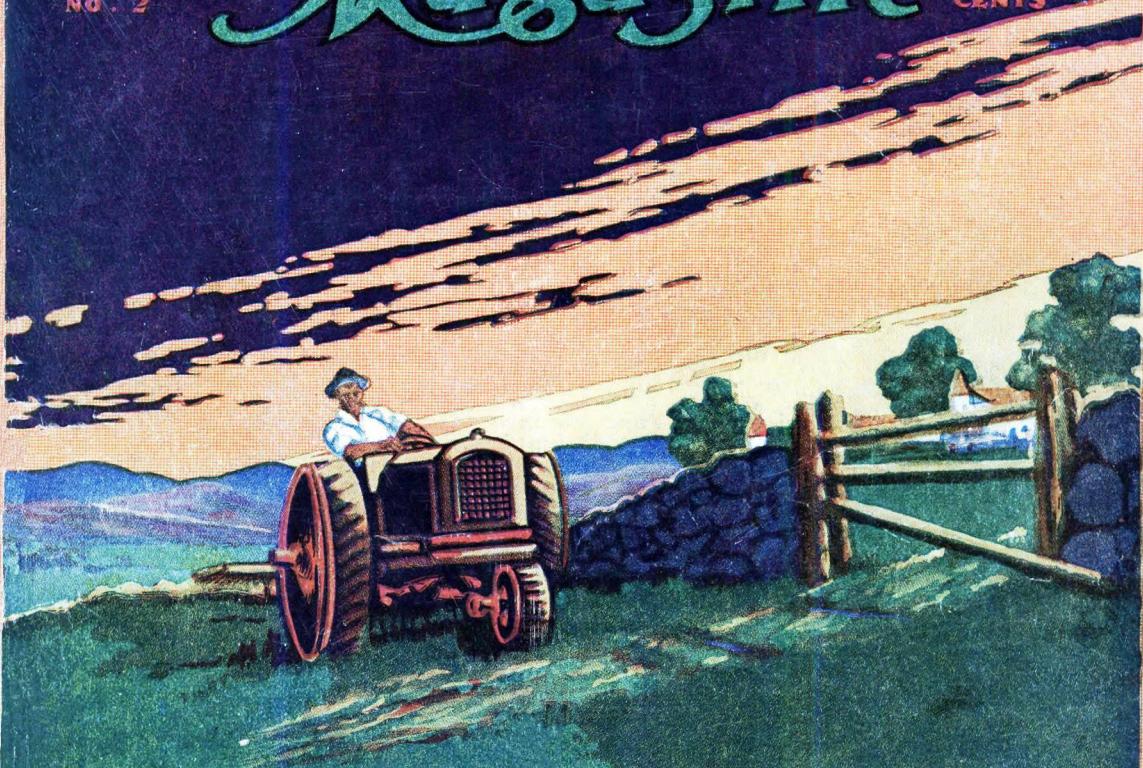


TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

VOL. 52
NO. 2

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APRIL SEVENTH 1919

BEGINNING
A NEW SERIAL BY
DANE COOLIDGE
"THE WILD BUNCH"

ALSO STORIES BY
J. FRANK DAVIS - EDGAR WALLACE
BEN AMES WILLIAMS - H.C. ROWLAND
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TWICE-A-MONTH
The Popular Magazine

Vol. LII. No. 2

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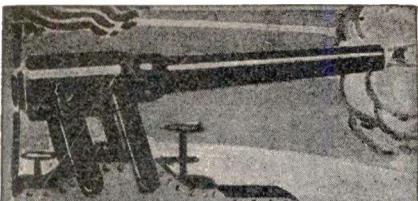
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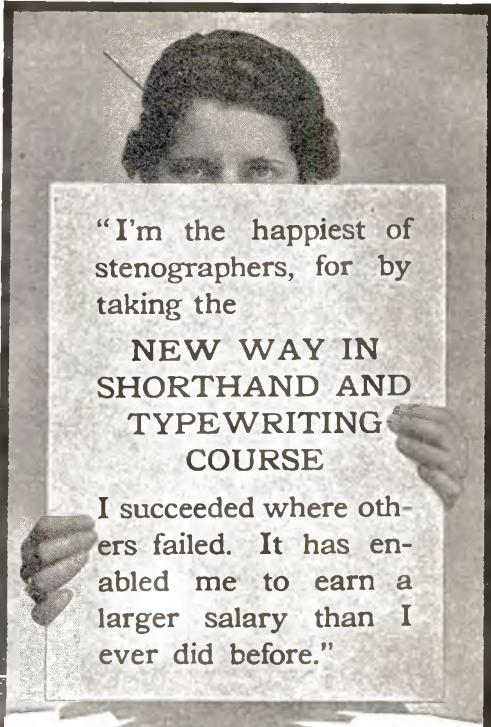
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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

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APRIL 7, 1919.

No. 2.

Storming John

By Ben Ames Williams

Author of "Tricks That Are Vain," Etc.

This story will take you to sea on one of the queerest voyages that any one ever took. From the moment the little professor and his daughter stepped aboard the "Annie Plaice," the brig lived up to what the second mate said of her. "She's no pleasure liner," said he. Indeed, the boat seemed to have taken a hoodoo unto herself when Professor Rowalton and the girl became passengers. Trouble follows trouble. But through it all comes Storming John, the most unlikely hero, wishing for peace among his pots and pans, but elected by circumstances to fill one office after another aboard the "Annie." The tale is calculated to entertain and startle even a sophisticated reader.

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CHAPTER I.

THE beach was not a beach of sand, like properly constituted beaches; it was a beach of mud. It stretched in an ugly crescent to right and left, and the tips of the crescent were set with ugly brown rocks like warts. The beach was very flat, so that the tide receded a long way as it ebbed; and the baking sun dried the mud that the tide left behind, so that it split into rectangular and octagonal cakes, and curled up at the edges and the corners. Toward the shoreward side, where the mud was longest uncovered, it dried to the consistency of dust, and the winds that played relentlessly along this griddle of a beach scoured this dust up in its passing, flung it into the eyes and ears and hair of those who came that way.

When a man walked upon the dried mud cakes above the receding tide, they crunched like eggshells beneath his feet, and his shoes sank into the wet mud beneath them. This mud stank of the sea; it had that peculiar smell of corruption which is born of deceased shellfish, preserved in salt water. This smell was not violently offensive; on

the other hand, it was not pleasant. The most that could be said for it was that one could accustom himself to it.

The mud, the sun, the wind, and the smell filled this corner of the universe. Humanity was dwarfed by them. The ugly shacks of mud or straw or boughs which were ranged along the shore; the awkward native craft which were dragged up here and there above high-water mark; the patch-sailed vessels drooping in the harbor; the unkempt brig at anchor a mile from shore; these things seemed small and of little importance in the scheme of things.

Even the cavalcade that emerged from the junglelike forest above the mud line of the beach was no more than a draggle-winged fly crawling across a large and very dirty windowpane.

Nevertheless, this cavalcade was worth study. It consisted of a white man, a white woman, and four blacks. The white man was small and old and very dry, like a thing that has been hung in the sun till all the sap is out of it. He suggested a slice of dried apple; a string of jerked beef. His skin was so dry that it seemed dusty. In fact, it

was dusty, with the dust of the mud. He wore a white helmet, and white garments which were sadly creased, as though they had been laid away for a considerable time in a chest. In his left hand, he carried a white umbrella, open. It rested against his left shoulder like a musket, and its shade fell upon him. Under his right arm he carried a box.

This box was one to attract attention. It was of some native wood, a dark brown, with a beautiful grain that shone through the grime of many hands. Its corners were bound lightly with brass; and this brass was tarnished. Two brass bands ran clear around the box. The hinges at the back were a part of these bands; the hasps in front joined their two ends. Each of these hasps was held fast shut with a lock. These locks were incongruous; they were brightly new; they were obviously of American manufacture; and they were devised to defy the skeleton key or the curved steel pick of the marauder.

This box was not large. It was a little more than a foot long, a little less than a foot wide, and something like half a foot thick, cover and all. It was a box with an air about it; it was a box that might have held diamonds, or rubies, or gold, or platinum, or any other very precious stuff. It was, in short, from the very nature of things, a treasure box. No man could look upon it without feeling an itch to see and possess its contents.

The white man who carried this box hugged it against his side with jealous solicitude.

Immediately on the heels of this man came the woman, the white woman. That is to say, she was in that indeterminate period between six and thirty-six which classed her as a "girl." Beneath the shadowing brim of the overlarge helmet which she wore, her face was brown and dusty, as though she had come far without opportunity to wash away the grime of travel. Her eyes were tired. She might have been thirty, or thirty-five. She was, as a matter of fact, just passing twenty-one.

She was dressed, head to toe, exactly like the man who walked ahead of her. Nevertheless, her womanhood was apparent; there was the feminine in every line of her. Her slender, poised throat; her softly sloping shoulders; the grace of her stride; and the absence of that leanness about the hips

which would have characterized a man, all united to betray her. Yet it is not accurate to call it a betrayal; for she made no secret of her sex. In fact, she blazoned it; she had allowed her hair to fall in a thick braid from beneath her helmet, down between her shoulders. It had been insufferably hot, coiled upon her head under the helmet's slight weight.

She, like the man, carried a white umbrella; but she bore no box beneath her arm. Save for the umbrella, she was unburdened. The blacks behind her were heavily laden with the belongings of herself and the man.

This little group went down across the mud of the beach—the tide was out—to-ward where a long boat from the brig at anchor in the harbor was drawn up at the water's edge. Men were busy about this boat, loading it with stores which blacks were trotting down from the village in the jungle's border. A mile away along the beach, where a stream ran into the sea through a channel gouged deep in the mud, another group of men were filling casks.

The men about the longboat looked up as the newcomers approached; and they stopped their work to watch. The man with the box went steadily forward; and one of the waiting men saw the girl, and took off his cap, and came a little way to meet them. They stopped, and the man with the box looked at the other and asked in a dry, husky voice:

"What is that brig, out there?"

The sailor looked out toward where the craft lay. "The *Annie Plaice*, out of Searsport," he said.

"Where bound?"

"New York, with hides."

"My name is Henry Rowalton," said the little man huskily. "Professor Henry Rowalton. My daughter and I—" He glanced toward the girl who stood beside him. "My daughter and I wish to take passage with you." And he added quickly, as an after-thought: "You're the captain, are you not?"

The man shook his head; he smiled. The girl saw that he had a shrewd, lean, but not unpleasant countenance. His teeth were good, and this pleased her. He said: "No sir. I'm the second mate, Mr. Hains."

The professor held out his hand. "How do you do, Mr. Hains," he said formally, and they shook hands. He performed an introduction, and Rufus Hains and the girl

clasped hands. The girl smiled at him. He was the first white man, save her father, with whom she had spoken for three years past. She was glad to see him.

"You'll have to ask Cap'n Murch," said Hains, when the introductions were completed. "I guess he can take you, if he wants to. There's cabin room."

Professor Rowalton nodded. "Yes, yes," he said huskily. "May I put my luggage aboard your boat? We will go off with you."

Hains hesitated only an instant. "Why, yes," he said. "You may have to come ashore again; but I reckon not. Wait till I get these stores aboard first."

He turned back to his men and drove them to their work. The professor dismissed the blacks who had carried his belongings down the beach. The girl spoke to them in the clicks and clacks of the native dialect, smiling; and they bent their heads to the mud before her, their teeth gleaming white in the ebony of their countenances.

Hains came back to stand with the professor and his daughter, whence he could keep an eye upon his men. He said casually: "You're in a God-forsaken hole, here, sir."

"Not at all," said the professor testily. "Not at all, young man. I have been here five years. That is to say, I have been in the interior. I may say to you that this locality is vastly interesting; that it has an importance in the scheme of things which you do not do well to overlook."

The second mate looked at him curiously. Then his eyes swept around him, over the expanse of mud which surrounded them.

"It don't look it," he said cheerfully.

The girl said: "It's father's beloved land, Mr. Hains. He knows every foot of it. You mustn't be surprised that he likes it."

Hains shouted something to a blunderer at the longboat, then smiled at the girl. "Well, that's all right," he said. "Just the same, I notice he's glad to get away. Shipping on the *Annie*— She's no pleasure liner, ma'am."

The girl laughed softly. "You'll not find us overparticular. We're accustomed to hard living. And the *Annie* is the first outside vessel to touch here in seven months, so you see we've no choice."

Hains nodded. "I guess Cap'n Murch will be glad to take you," he said. The work of the men was almost done; he left

her and went toward them. The last of the stores went into the longboat; and he sent two men to get the belongings of the professor and the girl. He himself, following, said to Professor Rowalton:

"I'll stow your box aboard, sir."

And he held out his hand for the brass-bound chest beneath the other's arm. Professor Rowalton backed away sharply; he flung both arms about the box and hugged it against his thin body. And he cried out: "No, no, no!" in a shrill staccato; and then: No, sir. No man—"

The girl said softly: "Father! Mr. Hains meant only to help you."

The professor recovered himself. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Hains," he said, his husky voice still suspicious. "However, no man touches this box except me. I, myself, Mr. Hains."

Hains laughed. "Why that's all right, sir," he said. "Let's get aboard."

They went to the longboat, and Hains helped the girl climb in over the high side of the craft as it lay high and dry on the mud. The professor looked at the boat, looked at the creeping tide that barely lapped its seaward end; and he eyed Hains suspiciously.

"How will you get it afloat?" he demanded.

"The tide's coming," said Hains. "She'll float in ten minutes. Get in and sit down and wait."

Professor Rowalton seemed still to be in doubt. The girl said: "Come, father." And reluctantly he obeyed, taking his place beside her on the after thwart, facing the stern where Hains stood ready to steer. The waist of the boat was full of stores; the oarsmen were on the bow thwarts.

After they had taken their place in the boat, there was nothing for them to do save sit and wait, while the sun seared them. The muddy margin of the tide crept along the boat's sides, until there was water all about them. The dry, hot mud drank in the water with little hissing sounds; and there was a fringe of steam along the line where water and mud joined. This fringe was so faint and fine it was scarce perceptible. As fast as it formed, the wind snatched it away.

This wind that blew always along this scorching shore had a malignant quality all its own. It flowed like quicksilver, or like molten metal, smoothly and tormentingly. It was blistering hot; and there was not suffi-

cient strength in it to stir the stagnant water to more than passing ripples. It dried the skin without cooling.

In the course of time, the tide floated them; that is, it took up enough of their weight so that the oarsmen were able to thrust the boat off the mud. They swung around, and crawled out across the brass-hot bosom of the harbor toward where the brig lay with her decks cracking in the sun. Hains steered, speaking a word now and then to the men; the men rowed; the little professor hugged his box; and the girl watched the brig that was to be, for weeks to come, their home.

She thought it looked dirty; but she was prepared to accept that as a matter of course. She had the landsman's notion that ships, save naval craft and close-scrubbed liners, are always dirty. She thought the *Annie Plaice* looked businesslike, and able to make its way about; her eye was not sufficiently skilled in the ways of the sea to mark the slackness here and there, the frayed rigging, the ill-stowed canvas, the unpatched rip in a sail that betrayed an ill-kept ship. These things, if she had had eyes to see them, might have warned her what manner of man to expect in Captain Murch; but they did not, and she was shocked and half alarmed when she saw him.

The cap'n was on the quarter when the longboat came alongside and they were helped aboard. Mr. Hains said, under his breath, to the professor: "There he is." And Professor Rowalton saw Cap'n Murch, and went aft to face the man, his umbrella still spread above his head, his box still hugged under his arm. The girl went with her father. The captain stood on unsteady legs and watched them come with red, unblinking eyes.

Professor Royalton, when he was within easy speaking distance, said in his hurried, husky voice: "My daughter and I wish to take passage with you, captain, to New York."

Cap'n Murch looked at him, looked at the girl, looked long at the brass-bound box beneath the professor's arm. It was plain to the girl that he had been drinking, even before he asked in a bleary voice:

"What's that you say?"

Professor Rowalton said impatiently: "Man, man, can't you hear. I say we want to take passage."

Cap'n Murch wagged his head. "Pas-

sage?" he echoed. "Passage? What's that?" He grinned. "I know. You want to go home aboard the *Annie*!"

"Certainly."

"She ain't a liner—the *Annie* ain't a liner."

"I'm aware of that."

The captain, by an obvious effort, straightened in his tracks, and before their eyes shook off his drunkenness. He said:

"You want to go home with me? Come below, sir, and we'll discuss the matter."

The professor nodded. "You may name your own terms," he said; and he stepped toward the other.

At the head of the cabin stair, the captain said: "I'll take your box. You'll need your hands. This stair is steep."

He caught the professor unawares, and his hand was upon the box, gripping an end of it, before the little man could jerk it away. Professor Rowalton went white to the lips, his umbrella dropped backward over his shoulder, and in his left hand appeared, from nowhere, a revolver. The weapon was enormous, and black. It quite overshadowed the little man who held it. Its muzzle menaced the captain's middle; and the professor barked:

"Let go. Let go the box."

Cap'n Murch let go; his face was purple. The girl intervened, pushing aside the weapon, holding her father's hand. "Father!" she said softly. "Please—" And to the captain: "Forgive him. He is very jealous of that box. There are five years of his life in it, so you can't blame him so very much. He likes to carry it himself."

Cap'n Murch grinned reluctantly. "I wasn't going to steal it," he said harshly. "Let him carry it. I hope he falls and busts his head. Come below, if you've a mind to. Stay on deck if you'd ruther."

He went down the cabin stair with no further word to them; and the girl spoke swiftly to her father, scolding him lovingly. The professor restored his weapon to a capacious pocket in his white trousers; and after a moment, he and the girl followed the captain below.

CHAPTER II.

The *Annie Plaice* was not in the passenger trade: nevertheless there was, as Rufus Hains had told the newcomers, cabin room for them if the captain chose to take them. And Cap'n Murch did so choose.

When the professor and the girl followed him down into the main cabin, the captain sat down and left them to find seats for themselves. "Now," he said, looking at them aggressively. "Now, what's your proposition?"

Professor Rowalton told him: "We want passage with you, and we're willing to pay—in reason."

Cap'n Murch grinned. "Ought t' be worth something, to get away from this hole."

The professor protested, in his hurried, husky voice: "Not at all, sir. Not at all. You speak of it in that fashion only because you are blind, sir. You betray your own ignorance and lack of understanding. Indeed you do."

The captain studied him, and he looked at the girl, and his eyes went a little furtively to the dark box beneath the little professor's arm.

"What were you doing there?" he asked.

The professor said coldly: "That is a matter which no one may inquire into at this time, sir. It is hidden from the world, now; the whole world will exclaim when the story comes to be told."

The captain's eyes narrowed thoughtfully, fell again upon that brass-bound chest. The professor watched him with flickering eyes, and the fingers of the hand that held the chest twitched nervously.

The girl intervened. "This is really beside the question, captain. We wish passage. Can you accommodate us?"

He looked at her, and he smiled. "That's a fair question, miss. I can. With a cabin apiece, handy as you please."

She nodded. "You can. Then will you?"

"Why, certain!"

"And what will you charge?"

He waved his hand. "Pshaw! No matter! Glad to have the company of the two of you. A ship captain's a lonely kind of a man, miss."

She smiled. "That is good of you. But we're quite able and willing to pay." He protested again; she insisted; and so he was constrained to name a price, to which the girl assented. During this conversation, the professor had remained rigidly by the table, his box tight clasped, his quick eyes searching the dark crannies of the cabin. At the end the captain rose lumberingly, crossed, and opened a door.

"This'll be your quarters, professor," he

said amiably. "It's full of stores, right now; but I'll have them cleared out in a bit. Will it suit?"

The professor peered in, then studied the door. "I shall require three strong bolts on the door, so that I can secure it from the inside," he said. "Can you arrange that?"

"Why, certain," said the captain readily. "Not as you'll need 'em. We're not pirates aboard here."

The girl caught Cap'n Murch's eye, and there was a humorous little plea in hers, as though she had said: "Be kind to him. It's a whim he has." So the skipper added heartily: "But there, now. That's all right. I'll have it fixed right off."

The professor nodded; then, as though with an awakening sense of his responsibility for her, he asked: "Where will you accommodate my daughter?"

Cap'n Murch turned back across the cabin. "That used to be third mate's cabin, where I'm putting you, when we had one," he said. "This was my wife's, when she sailed with me, first two-three cruises."

He opened the door, and the girl saw a neat little apartment with a single tiny port opening astern.

"Your wife doesn't come to sea now?" she asked.

"She's gone to Davy Jones," said Cap'n Murch philosophically. "Spar dropped on her, on deck one day. She's buried in mid-Atlantic."

The girl said nothing, but there was a quality about her that made her sympathy felt without words. She stepped into the cabin. "This will do nicely," she said. Then she saw that a door connected this cabin with that of the captain, immediately adjoining. He saw where her eyes had gone, and explained:

"That's a door into my cabin. There's a bolt on it, you see."

She said she was content, but there was an uneasiness upon her. They went back into the main cabin and climbed to the deck, and Cap'n Murch bade them wait till the brig got under way.

"I'll have things fixed for you, then," he said.

They saw the longboat was being hoisted inboard; and they stood together on the quarter-deck and watched the process of taking the brig to sea. Cap'n Murch remained near them, the mate—his name was Mr. Stoll, and he was a mild man with little

force in him—stood forward by the knight-heads, and Rufus Hains, who had brought them aboard, went into the rigging with the men. With sails loosed and yards braced, the men at the capstan were heaving up the anchor. The girl heard some one begin to sing, a lugubrious and doleful chant. She saw the singer atop the pawl bitt, just abaft the capstan. A big man, lean and tall and strong, with a shock of black hair beneath his cap, and an apron girt about his slim waist; yet he sang well, in a pleasant, melodious voice. Cap'n Murch was near them at the moment; and the girl asked:

"Why—— Who is that man, singing?"

"Him?" said the skipper. "That's John Brant, the cook; him that the men call 'Storming John.'"

She echoed the name: "Storming John? Why? Is he a—quarrelsome man?"

The captain laughed till he choked. "Bless you," he protested. "You'll see the joke o' that when you know John. Never was a milder man. Gentle-spoke as a baby, miss." And he added, as an afterthought: "Gentle acting, too."

"Then why?" she asked.

"Ain't you heard the chantey, miss?" he asked. He pronounced it "shanty," so that at first she did not understand. Then she shook her head; and he sang out adown the length of the ship: "John—— Give us 'Storming John.'"

The men, thrusting at the bars, echoed the demand; and the cook on the pawl looked aft to where the girl stood, and stopped the song he sang, and struck up another:

"Storming John was a fine old man
To-me-way-you-roll-and-go.
Storming John was a fine old man,
Aye, aye, tye, old Storming John."

He carried the burden of the song, the men's voices joining in a grunting volume on the alternate lines. The girl, listening, gathered that the hero of the song was dead and gone, his grave dug with a golden spade, his body lowered in with a silver cord, and all the other sorrowful details. The man on the pawl sang dolefully; the men barked their chanting chorus.

Then the anchor was up and fast, and the *Annie* was taking the faintly stirring breeze. Before the girl understood, the wide-spreading mud of the beach was receding from them, and the distant, inland hills that had been her home were climbing into view

above the jungle that lined the shore. She stood watching, thoughts back in those hills, forgetful of the present and of the future that stretched before her. She was roused by the voice of the captain, from behind her, singing down the deck to Storming John and bidding him come aft. She saw the man come toward them, and she watched him as he came. A fine face, she decided; blue eyes beneath the black hair, and a wide and humorous mouth. He looked once at her, looked from her to the captain. Cap'n Murch bade him go below and clear out the third mate's cabin and make it ready for occupancy.

"John's cook and steward, too," he told the girl, when the man was gone. "A good man. Does two men's work, and has time to spare——"

He checked himself, said amiably to the girl's father: "Professor, I was nigh forgetting the bolts for your door." He shouted to the carpenter, Abner Hatch, where the man was mending a crushed bulwark: "Abner!"

The man looked up, rose from his knees on the deck and came sulkily toward the captain. He was, the girl saw, well along in years; he might have been sixty. He was gray, his straggling hair showing beneath his cap. He had his hammer in his right hand; his left was in one of the nail pockets in his apron. His eyes wavered curiously before the captain's glare, and he stopped six feet away to wait the other's command. Cap'n Murch asked harshly:

"Got any bolts in your stores, Abner?"

"Bolts," said the man in a mild, aimless voice.

"Aye, bolts. Door bolts, you fool!"

"Fool?" the carpenter repeated. "Oh, aye, fool."

"Bolts, I said."

"To be sure, sir. Bolts. Yes, sir, I have some."

"Fit three to the door of the empty cabin, sharp," said Cap'n Murch. "Don't stand there gawking, now."

"Gawking?" echoed the man. "Why, no, sir, I won't. I'll do it right away, sir."

He turned away unsteadily, and the girl felt sick and shaken. In that brief interchange of words, it was as though she had looked upon a stripped and naked soul. She had sensed the hostility in the captain's voice when he called to the man; the bullying tone in which he spoke to the carpenter. She

thought this anger was half compounded of fear. And in the carpenter, on the other hand, she had seen stark panic, alive and cowering. The sight was ugly; she swallowed hard.

Cap'n Murch watched the other go, said to the girl: "He's off, you understand. Not there. Crazy. I have to hold him down. He goes into fits. Tries to kill a man."

"He seemed to me like a—like a sick man," she said.

Cap'n Murch chuckled. "Sick?" he repeated. "You'd have thought different, three days back. I had t' hit him with a handspike to knock sense into the old fool. He's daft."

She said nothing; and the skipper seemed to feel the necessity of explaining more fully. "You touch one o' his tools and you'll see," he told her. "He thinks they're made o' gold, or silver, or the like. Half killed a seaman the other day because the man borrowed his hand ax without asking."

The brig was working slowly seaward, the land shrinking into a ribbon upon the sea behind her. Forward and amidships, the men were busy stowing the stores that had been taken aboard. The girl watched, saying nothing; and the skipper remained at her side, and spoke at last.

"You were lucky we happened in here," he told her. "We got caught in bad winds, put back three weeks, or we'll been able to make it home without stopping. Had to put back."

"We've been waiting for something to touch here for months," she said. "There was no pressing hurry. We were ready to go at any time."

"You might have waited years."

She made no comment. Her father had gone back to watch the steersman; she and the captain were beyond his hearing. The skipper asked casually, furtive eyes watching her:

"What was it you said you were doing in there?"

She smiled at him. "I didn't say."

"Well, I guess it's no secret, is it?" he protested.

"Yes," she said. "Yes, it is."

He looked at her slyly. "How long you been there?"

She said steadily: "I think you ought to understand. My father had his own concerns there; he does not wish them known. If he were willing you should know, he

would have told you. I can't say anything."

"Well then, that's all right and square," he said sulkily. "But I never saw that it paid to mistrust a man."

"He mistrusts all men."

He said sharply: "I've heard tell there was diamonds found up in them hills, yonder. Natives find them."

She was surprised; then, abruptly, she laughed, and with no further word she left him and went back to where her father stood. Cap'n Murch looked after her with a hot face; and his eyes centered on the box under the professor's arm. He turned and went below. When they saw him next, he was fuddled with drink as he had been when they first came aboard. The girl was to find that this was the way of the man; he drank regularly, and there were hours when his tongue tripped him, and other hours when he appeared as sober as any man. The border line between the two conditions was abrupt; he passed from sobriety to drunkenness, from drunkenness to sobriety, in the drawing of a single breath.

They were still on deck an hour later when they heard an outcry in the cabin below them; an oath, and the smash of blows. The mad old carpenter shot up to the deck, fleeing like a rabbit, his tools in his hands. There was a bloody smear upon his cheek. The skipper was at his heels, but he did not pursue the man off the quarter-deck. He contented himself with shaking a big fist after the carpenter. Mr. Stoll, the mate, was on deck at the moment; he asked no questions. But Professor Rowalton barked huskily:

"What is it, Cap'n Murch? What's the trouble, sir?"

The skipper waved a hand toward where the carpenter had disappeared. "Th' damn dog was spillin' shavings on my cabin floor," he swore. "I showed him. I'll teach him manners, anyhow."

The girl turned away, hot and angry. As she turned, she came face to face with Storming John. The cook smiled a little, said pleasantly:

"I've cleaned out below, ma'am. All's ready for you. If there's a thing you need, just call for Storming John."

The words were commonplace enough; but the girl sensed a strength behind them which she found surprisingly comforting. She had already decided that she did not like

the captain. She was equally sure that she did like Storning John.

But she only said: "Thank you very much," and passed him and went below.

CHAPTER III.

There were the ingredients of a devil's brew of tragedy aboard the *Annie Plaice*. Within three days' time after their sailing, this much was plain, even to the girl.

The *Annie* had been a luckless ship from the beginning; she gathered that from the cabin talk. She had carried cotton from Galveston to Liverpool, and coal from Liverpool to Taku. On that long leg of the cruise, her fresh stores had run out, with the result that scurvy appeared in the fo'e'sle, and one man died. After unloading at Taku, she wasted six months hunting for a homeward-bound cargo, and found it at last in Australian hides. Now she was working her painful way up the South Atlantic, with the wind in her teeth. She had been six weeks around Good Hope, and was still---what with evil gales and the like---within a week's fair sailing of that cape. The captain was drinking more than was good for him; Stoll, the mate, went placidly about his duties, as unconcerned and as unaspiring as a caterpillar; and Rufus Hains ran the ship.

The girl---her name was Patience Rowalton, for the professor's wife had been a devout woman---was interested in studying the three officers and weighing them. The skipper she detested, not alone for the man's obvious and unnecessary drunkenness, but also for the brutality that lay in his loose features, and for the cruelty he lavished on the mad carpenter. She found, very quickly, that his abuse of the man on the day they came aboard was not exceptional; the carpenter was target for a blow or a kick on any pretext. She guessed that the captain was afraid of him, and wondered at it. Abner Hatch seemed a pitifully harmless old man.

Stoll she ignored; he had no force or strength in him. He said little, smiled placidly to himself at his own thoughts, and did his share of the ship's work without heat and without imagination. But Rufus Hains, the second mate, interested the girl. She enjoyed talking to him. He enjoyed talking to her. She thought she perceived in him a fierce impatience with the captain and Mr. Stoll. The second day out, she heard him

dispute a direct order from the captain, and force the drunken man to yield to him. He was the strongest man of the three.

They were together on the quarter-deck the second night, in the starlight. They had spoken of many things; they talked of the brig and the men aboard her. The girl asked at last: "Why does the captain dislike Abner Hatch---and abuse him?"

Hains moved his shoulders impatiently. "He has no use for any one."

"He's particularly brutal to the carpenter. I--- I've thought he seemed to be afraid of the man."

The second mate looked at her with sharp surprise. "I had not thought of that." He was silent for a moment. "As a matter of fact," he said, "Abner did stand up to him, when we were out of Galveston for Liverpool. The old man swore at him, and Abner --- It made him mad, I should say. He rushed the captain, and downed him before we could step in."

"Good for him," said the girl, so fiercely that Hains chuckled.

"You don't like the old man?" he asked.

"No." And she added: "What has changed the carpenter? He could never hurt the captain now."

"He's been rode hard," said Hains frankly. "He had a rope's end for that first blow; and it took the gimp out of him. And he's had a kick for breakfast and a fist for supper ever since."

The girl said hotly: "It's pitiful. I wish he would--- I don't know what."

Hains said thoughtfully: "He might, at that. You can't tell what a crazy man will do."

It was a little after that that he began to ask her about the professor's work ashore; and the girl became reticent with him as she had with the captain. He spoke of the box the professor guarded so carefully; and she asked him to point out to her the Clouds of Magellan.

Hains smiled and followed her lead. The box had struck his imagination, as it must strike the imagination of any man who saw it. Professor Rowalton was not tactful; he did not understand that it is possible to invite trouble by seeking to avoid it. He had bolted himself into his cabin that first day, and he stayed behind the thrice-barred door from morning to night, never venturing on deck, never entering the main cabin except to eat his meals. Even then, he occupied,

by his own demand, the seat nearest the door of his cabin; and the side pocket of his loose, white coat sagged with the revolver he carried there.

Cap'n Murch spoke of the box every time he encountered the other. The effect was to anger and alarm the professor, so that he was constantly on edge for trouble. He never admitted any one to his cabin except the girl; and it fell to her to explain his idiosyncrasies to the others, and urge them to bear with him. At which the captain grinned, Mr. Stoll smiled placidly, and Hains nodded his agreement.

Hains puzzled the girl. He was pleasant, cheerful, strong; he seemed a man of right feeling. Yet now and then she detected that about him which disturbed her. His eyes had at times an unnatural keenness; at others they were bloodshot and slightly glazed. He was given to days of pallor and lassitude. When he was off guard, she thought his lips twitched cruelly. His eyes, when he looked at her, had something in them that she was inclined to fear; yet it fascinated her, and attracted as much as it repelled. She wore, for a day or two after coming aboard, the masculine garb in which she had boarded the ship. She had, in her belongings, only a few articles of feminine apparel. She had always dressed as a boy or as a man, in the hill village that had been her home these five years past. A girl of sixteen when she went there, her clothing of that day was outworn or outgrown; but she had laboriously fashioned other garments, copying them from the occasional magazines that came in to them in their infrequent communication with the outer world. She had a dress, now, and a suit, which she had made herself; she had planned to save them to wear when she should go ashore in New York. But there was something in the eyes of Hains and of the captain, when they looked at her, that impelled her to lay aside her masculine garb and don these garments. Hains told her they were unbecoming; he said, laughingly: "You should stick to the others. They're a lot better." She did not dispute with him, but she stuck to her change.

On the fourth day out, the girl talked for the first time with Storming John. He was in the cabin in his capacity as steward, clearing away after dinner. The captain and the officers were on deck. The girl had been in her cabin; she came out and found the

man at his work, and nodded to him and said:

"Good afternoon."

He touched his forehead with a finger in respectful salutation. "Howdy, ma'am," he said.

"Thank you for fixing up my cabin so nicely," she said. "I've had no chance to thank you before."

"Why, now, that's all right. That's my job, miss."

She smiled. "You seem to have a good many jobs. Cook, and steward, and chantey man."

"Yes. If you'll call them jobs."

"You sing as though you liked it," she said.

"Aye, I do. I do that."

He was working swiftly and deftly; she watched him with thoughtful eyes. There was a comfortable strength and honesty in the man. He had, she thought, a fine face. There were no coarse lines in it; there was humor, and strength, and courage. Her eyes, watching, were somehow wistful. The man saw, and paused in his work.

"Was there anything bothering you, miss?" he asked.

"Why—no."

"You looked—sadlike."

"I wasn't," she laughed. "I was only thinking."

He took a step toward her. "You're not to mind the men's talk, miss," he said. "It's their foolishness. That's the sea of it."

She was surprised. "Their talk?" she echoed. "What do you mean?"

He looked uncomfortable. "I thought you heard, this morning, when you was in the waist."

"No," she said. "What was it?"

He chuckled. "Why, you'll laugh, miss," he said. "You see, there's a notion some seamen has, that a woman aft is bad luck to a ship. And the *Annie* is a bad-luck ship, anyhows."

"Bad luck," she echoed. "Oh, I hope not."

"I'll warrant not," he agreed. "It's just their fool-headed way of looking at things."

She said, with sudden anger: "The way the captain treats Mr. Hatch is a great deal more likely to bring bad luck than anything I may do—or be."

His face set faintly for an instant; he turned away from her. "Oh, aye, ma'am," he said.

"I should think you would stop him."

He shook his head. "He's the captain, miss," he said, as though the matter were ended by that word. She was impatient, turned away, went on deck and left him in the cabin.

She heard the skipper cursing, as she came on deck. He was swearing at the wind, the sky and the sea; for the wind had died on them, and the *Annie* was becalmed. The sea surged all about them, heaving restlessly like molten copper stirred by hidden fires. The sun burned down.

They were to stew in that calm for three days to come. The heat was terrific; the deck planking burned through the soles of their shoes, and the seams bubbled. Below decks, the brig was an oven; on deck, it was a grid. And in this steaming caldron, there fermented and simmered the black forces that were to boil over at last in red and overwhelming tragedy.

Tempers were short and raw in that time. Cap'n Murch was inflamed with constant drinking; and Rufus Hains went into one of his periods of lassitude. He walked the decks, unsmilingly. His eyes were red and hot. The girl was afraid of him, afraid of the captain. She would have kept to her cabin, but the heat there was unbearable; she was forced to remain on deck with them. Every one was on deck save Professor Rowton, who stayed steadfastly below.

On the second day, the first act of the tragedy was played; the ugly prelude to the ghastly days that were to come. Abner Hatch, the carpenter, passing across the deck, stumbled weakly and lurched against the skipper as Cap'n Murch turned from the rail. The captain struck out with a blow like the lick of a whip, and because his nerves were jangling with the drink in him, he missed. The blow slid across the carpenter's shoulder; and a frenzy was born in the madman's face, and he swung up the hammer that he carried and struck back, blindly. The wooden handle of the hammer hit the captain squarely across the face and dropped him; his cheek was cut to the bone. Then Storming John's arms wrapped the carpenter around and held him, writhing. The captain groaned and came to his feet, and leaped to vengeance. When he was almost upon the carpenter, Storming John swung himself between. Cap'n Murch roared:

"Get out o' my way. Give me the dog!"

Storming John said gently: "Why no, now. It was the heat, driving him wild, sir."

The skipper stormed: "Get away, or I'll kill the two of you. Get back, John!"

The cook, still holding Abner, shook his head again. "No sir." And Cap'n Murch lurched unsteadily on his feet, turned and called to the mate: "Mr. Stoll, give me your gun."

The mate smiled placidly, and handed the skipper his revolver. Cap'n Murch jammed it into Storming John's side. "Now, out o' my way," he said.

The girl, watching then, saw John's eyes blaze into slow fire; and the big man shook his head.

"No," he said.

"You damned mutineer," Cap'n Murch raged. "I'll drill you in three seconds if you're not out of the way."

John's voice rang. "You'll not. Put down the gun. Let be."

Their eyes clashed then, gripped and held in a swaying struggle. The captain was mouthing and yammering with fury; but in spite of himself he cooled at the blaze in the cook's eyes. His vociferations slowed and stilled. The gun in his hand fell from John's side. He gave back, stubbornly; he stepped up on the quarter.

"I'll deal with you," he said harshly. "I'll deal with you—"

John neither moved nor spoke again; the captain went, growling, down into the cabin. Abner still struggled in the cook's arms, and John released him now.

"There, man," he said. "Quiet. You had the best of it. Forget it now."

Abner's mad old eyes glared around the deck; he shook himself and moved away.

That afternoon the girl from the quarter saw Abner at the grindstone. He was grinding a light hand ax; and there was a cruel, insane light in his eyes as he pressed the edge against the whirling stone. Watching, she imagined the things he might do. And as she watched, Rufus Hains spoke, beside her. She had not heard him come; she turned and saw that his eyes were bright, that he was alert with a nervous alertness, smiling mirthlessly.

"Mark what the man's doing," he said softly, and pointed toward Abner.

Patience nodded, with a shiver. "Poor old man."

"He's crazy as a hawk," said Hains. "I'm not sure I'd not best lock him up."

The girl said nothing; they stood silent, watching the carpenter grind his ax to a razor edge. They saw him test it at last; they saw by his face that he was content.

Patience went to her cabin that night under the load of a crushing premonition of what was to come.

CHAPTER IV.

The stewing calm held them all that night; the morning dawned as coppery hot as the day before. The brig with slatting sails lurched like a drunken man on the slow-stirring swells. There was slime upon the water; and here and there little bubbling swirls broke the brazen surface to mark the passage of some fish below.

The girl spent half the morning on deck; then she went below in a desperate hope of escaping the stifling sun. Her tiny cabin was hotter than the deck, but she bolted her door and got some measure of comfort by taking off her outer garments and laying arms and throat in brackish water. She lay down on her bunk and panted for breath. The water lifted the brig's stern and dropped it with tiny, slapping sounds against the planking. There was no other sound aboard the *Annie*. She was like a ship of the dead.

After a time the girl heard the captain come into his cabin, next to hers, and she caught the clink of glass on glass, and knew he was drinking. She lay with staring eyes, listening for the sound of his door that would tell her he had gone out again; but she dozed off into a half-slumber without hearing it.

She was awakened, as she thought, by a sharp rap against the planking of the vessel's stern, just beside her head. She twisted in the bunk and looked up quickly and saw only the blank wall; and then she heard a curious choking noise. Nothing more.

Sounds innocent enough; yet there was that in them which froze the girl with horror. She could not have said why this was so; yet the very air seemed to have a message of terror for her. She was motionless, her body half raised and supported by her arms, her eyes staring at nothing, her every faculty concentrated in a terrible intensity of listening.

She heard some one moving in the main cabin, and she slipped soundlessly to the

floor, and crossed to her door, and leaned against it, ear pressed to the panels. She heard a door at the forward end of the main cabin open and close again. It was the door to the cabin of either the first or second mate; she could not be sure.

There had been no alarm; nothing but these faint sounds which had come to her. She smiled a little at her own fears and turned to go back and lie down; but as she turned, her eyes rested on the door which connected her cabin with that of the captain; and she was still as stone again.

This door was secured by a stout bolt on her side, a little below the middle. It was moving now; it bent outward a little, above the bolt. That is to say, it bent toward her, as though some one on the other side were making a silent effort to force it open. The girl watched it, her face white and her eyes straining; she saw it bend toward her, then recede again, as though whoever stood on the other side had abandoned his effort. She tried to tell herself she had imagined the thing; but the door strained toward her again.

Her garments were hanging against the wall beside her; she caught them instinctively, drew them about her, began to slip them on with a desperate effort to make no sound.

Then she heard some one coming down the cabin stair from the deck; and at the same time she heard the door from the captain's cabin into the dining cabin open and softly close. An instant later, while her flying fingers worked with the fastenings of her clothes, she was deafened by the roar of a shot in the narrow confines of the main cabin. Its reverberations filled the place with clangor, and on its heels came an instant's hush, and then an oath, and a sound of struggle.

She flung open her door; and in the instant of its opening, the scene before her was forever photographed upon her mind.

At the foot of the cabin stair, half sitting, and leaning back against the stairs themselves, lay the body of the mate, Mr. Stoll. The lower half of his face was covered with a smear of crimson, as though he wore a mask. His eyes were half open, glassy and unseeing. His hands lay beside him, palms up, fingers curling a little inward. His feet were sagging outward, his legs straight before him. He seemed to the girl smaller than in life; he had shrunk in

the instant of his dying. His clothes fitted him loosely.

In the middle of the cabin, by the huge butt of the mizzen-mast where it came down on its way to its step in the fabric of the brig, the second mate, Rufus Hains, was grappling desperately with the mad carpenter. The carpenter had in his right hand the ax which he had been whetting at the grindstone the day before; in his left he held a revolver. Hains had the man about the chest; and even while the girl looked, the carpenter brought down his two hands with the weapons they held, upon the second mate's head. The pistol barrel cracked against his temple with the sharp sound of a snapping stick; the ax jerked down over his shoulder and struck lightly into his back and jerked free again. His body collapsed, and the carpenter kicked him away with a motion of his knee, and walked over him as though the man had not existed, and started for the stair.

The madman had not seen the girl; the girl did not stir. She was paralyzed, not so much with fright as with the sheer, appalling horror of what she had seen. She watched.

Mad Abner walked across the cabin toward the stair where the dead man lay: he saw him no more than he had seen the second mate. He stepped on the dead man's legs and stumbled, and stepped upon the sagging body, and clambered over it on hands and knees, and so went up toward the deck.

Patience watched him disappear; his hands first; with the pistol and the ax; then his head; then his body, and last his legs, dragging slowly upward after him.

She wanted to hurry after him, to cry out, to give the alarm. Life returned to her slowly; she stumbled across to where Rufus Hains lay. He was on his face on the floor, and the blood flowed from the wound in his back. She thought he was dead; and quite suddenly she was as cool as ice. She went toward the stair, stepped over the body there, climbed quickly. She had one thought —to find Storming John. She trusted him to meet this thing.

She came on deck in time to see what happened next.

Mad Abner, from the shambles of the cabin, had wandered aimlessly forward. He was nursing his bloody ax against his breast with his right hand; the pistol was in his left. He gesticulated with this, and cried

out something, maudlinly, over and over. His words were meaningless. He was in the waist when Patience came on deck; she saw him go forward, past the galley in the after end of the forward house. Storming John was in the galley, she knew. He would be preparing dinner. She would have called. She ran lightly toward the spot. Then John stepped to the galley door as Abner passed, and leaped out and encircled the man with his arms and held him fast.

Abner, thus pinioned, went into a frenzy of terrific rage. He lifted the pistol in his left hand and fired, striving to bring it to bear upon the head of Storming John, over his own shoulder. John moved his head aside. The discharge seared his cheek. Before Abner could fire again, John pinned his wrist. The madman still pulled trigger; the bullets flew wild. One went into the deck, another cut a line in the fore rigging, a third sang straight into the air above his head. Then the weapon snapped on empty cartridges. At the same time, John gripped Abner's right hand. He thus held, from behind, the man's left wrist, and his right hand; and Abner, fighting and kicking and screaming with rage, dropped the empty revolver, and brought his hands together on the ax, and strove to bring that into play. John wrenched it clean away from him, flung it to one side.

As it chanced, when he threw the ax blindly away so that Abner might be disarmed, it went toward the rail. It struck the starboard ratlines, whirled in the air, and dropped into the sea. Abner howled in horrible despair, and twisted in John's arms to kick and bite and strike at him. He screamed threats and curses; he swore to kill John horribly.

The men were up from the fo'c'sle by now. With their help, the madman was secured, bound fast, wound round and round with fine, strong line. John lifted him bodily into the longboat and laid him there as comfortably as might be. Abner still screamed his threats; but John paid him no heed. He turned aft, running lightly, till he saw the girl where she leaned weakly against the port rail, and crossed to her, and asked quietly:

"What's happened, miss?"

"He's killed them. Killed them all," she stammered. She caught John's hand, turned and ran, leading him. "Come," she told him over her shoulder. "Come."

He dropped into the cabin before her. When she came down more slowly, he had lifted Mr. Stoll aside and the stairs were clear. He knelt by the mate for a moment, then faced her.

"He's dead," he said. His eyes swept around.

They saw Rufus Hains, the second mate, feebly trying to lift himself from the floor. He had his hands propped against the planks, he raised his shoulders a few inches, while his head dragged between them; then, strength failing, he fell back again. John called cheerfully: "All right, sir. We'll fix you up." And with the last word, he had the man in his arms, tenderly as a woman. Patience was beside him. She saw now for the first time that Rufus had a deep cut in his right forearm, from which the blood seeped slowly. She cried to John:

"He cut him in the back, too."

John lifted the second mate and laid him on the cabin table. Hains tried to sit up. The cook said sharply: "Lie still, sir. Let us see what's needful." His clasp knife slit the man's sleeve, slit the coat off his back, cut away his heavy shirt. His shoulder and back and arm were bared; and Patience could see the clean muscles lying slack and helpless beneath the white skin. In the thick muscle above the right shoulder blade there was a cut, deep, but not through the bone. John spread this open, pressed with his thumbs upon its edges; he examined the wound in the man's arm.

"Right as rain, sir," he said cheerfully. "You'll not know you was hurt in a week. Now lie still."

He turned; the girl asked: "What can I do?" He said:

"Get water. And clean rags, if you have any."

She nodded quickly, turned into her own cabin. John went into the captain's, where the chest of medicines was kept. The girl was back first, with the things which he required; she started toward the captain's door to find John. He came out quickly, to meet her, and shut the door behind him. She looked up into his face; she asked softly:

"Is he——"

"Dead," said John briefly. "Now hold that water handy for me."

She had had some experience with wounds, during her years in the jungles. She was no weakling; and she was able now to do her

part. She watched John bathe the cut in the mate's back; and she found herself admiring the gentleness and the skill of the man. He bathed it with water, then with a solution compounded from a tablet which he had found in the captain's cabin. The mate groaned; and John said amiably:

"All right, sir. If it burns, it's doing the work. Don't mind it."

He twisted a strip of soft linen which she had brought into a wick, and left this in the wound, and then sewed the edges together with plain needle and clean linen thread. When it was done, he laid a pad of folded linen over the whole, and bandaged it in place while she tore the cloth she had brought into strips for him. Then he turned to the wound in the arm.

"This is nothing," he said. "Just a slice."

The girl bent to look. The tender skin of the inner side of the forearm was cut through to a depth of a quarter inch or more. She saw that from the end of this cut there ran diagonally back across the man's forearm a livid bruise, and pointed to it.

John nodded. "Abner must have hit him from behind, see," he said. "The heel of the ax did this cutting; the handle bruised him. If Ab had hit straighter, we'd have to sew his arm onto him."

The wounded man asked huskily: "Where is the devil?"

"He's all right, sir, all right," John told him. "Don't you bother, now."

"Where is he? I want to know."

"Tied up, hard and fast."

"Didn't you kill him?"

"Lord, no; he's crazy! That's all."

"What did he say?"

"Nothing. Screaming and all." John chuckled. "I took his ax and throwed it overside; and he said he'd cut my heart out."

Hains lay quiet under their ministrations. "Now I'll get you into your bunk, sir," said John at last. "Just lie still when I lift, so's not to stir the bandages."

Patience opened the door of Hains' cabin, and John laid the second mate on his face in the bunk. "Lie so. Your back'll be sore for a spell," he said.

Hains grunted his assent. The girl asked: "Can I do anything to make you more comfortable?"

The man looked at her sullenly and shook his head. John said: "Call if you want me, sir. I'll shut your door."

They went out and left the wounded man, closing the door behind them. The girl asked softly: "The captain?"

John said: "You go now and lie down a spell, miss. You're half sick with it all."

"I'll not. I want to see—did he kill the captain."

"Yes."

"How? What—"

John said gently: "You do what I'm saying, ma'am. You'll only distress yourself."

"No, no," she protested. "I want to. I can't just lie still. I have to."

John opened the door of her cabin. "Go in," he said. "Lie down. Sleep. And no more words." There was a compulsion in his voice which overwhelmed her; she hesitated, looked up at him, shook her head, then abruptly smiled and did as he bade.

"But you'll call me if I can help," she pleaded.

"Yes." He shut the door upon her. Alone in the cabin, his face set hard for a moment; he stood in a concentrated energy of thought. The sweat burst out upon his forehead.

He flung it away with the back of his hand, and opened the door of the captain's cabin and went in.

Cap'n Murch lay amid his tumbled coverings, hideously smeared. The ax had cut twice into his neck, beneath the ear, as he lay on his side with his face to the cabin wall. The neck was cut through the very spine. The man had died instantly.

John studied the wound; he stood erect and looked around the cabin. There was nothing to see, save that on the under side of a shelf above the captain's bunk there was a dent made by the head of the ax when it was raised between blows. This dent—John studied it, and its position—was about eighteen inches from the cabin wall at the head of the bunk; the captain's neck, where the blow had fallen, was no more than twelve inches from this wall. The ax was square-headed; and John could see by the indentation that it had struck squarely upward. The dent was not deeper on one side than on the other.

Abruptly, John turned away. "Poor old Ab," he whispered. "Well—"

He came out into the main cabin, looked around. His eye fell upon the door of the cabin where Professor Rowalton had isolated himself; he remembered the professor for the first time, and crossed, and knocked. "Professor," he called.

A revolver roared within the cabin; a heavy slug smashed through the thin panels, waist-high, and struck into the butt of the mizzenmast in mid-cabin. John was ten feet to one side in a single leap; and at the same time the girl's door flew open, and she stood there, hand to her throat, staring. John called to her:

"I knocked on your father's door. He shot through the door."

She cried out sorrowfully, ran across the cabin, spoke softly:

"Father!"

The professor answered huskily: "Yes, yes. What is it?"

"Open the door."

"No."

"It's I, father. Patience."

"Keep away, girl. They're after me. They shan't have me without a fight."

"No, no, father. There are two men killed and another hurt. Come out. I want to talk to you."

The professor laughed harshly. "I know. There'll be more men killed if my door is opened. Keep away."

Storming John said gently: "Let be. I only wanted to ask what he had heard or seen. Let be."

The girl protested through the door: "You're awfully silly, father."

"Be still, child. Get away from the door. They shan't come in so long as I am alive."

"It was a crazy man, father. The mad carpenter!"

They heard the professor laugh. "Crazy! Eh, a pretty game. But they don't fool me, my dear. I know."

John crossed the cabin silently. "Come on deck," he whispered to the girl. "We'd best talk of this."

She followed him to the stair, went before him to the deck. When they came out on the quarter, they saw the wind had come at last: the water was rippling with the approaching breeze.

CHAPTER V.

The coming of the winds after their days of stagnant calm meant that the brig must be put in sailing trim again. But the captain and first mate were dead; the second in his cabin helpless. When John came on deck at the girl's heels, he saw the men standing uncertainly in the waist, talking excitedly together, looking blackly aft. From the longboat came the screams and maledic-

tions of the mad carpenter; and the voices of the men were hushed as though they feared to disturb him. Now and then one of them went on tiptoe to look in at the bound man. The sun beat down upon him. He was cursing the name of Storming John.

John took command of the brig without ceremony or apology. He shouted to one man to take the wheel; he sent the others aloft to trim the sails; and the *Annie* got under way and the flapping canvas steadied under the wind's pressure. John gave the course to the man at the wheel; he called the men into the waist and told them what had happened.

They listened to him dourly. Their eyes watched him, shifted from him to the girl on the quarter. There was anger and some fear in their eyes when they looked at her; and she sensed the tension in the air, and remembered what John had told her about the superstition that a woman aft is ill luck for a ship. She hesitated, wondering what it were best to do; and in the end she drew back and effaced herself, leaving John to meet the situation.

He told them the captain and the mate were dead. "Mr. Hains is hurt, not bad," he said. "He'll be on deck in two-three days. Till then, I'll navigate. Then he'll take command again."

The man farthest from him, at the back of the little group, jeered at him. "You're a good cook, John; but you're a hell of a navigator."

Storming John said amiably: "Sure, Jim. But we're a full three hundred miles offshore, so I won't pile her up."

His good nature won them. One called: "You're all right, John. Go ahead." He nodded, and said:

"Sure. Now go below, the watch. I'll call you when I want you."

He whom Storming John had called Jim pointed to the longboat. "What about old Ab, there? You can't take him home that way."

"You stay by him, Jim," said John. "Give him a drink if he'll take it. I'll fix him, somehow, soon's I can. Now two of you—" He pointed to one man, and then another. "You come below with me. I want you to see things, so you can tell the story when we make land. I'll take you below, two by two."

The men stepped forward; and John took them down into the cabin, showed them

what there was to see there, showed them the dent in the shelf above the captain, measured to mark its location the better in their minds. When they had seen all there was to see, he sent them forward, summoned others. Inside the hour, the entire crew had been below; and the men were subdued and grim of lip from what they saw there. When the last man had been down, John sought the girl.

"I'm going to ask you to come and see," he said. "You'll be needed to testify."

She went through the ordeal, shudderingly. Afterward he asked: "Think the professor would come out and look things over?" She crossed and spoke to her father; but his husky, barking voice warned her to begone. She and John went on deck again, and John went into the galley and cooked dinner, and served it out to the men.

Late in the afternoon, John called two of the men and with their help carried on deck two long, canvas bundles, stoutly sewn. These bundles were laid on the deck amidships, while he tied weights to one end of them. Then John unshipped the cabin scuttle, and laid one bundle upon it, and rested the scuttle on the rail. He had found a Bible in the cabin; he read from it, and sang a hymn in his fine voice, and signaled and the men who held the scuttle poised, tipped it upward. The bundle slid into the sea. Ten minutes later, the other had followed it. Throughout the grim ceremony, the mouthings of the maniac filled the air. The men were nervous; they looked overmuch over their shoulders; and they avoided the long-boat.

Afterward, John himself went below with water and scrubbed away the traces of the tragedy. When he came up, he told the girl she might go below whenever she chose. She shook her head.

"I can't," she said.

He looked at her thoughtfully; then he said: "Mr. Hains may be needing something."

That heartened her; she assumed the duty, and went down and knocked timidly on the second mate's door. Rufus Hains bade her come in. She found him still lying as John had left him; but his strength was coming back. He looked badly, she saw. His eyes were dull, he was pallid, and his fingers twitched and twisted. There was a furtive look about the man that she could not understand at first; afterward she

guessed that it was shame. He was ashamed to have been overcome by the madman.

He asked her harshly: "What's happened?"

She told him not to worry. "You must just rest and get well," she said.

"I'm thirsty."

"I'll get you a drink," she promised, and brought water. He drank greedily, fell back into his place with a groan. After a little, he said:

"Killed Cap'n Murch, didn't he?"

She hesitated, then said: "Yes."

"And the mate?"

"Yes."

"Where are they?" There was an unnatural and morbid anxiety in the question. She said:

"Storming John buried them, this afternoon."

"Overside?"

"Yes."

He said that was good. She thought he was relieved. He asked, after a moment: "What happened to Abner?"

"Storming John captured him."

"Where is he?"

"In the longboat, till a place can be made ready."

"He's not safe, alive. He'd best be—" He hesitated, caught her eye and did not finish his sentence. She stood by the door, watching him, very sorry for him. After a little she asked quietly:

"What happened? What happened to you?"

His eyes flashed at her, then fell. He flushed, and said slowly: "Enough. He got me."

"How?" she asked.

He hesitated; at last he said: "I was in here, going to try to sleep. I'd just come down. Left Mr. Stoll on deck. Heard a shot, in the cabin, and came out on the jump and saw Mr. Stoll slumping down against the foot of the stair. Stood there—like a fool. Abner hit me with the ax, across my arm." He moved his wounded arm. "I tried to grab him, and we swung around, and he cracked me. That's all I know."

"Where was he when you came out?" she asked.

"I didn't know a damned thing—" He stopped abruptly, grinned at her. "Sorry," he apologized. "Mean to say, I didn't see him till he cracked me. Must have been behind me."

She nodded. Her face was white. He said ruefully:

"It's tough on you."

"I can stand it."

They were silent for a moment; then he remembered the shot he had heard after John put him in his bunk. "What was it?" he asked.

"My father," she said. "John knocked on his door, and father shot through the panel. He'd heard the fighting."

"Probably thought some one was after that precious box of his."

"Yes, he did."

He looked at her shrewdly. "D'you tell him what it was?"

"Yes. He—didn't trust us."

"Still in his cabin?"

"Yes."

He lay, eyes wide and thoughtful, for a moment more. Then: "Can I have another drink? I'm hot."

She brought more water; he gulped it. She touched his forehead with her palm. "You've a little fever," she said. "Naturally. Best lie still and rest. I'll leave you."

He turned on his side, face to the wall. She closed the door upon him.

John came down then with food. "Your father will want supper," he said to her.

"I'll ask him," she said, and went to the professor's cabin and called: "Father. Your supper is here."

The professor barked: "I don't want it."

"You'll have to eat, father."

"It's a trick."

"No, no, father."

"Set it down, outside my door. Then get back, out of the way, where I can see you all. If you make a move, I'll shoot. Tell the man that."

The girl hesitated wistfully. Then: "All right," she said. She looked toward John; he brought the tray and set it on the floor. They moved back; and she called: "All right, father!"

They heard the bolts slide cautiously, one by one. Then the door opened a crack, then was flung wide. The little professor appeared; he was crouching, alert, on edge. His revolver was in his hand; it covered John steadily.

"Stand still," he said.

"Please, father," the girl called. "You're so silly!"

"Be quiet," he snapped. He took two

crouching steps forward, had the tray, dragged it into the room, slammed the door. They heard the bolts slide home.

The girl looked wistfully at the closed door; she looked at John apologetically.

"I'm sorry," she said.

"That's all right. He's wise to be careful. Been better if others were more careful," he told her. And after a moment, he asked: "Did you see Mr. Hains?"

"Yes."

"How? What?"

"He's better, I think. Fever, of course."

"What happened? Does he know?"

She told John what Hains had said; he listened intently, and after she had done he looked about as though picturing to himself what had happened. He crossed to Hains' door, stood with his back toward it as though he had just come out, looked toward the stair, then considered his own position. The whole cabin was before him, save a corner immediately at his left. This corner was diagonally opposite the door of the captain's cabin. He said to the girl:

"Stand over in this corner."

She obeyed him.

"That's where Abner must have been," he said. "Or Mr. Hains would have seen him."

She nodded. "Yes."

"He came out of the captain's cabin," said John, half to himself. "Why did he come clear across into this corner? There's nothing here."

She said nothing; he looked down at his right arm; it was on the side away from the girl. "And how did Abner happen to hit Mr. Hains on this arm?" he asked himself. "How did he reach it? He must have reached clear around the mate."

They had spoken softly, so softly that Hains, in his cabin behind them, could not have heard above the creaking of the brig and the crash of the water hissing against her sides. John turned abruptly, opened Hains' door, looked down at the man.

"Well, sir," he said amiably. "Feel as well as you'd ought to?"

Hains turned over sharply, faced John. "Knock before you come into my cabin, man," he snapped.

John touched his forehead. "Sorry, sir."

Hains asked: "Where's Abner?"

"In the longboat."

"What has he said?"

"Said I was a——" He glanced at the

girl, smiled, began again. "He 'lowed I was a skunk, and that he'd skin me."

"Crazy?"

"I'd say so."

"What are you going t' do with him?"

"Put him in the steerage, sir. Make him fast, there. The only place there is."

Hains nodded. "That's best. Does he seem worse than usual?"

"He was at first," said Storming John. "Worst I ever saw."

"At first?"

"Yes, sir. He quieted a bit, after."

Hains was silent for a moment; then he asked sharply: "Have we got a fair wind?"

"Out o' the southwest, sir."

"Who got her moving?"

"I did."

"Can you handle the men?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can you handle the brig?"

"Yes, sir."

"How's she heading?"

John gave him the course, and added the sails she was carrying. Hains considered, said: "Go slow. Take it easy. Play it safe. I'll be on deck in a few days. There's no hurry. You buried the bodies?"

"Yes, sir."

"Been better to keep them."

"If we had brandy aboard, we could have kept them. Not without, sir."

"I suppose not." The second mate lay back again, thinking. Patience, in the doorway, watching, thought she could see strength flowing into the man. He was alert, energetic, full of life for all he lay so helpless. He asked John, after a moment:

"You say Abner is getting quieter?"

"Yes, sir."

"How'll you make him fast?"

John said slowly: "I figured to sew him in a canvas jacket, sir. Not too tight. Leave his head out. He can move, then; and his blood'll circulate, and he can eat. But he can't do any hurt."

"Rig a bunk for him in the steerage, and lock him in," the second mate directed.

"Yes, sir."

"And keep an eye on him."

"I'll be on deck all night," said John. "I'll take a look at him, every bit of a while."

Hains nodded. "You think there's any chance of his being able to talk sensible, after a spell?"

John considered. "Why, I sh'd say he'd

come around to telling us the why of it, and all."

"When? How soon?"

"Mebbe to-morrow," said Storming John. Hains was silent a moment more. Then: "I'll not want any supper," he said. "I'm going to sleep. Leave me alone to-night, unless I call."

"All right, sir," said Storming John. "Good night, sir."

"Good night," said Rufus Hains. "Good night, Miss Rowalton."

The girl said: "Can't I make you more comfortable, somehow?"

"No, thanks."

"Well—good night, then."

John closed the door behind them. They went on deck again. "Now," said John, "I'll go tailor a canvas coat for poor old Ab."

He left her on the quarter to her thoughts.

CHAPTER VI.

Storming John was a good cook, a first-rate chantey man, a competent steward, something of a navigator, and no bad hand with the needle. In an hour he had fashioned a huge sack of canvas, the seams stoutly secured. When it was done, he summoned two men to help him put into this improvised strait-jacket poor old Abner, the mad carpenter. They bound Abner's ankles anew with a single bit of cord; they bound his hands to his sides with another; and then they loosed the original bonds. The madman screamed at them throughout the process. Dark was falling; they worked by the light of a lantern, in the waist of the ship; and the girl could not keep away from the spot. She stood in the shadows and watched, full of pity for the carpenter, full of horror at the curses and threats he poured out on Storming John. John had thrown his ax overside; Abner swore to kill the cook for it. The sweat stood out on Storming John's forehead; and once he rested for a moment, and came back and spoke to the girl.

"You'll mark he loved his tools like a woman," he said. "I'm sorry the ax went."

"Don't let him get loose," she begged.

John nodded grimly. "He won't get loose, ma'am," he promised. She was a little afraid of the sternness of the man; she was glad when he left her and went back to the task of getting Abner into the sack.

They thrust in first the carpenter's feet, and Storming John reached in and slit the bonds about the man's ankles. Abner kicked wildly; the loose sack gave him some measure of freedom, but he could do no harm. When he was in it to the shoulders, John cut the line that bound his hands to his sides. Then the two seamen held him pinned to the deck, while John sewed up the top of the sack snug about Abner's neck, leaving only his head protruding. Abner, flat on his back, tirelessly spouted his abuse and threats into John's face as the cook bent over him. John held to the work till it was done, got stiffly to his feet then. The seamen released Abner; the man rolled and kicked in his loose prison.

"That'll hold him," said John, a grim fashion of regret in his tones. "Carry him down into th' steerage."

He went below ahead of them, with the lantern. The girl knelt by the hatch to peer down and watch what they did. Among the litter of stores and odd junk in the steerage compartment, there were two bunks. In one of these, they laid Abner; and John, with stout lines, secured the sack in such a way that while the carpenter could move freely where he lay, he could not get out of the bunk. When it was done, he sent the men away, and himself sat down by Abner's side, and tried to quiet the madman. He talked to him in a steady, soothing monotone for an hour on end; but through it all the carpenter never ceased his continual stream of abuse and denunciation. John gave it up at last; he lifted the lantern and came on deck. The girl was on the quarter, and he found her there, and wiped the sweat from his forehead, and said wistfully:

"Happen he'll quiet down with me out o' his sight."

"I hope so," she agreed.

John spoke to the man at the wheel; and thereafter, for a space, there was no further word. The carpenter's howls came to them, muffled by the intervening timbers. Storming John went forward at last and slid into place the hatch cover, so as to stifle still further the horrible sounds. When he came back to her, the girl saw that his face was twitching and weary with the strain. She said:

"He's getting on your nerves."

"Yes, ma'am. Some. It's wearying."

"Is there no way to stop him?"

"I'm hoping he'll wear himself out, miss. The man has got to sleep in the end."

Half an hour later, three of the men came aft, grumblingly. "I say, now," one of them protested to John. "That damned howling—A man can't sleep. A crazy man's bad luck, aboard ship, John."

Storming John grinned at them cheerfully. "Shucks, now; you'll not be afraid of a man in a sack."

"Hell, no. Who's afraid? All the same, it's bad luck."

"He'll quiet down, come morning," John assured them.

"That's all right to say."

John took a step toward them, and his tone changed. His easy drawl vanished; he said crisply: "Get forward and go below. I want no more words from you."

Patience looked at him sharply. This was a new phase of the man; she watched to see what the men would do. They yielded; they gave ground stubbornly; and at last, muttering together, they turned and went forward again along the dark deck. She could see them till they passed the waist.

A little later, John said: "I'm going down and see if Mr. Hains is needing anything."

He seemed to expect her to come with him; she shook her head. "I'll stay on deck," she said. "I can't bear to go down there."

He nodded, and went below with no further word. Ten minutes later he was back on deck. "He's sleeping," he said. "Moaning a bit in his sleep. I looked in on him."

She asked: "Did you hear my father?"

"He's awake—watching," he said. "He heard me, called out to know who was there. I kept still, and sneaked out." He grinned cheerfully. "I'm not wishful to cross that little man, miss."

She understood that he was trying to comfort her. "He's lived so long alone, among the natives," she said, "that he mistrusts everybody. Even me. He was not so before my mother died."

John looked toward her quickly; he seemed about to speak, but checked himself. She said: "Mother died while we were in the interior, two years ago, you know. She's buried in the hills, there."

"I've always thought," said John gently, "that when it comes my turn, I'd like to be put up in the face of a big rock, somewhere, where I could look out across the water.

Across the sea, ma'am." He paused, chuckling at his own fancy. "But like as not, I'll be sunk a thousand fathoms deep. I'm a blue-water man, ma'am."

She asked curiously: "You love the sea?"

"Lord, yes," he said. There was no profanity in the word; it was spoken as reverently as a prayer, and as simply. She said: "I don't see how you can. I hate it."

"You've got to know the sea, first, before you love it, miss," he told her. "Now I'm guessing you've not seen its sunny side."

"No," she told him. "When we came out, it stormed and stormed. I was a girl, a child; and I had to stay in my cabin, day on day, with the water lashing against the ports. I hated it. Now—this—" She waved a hand hopelessly. "Do you wonder I hate it all?"

He asked quietly: "You mean because of the things done aboard here, this day?"

"Yes."

He shook his head. "They're but life, ma'am. That's why I love the sea. Because it strips men. It's the trouble, and the strife, and the hardships of it. It finds the weak spot in a man; and it finds the strong. It bares them. It makes their ugliness uglier, and their goodnesses better. If I wanted to know what I thought of a man, I'd make out to go to sea with him." He chuckled. "Let me tell you something, ma'am. Don't you ever marry a man without you've seen him at sea, in a time of trouble. That's the sure way to seek out what manner of a man he is."

She wondered, abruptly, and for no reason in the world, how old Storming John was. She asked him; and he laughed softly.

"You're thinking I talk like an oldster, miss," he accused.

"Well, you do, you know. But you don't look old."

"I'm twenty-four, ma'am," he said. "And fourteen years at sea."

"Fourteen years?"

"Yes." His voice smoothed; he spoke quietly and gently, as his thoughts went back through the years. "I was a sickly boy, ma'am," he said. "My father died, before I was old enough for school. He was a sail fitter, in Essex. My mother kept me in school till I was ten; then she asked her best friend to take me to sea. She said it was because I was sickly, miss. This friend of hers was the wife of an old captain; a good man, in the China trade. I remember my

mother saying good-by, the day we sailed. She was crying; but I didn't cry, miss. I was that excited and all, and wild with the smell of the salt in my nose. Afterwards, when I was old enough, I knew why she'd sent me away. She had a cancer, miss, and she didn't want me to watch it kill her. So she sent me away, and when I came home again, she was dead. So I stuck to the sea."

He stopped abruptly, as though the story were ended; and she fought to hold her voice steady, and asked:

"What did you do?"

"Cabin boy, ma'am. Studied navigating, some. Steward. Cook. I could have been an officer, twice, miss. But—— I'm a hand to like men; and the cook is the men's friend. If I was ast, I'd have to hold myself above them—boss them. I'd rather be a cook than a skipper, ma'am."

She said nothing; she was thinking he would make a good ship's officer. She looked out across the starlit waters, where every distant star laid its ribbon of light upon the turmoil of the sea. The cries of Abner came to them, above the singing of the rigging and the creaking of the masts, and the vibrant staccato of the ship's response to the pressure of the wind. When she looked toward John again, he was gone; and by the louder sound of Abner's howls, she knew he had moved the hatch and gone below to look to the madman. He rejoined her presently; and to her question, said:

"Yes'm, he's all right. Quieting a bit, I think, ma'am."

The wind was fair; they were running under light sails; the sky was star clear on every hand. Storming John paced across the stern, studying the heavens. The girl was leaning against the after rail, watching the white water boil from beneath the stern. After a time, John stopped beside her, and she felt his big strength near her and found it comforting. She did not turn her head, but at last he said:

"Time you were turning in, miss. You'll be tired, to-morrow."

She looked up at him, then, smiling. "I'm not sleepy. I shan't sleep to-night, I'm afraid."

He laughed. "Oh yes you will, give yourself a chance."

"Are you going to?" she asked.

He shook his head. "I'll take cat naps

from now till Mr. Hains can come and spell me," he said.

"But that will be days."

"I'll get my sleep. In the daytime. I'll stand the deck to-night."

She said softly: "I'll stay with you."

"Best go below and sleep."

"I can't bear to think of it. I can't go below. Not down into that cabin. Not to-night."

He said: "Pshaw, now. There's nothing there to hurt."

"There's quiet, and a chance to think. I don't want to think, yet."

"You'd be asleep in five minutes, ma'am. I can see your eyes, even in the starlight. They're drooping shut."

She opened them wide, laughing at him. "No, no. I'll stay on deck. Truly."

He urged her no further; but a little later he went below, and came on deck again carrying her bedding. "I'll make you a place to sit, warm, here in the lee," he said; and she watched him deftly arrange coverlets and blankets against the lee of the after house. "Now, come," he said. "Sit down here, and let me wrap you. There's a chill in the wind."

"I would like that," she admitted, and sat down among the coverings he had prepared. He drew them about her gently, tucking them beneath her feet and body with hands as gentle as a woman's, till she was snug as a caterpillar in a cocoon.

"Now," he said, standing above her. "Rest there; and if you've a mind to sleep, just close your eyes."

"I'm comfortable," she admitted. "Ever so comfortable. But there's no sleep in me, Storming John."

He laughed. "Where heard you that name?"

"The captain told me what the men call you. I like it, even if you're not a stormy man."

He sat down on the house, beside and above her. "It's only on this cruise I've picked that up," he said. "From the chantey, you'll mind."

She looked up at him. "Did you ever do anything serious, with your singing. I think your voice is—unusual."

He laughed; and abruptly, he began to sing to her, softly; he sang so softly that the man at the wheel could scarce have heard, yet even these gentle tones were true and full and sweet. The song was slow and quiet;

she could not, for the life of her, distinguish the words. She tried to, at first with some semblance of energy, then more and more drowsily as sleep crept upon her. The song seemed endless, and endlessly sweet and soothing. She sank, abruptly, into an abyss of sleep, and never knew when John knelt beside her and lowered her from a sitting posture until she lay easily upon the thick-heaped coverlets. He covered her over, and stood looking down at her; and he looked up and swept the heavens with his eyes, drinking in the glory of the stars.

From amidships came the muffled cries of Abner, less loudly now. John went forward to the hatch and listened, and smiled contentedly. The man was quieting. He would sleep.

He sat down by the hatch and gave himself to thought; he conned over the tragedy of the day, groping through the swift race of events, striving to fit the pieces together. And as he thought, a curious change came across his countenance. It stiffened, hardened. Lines formed about his mouth, and set there. His eyes narrowed; and a gust of rage flickered in them, and flamed into a furious and terrible fire.

The girl woke without knowing that she had been asleep. Her eyes opened, and she looked straight up and saw a single pale star winking at her. She put her hand to her head, and felt her hair damp with the night air; then, as her slow senses returned, she saw that the sky was gray, instead of blue-black as it had been when she fell asleep, and she understood that she had slept all night, that morning was at hand.

She was exquisitely comfortable. In the background of her consciousness lay the recollection of the tragedy of the day before. She left it there, she would not summon it into her thoughts again. She lay quietly, eyes closed, in that blissful state between sleep and waking, until the increasing illumination in the east painted the sky with crimson, so that it burned through her upturned eyelids. She opened her eyes again, then, and looked about, and saw, ten feet away, the broad back of Storming John where he leaned against the rail. She sat up then, wide awake, smiling "Good morning," she called.

He turned quickly, and looked at her; and for a moment his face was curiously set as he stared at her. She was one of those

favored women who are most beautiful at waking; the sleep traces made her eyes crisp and warmly brown; her cheeks were fiery red with the rush of waking blood; her parted lips were crimson, and the soft disorder of her hair was altogether lovely. John stared at her until she was alarmed, and called uneasily:

"What is it, Storming John?"

He pulled himself together, chuckled. "You did sleep, ma'am," he told her teasingly. "For all your saying you never would."

She nodded. "I was so comfortable." She got up stiffly; her muscles ached from her hard bed. He gathered up the blankets and the coverlets and folded them neatly and laid them on the house. "Leave them," she said. "I can tend them. Don't you want to sleep a while?"

"I've breakfast to get for hungry men," he told her.

"There's a way I can help," she said instantly. "I can cook."

He chuckled. "Not as they're used to, ma'am," he told her.

She took his arm. "Then you shall teach me. I'm going to help."

He said gently: "If you want to, miss. Come along."

They started forward; and she noticed that Abner was making no sound, and remarked on it. John said: "He quieted an hour before dawn, ma'am. Suddenlike. Happen he's asleep, now."

"I hope so," she agreed. The sun was just rising; its crimson disk was cut in half by the blue line of the sea, yet even this first touch of its rays was blistering hot upon them. The red glory of it bathed the brig in bloody light, bathed the girl and the man in crimson. He looked down at her, and his eyes leaped at her beauty. She did not see his glance.

They worked together in the galley, laughingly. The men came on deck, and looked in at them, and grinned good-naturedly. After they had been served, John and the girl took food ast to the cabin for the professor and Mr. Hains. Professor Rowlton received it as he had the night before, at the gun's point. Hains was asleep; they looked in and saw him lying quietly, breathing gently, and did not wake him. John whispered:

"I'll take something to Abner, if he's awake."

"I'll go with you," she said. "I can help."

There was a door from the cabin into the steerage; a door that was seldom used, and that was bolted on the cabin side. John opened this, quietly, so that he might not wake Abner if the carpenter still slept. He went in without sound, and she kept at his heels.

It was dark in the steerage, for the hatch was still on. Yet they could distinguish objects dimly; and John turned toward the bunk where Abner was tied. She watched him bend to look at the carpenter, who lay so quietly; and something warned her, even before John swept around to thrust her toward the cabin again, that here was tragedy again.

"He's dead?" she whispered.

"Yes," he said huskily.

She sobbed in spite of herself; for Abner had been a pitiable figure. Sobbed, and whispered: "Died—alone here, in the darkness. The poor, poor man."

Said Storming John: "He were not alone when he died!"

His tone was grim; she looked up and asked: "What do you mean?"

"His throat's slit like a pig's," he said.

CHAPTER VII.

The discovery that mad Abner had been slain came at the moment when Patience had shaken off the first oppression of the greater tragedy of the day before; and it shocked her to her knees. She went limp, stumbled, half fell to the floor; and Storming John caught her gently, and held her with an arm about her shoulders and a hand under her elbow. She sagged against him, her forehead against his rough shirt. He said contritely:

"I hadn't ought to have told."

"Yes, yes," she whispered. "It's all right. I'm a little fool."

He half led, half carried her to the cabin stair, and helped her up. In the open, she sat down limply on the break of the quarter; and John said to her:

"Just stay there. I'll get you something."

When he came up from the cabin again, she was stronger. But he pressed to her lips a goblet half full of fiery stuff, and she sipped a little and felt it run like a flame through her veins. It warmed her to her toes, and gave her a dizzy strength. She was able to

smile at him. He tried to make her drink again, but she pushed the glass away.

"It's all right," she said. "I'm all right now."

He watched her solicitously; she rubbed her cheeks with her hands, straightened, stood up. Her face was white, but her lips were steady; she looked at John.

"Tell me again," she said. "Abner was killed?"

He nodded grimly. "Yes."

She looked about her furtively. "That means—the man is aboard—"

"Yes."

She looked at Storming John. "Who did it?"

He flung his hand to one side hopelessly. "God knows." She said nothing; he added: "But I mean to find out."

She said after a moment: "I—wasn't afraid, so much, as long as we thought Abner—killed the others. I wasn't afraid of him. I was just sorry for him. But a man that would kill Abner—I'm afraid of that man, Storming John."

He looked away from her. "Stay here," he said. "I'm going down to make sure."

"I won't stay anywhere, alone. I'm coming with you."

He hesitated, then: "All right. Come."

They went toward the hatch, and he loosed its fastenings. "You'll mark, this is tight shut," he said. "I made it fast last night, so that the man could not get loose in any case. The door to the cabin was bolted against him, you'll mind."

"Yes."

He slid the hatch to one side, and the light poured down into the steerage. They descended, and the girl stood deathly still while John crossed to the bunk and bent to examine the dead man's wound. He came back to her presently, and said: "He was stabbed, just once, through the jugular."

"Stabbed? You said his throat was cut."

"It looked so. It's the same thing. I couldn't see plain, the first look I took."

"Where's the knife?" she asked, not looking toward the bunk. "Is it there?"

"No. It was wiped on the sack Abner was in. There's the smears, plain."

"What kind of a knife?"

"A clasp knife would have done it. Any knife."

She shuddered, climbed quickly to the deck, and he followed her. "Who did it?" she demanded.

He said: "No one of the men."

"How do you know?"

"I was by the hatch, through the night, till day."

"Couldn't they get in from the fo'c'sle?"

"No."

"Some one might have gone down through the cabin."

"No. Wa'n't no one aft except the steersmen. I watched them. They didn't go into the cabin."

"You're sure?"

"Sure."

"They might have gone down while we were in the galley."

"The blood is near dry, in spots. It's been there a time, two hours or more."

She frowned. "Then who was it? Not the men. Who else is there?" He did not answer; she said, thinking aloud: "Mr. Hains is hurt; he could not walk so far." She looked at him; and he nodded his agreement. Her eyes widened with sudden alarm. "My father——" she whispered.

Then, at what she saw in his eyes, her own flamed with anger. "You think he did it?" she demanded.

"No, no'm," he protested.

"You do," she cried. "You do believe that. But why should he? Why?"

He said, hesitatingly: "The professor must've thought Abner was after that box of his. He's——"

That was her own dreadful thought; and abruptly she hated Storming John for putting it in words. She leveled a finger at him, said harshly: "You—you could have done it, as well as he."

His face set; he did not answer her. She cried:

"He threatened you; he cursed you; he would have killed you if he could. You were afraid he would. You were so anxious to get me asleep. Out of the way. You could have slipped down, any time in the night. Couldn't you? Answer."

"Yes," he said slowly. "Yes, I could have done that, ma'am."

She stared at him, half believing in his guilt. "Did you?"

"No."

His denial—— But if he had not done it, and Hains could not have done it, then only her father remained. She knew her father; desperately absorbed in the fruits of his years in the jungle; given to mad fits of rage. He might have——

She flung the possibility aside. Not he. This man, this Storming John—— What did she know of him that she should trust him? He had done it; she told herself she must believe. This was the man. She looked him up and down. There was a knife in its sheath at his belt; she snatched it out, stared at the blade. John watched her with lips set. She dropped the knife, opening her hand and letting it fall as though it burned her. It struck on its point, quivering in the deck between them. John said gently:

"Is there blood on it, ma'am?"

She hated him for his gentleness; she wanted to believe him guilty. She swung on her heel, walked away from him, aft. On the quarter, she sank down in a huddled heap, weeping.

She heard John pass her and speak to the man at the wheel. She slipped down into the cabin, into her own room, and bolted the door. This was a fearful place, below decks; it was peopled with the shadows of men snatched from life. But it was better than the deck, where was Storming John. On her bunk she wept and shivered and sobbed.

She lay there for an hour, neither knowing nor caring what might pass on deck. Once she heard men moving in the steerage, heard their voices. Again, a little later, she heard through her open port in the stern, the sound of Storming John, singing. A hymn tune. She knew what that meant, even before her ears caught the sullen splash of something heavy, sliding overside. He was burying the carpenter quickly, she thought. Hiding his crime.

She slipped out of her cabin, across to her father's door, and called to him. He answered; she bade him let her in. He refused; she pleaded; and in the end, his bolts were slid, and he opened to her. She went in, and he bolted the door behind her. He held a revolver in his hand. Her eyes swept around the tiny cabin. The brass-bound box lay in the bunk, against the wall. The professor's red eyes spoke of a sleepless night. She said gently:

"You must sleep, father. Lie down. I'll keep watch."

He asked harshly: "What has happened on this ship of hell?"

"The captain is killed, and the mate, and the carpenter; and the second mate is hurt——badly."

"They'll not get my——"

She said sharply: "They're not concerned

with you, father. Please forget yourself. This is bigger than you, bigger than your box——”

“Stop!” he cried. “That is sacrilege, Patience. That box of mine—that it holds—is the biggest thing in the world. You know that.”

“Not bigger than men’s lives, father.”

“More than the lives of a thousand men.”

“You are selfish, father. Horribly. Oh, father!”

He stood, imperiously; he swept back the bolts upon the door. “Begone,” he said. “Begone.”

She said pitifully: “I’m sorry. Please be human.”

“Out of my sight. You’re leagued with them. My own child!”

He swung the door; the girl went out.

“He’s going mad,” she whispered. “He’s going mad.”

She heard a curious, hollow cry from the cabin of the second mate, and went to the door and leaned against it, listening. The cry was repeated, and a curse, and then a babbling string of words. She caught the name of the carpenter. She opened the door and stood, looking in. In his bunk, Rufus Hains twisted; his eyes met hers unseeingly. His face was pallid, and at the same time it was flecked with crimson spots of color. She had seen sickness; and when she crossed and touched his head, she was not surprised that it burned like fire against her hand. The man was consumed with fever. She eased him down, soothed him, stroking his head. Words poured from him; she caught fragments of sentences. He was cursing the carpenter; fear and anger in his words. He stiffened in struggle with an unseen enemy, and when she touched him, he glared at her, and shrank away, and cried out:

“The ax! The ax! Look out for his ax!”

She whispered: “It’s all right. Quiet, Mr. Hains. It’s all right. Quiet, now.”

Storming John said from the doorway: “What is it, ma’am? I heard him cry out.”

“He’s delirious,” she said. “Get water, to cool him. A high fever.”

“I’ll watch him,” he said. “You leave him to me.”

“No. I’ve tended sick folk. Do as I say.”

He hesitated, then obeyed her. He returned presently, with one of the seamen. They changed the bandages on the wounds

of the man. When he had examined the cut in Mr. Hains’ back, John frowned.

“It’s bad,” he said.

She held a basin while he bathed the cut. Then, after a moment’s hesitation, he drew his knife. She cried out with an alarm she could not repress. He looked at her, said quietly: “I’ve got to clean this out, miss. Best not look.”

She studied him desperately, trusted him because she must. She saw that the knife was razor keen. She nerved herself and watched while Storming John clipped away torn bits of flesh about the ragged wound, watched him scour it pitilessly with the water, while Hains stormed with pain or sank into the apathy of delirium. When the deep gash was bandaged again, she could scarce breathe; she was sick with the pounding of her own heart.

“I’ll take care of him,” she said. “I’ll stay with him.”

“There’s no need,” said Storming John. “I’ll leave a man.”

“No. I’m strong.”

He looked down at her; she met his eyes, searched them with her own. He smiled, and said: “You’re a—fine woman, miss. I’ll be glad to have you stay.”

She nodded. He bade the sailor take orders from her. “I’ll leave him, case Mr. Hains is too strong for you, miss,” he told her. And, to the man: “Call me if I’m needed. I’ll be sleeping, in the captain’s cabin.”

The man said: “Yes, sir.” John turned toward the door, stopped there to look back at her, then went away.

She told herself, desperately, that he had killed the carpenter, that he was a murderer, that she hated and feared him.

Nevertheless, in her heart, and in spite of all, there dwelt a great trust in Storming John.

CHAPTER VIII.

The girl was at the side of Rufus Hains’ bunk almost constantly for a week thereafter, while the second mate tossed and mumbled and groaned in a feverish delirium. Storming John kept a sailor within her call, sometimes beside her, sometimes in the cabin. He himself came near her seldom; he seemed to be conscious of the hostility she felt toward him. He did not obtrude himself on her; and she, on her part, from a half-shamed reluctance, took care not to come

face to face with him. When she took the deck for rest and air, John fell into the way of going forward to his galley. If they met, by chance, he nodded, and smiled, and spoke casually, and passed her by. She hated him because he did not defend himself against her hatred. She hated his mild gentleness.

During this period, Professor Rowalton kept steadfastly to his room. Save the girl, he admitted no one; and he let her come in only once or twice, at her insistence. Storming John patiently set the man's meals on the cabin floor, outside his door; and day by day the professor guardedly opened his door and snatched the viands in. They might have forced him to come out, by refusing to give him food. But Storming John hoped to quiet the little man's fierce and jealous suspicions by thus humoring him. The effect was the opposite of what he hoped; the professor interpreted John's kindness as guile, and told Patience one day that he expected the cook to drug his food before the end.

"They'll not be content till then," he cried. "They're hounds—thieves—"

She told him gently: "You're wrong, father. No one is planning against you. The ship is too full of trouble, without concerning itself with your affairs."

"I tell you," he insisted, "it was my affairs, at which you laugh, that started the trouble."

She shook her head. "No, no. The poor, mad carpenter, whom the captain had abused, came down and killed Cap'n Murch in his bunk, and shot the mate, and tried to kill Mr. Hains. That's all."

He looked at her slyly, head on one side. "And did the carpenter kill himself?" he demanded.

"No. No, he was killed. Some one killed him."

"My dear," he said, in a tone that approached the jocular, "you have an untrained eye and an untrained mind. I have been remiss; I have been so absorbed in my own tasks that I have given you too little heed. You are blind. Open your eyes, Patience. Open your eyes, see, and consider what you see."

She looked at him, puzzled. But because she knew that her father, for all his obsession with his work, was no man's fool, she asked respectfully: "What do you mean?"

He leaned toward her. "Where did mad Abner get his pistol, my dear? That's one

little question to bewilder you. Only the officers of a craft like this are armed."

She had never thought of that, she said. He bade her consider the matter, and thrust her out of his cabin and took up his solitary vigil. She puzzled herself, all that day, over the question he had set for her to answer. She wished she might ask Storming John. But John did not come near her, gave her no opportunity.

For a full week, Rufus Hains was almost constantly delirious. In the intervals, he slept. When he was awake, he babbled constantly. For much of the time, this steady talk was of gentle things, matters that had happened in his boyhood. Patience, listening, thought he must have been a splendid boy. He talked often of his mother, always happily. But there were intervals when he screamed and swore; and in these intervals the mad carpenter's name continually figured. He cursed Abner, he commanded him, he fought with an invisible opponent so that the sailor who stood watch with Patience had to use all his strength to hold the man. And after these paroxysms, he would relapse into a murmuring stupor, and lie for hours, lips moving in half-caught whispers.

Twice or three times, in his delirium, he spoke her name. And when he did so, there was a strange and unnatural ardor in his high-pitched tones. The first time, the sailor was in the cabin; and the girl blushed hotly that this man should hear. After that, as matters chanced, she was alone with Hains when he spoke of her. That he should thus cry out to her in his delirium was a strange and intimate experience; it was as though she saw herself, dwelling in the man's naked soul. A woman finds a man who loves her doubly interesting, no matter what her feelings may be toward him. Patience watched over Rufus Hains with new eyes; she brooded over him like a mother.

On the eighth day of his sickness, she was sitting beside him, and he seemed to be asleep. Her own eyes had closed with weariness. The sailor was in the main cabin; the intervening door was closed. A hand on her hand roused her; and she looked down and saw that the second mate had waked and was sane again. His eyes were weary; they met hers. He said huskily:

"Hello!"

She bade him be still and rest. "Sh-h-h!" she whispered. "Sleep. Go back to sleep, and rest."

He smiled mirthlessly and said: "I've been asleep."

She put her hand on his head and said compellingly: "Go to sleep again."

He yielded. It was pleasant to submit to her. It was in the late afternoon that he thus awoke; and he slept like a child that night through. She also slept that night; her first full night of sleep since tragedy had broken on the ship. When she went to his cabin in the morning, he was awake, and called to her cheerfully.

She asked how he felt; he said he was very weak. She told him that was because he was hungry.

"You haven't been able to eat much," she said. "You wouldn't. We tried. I'll get you some breakfast."

He smiled, and said: "Lord bless you." She bade him lie still, and went up on deck and told Storming John that the second mate was sane again, and hungry. John nodded and promised to get him food; and a little later, they went below together, John carrying a bowl of broth, skillfully compounded from what poor ingredients the ship's stores could furnish. He supported the mate, half erect, and Patience fed the man with a spoon.

When he had eaten, Rufus Hains lay still for a while, and strength flowed into him. Then he asked Storming John:

"Have you been running the ship?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where are we?"

"I've been aiming to steer northwest, by the sun, sir," said John. "Say nor'-nor'-west, sir."

"Any trouble?"

"Fair wind all the time, sir. Not so much as a squall."

"Where are we now?"

John said amiably: "Lord knows, sir. Somewhere in mid-Atlantic."

Patience looked up at Storming John with parted lips, a protest crying for utterance. He had told her he knew something of navigation; she had seen him, day by day, take the sun at noon. She had seen him calculating expertly. Yet now he said he did not know their position. A lie. Storming John was lying. She wished to cry out and accuse the man.

But something, some force she could not analyze or define, closed her lips. She was silent, and by that silence became a partisan, an accessory to Storming John's lie. She told herself it did not matter; that the

second mate could read the sun for himself, when he came on deck. But why had John lied?

Next day the mate was stronger; the day after, he was able to get to the deck, on John's arm, and sit there through the day. The girl sat with him. He said, casually:

"How long was I sick?"

"Eight days," she told him.

"Who took care of me? I have faint memories of you, through it all."

"I helped," she said. "I was with you, part of the time."

He looked at her sidewise, a curious light in his eyes. "I must have done some talking."

"Yes."

He said: "I've lived rough. Chances are my talk wasn't fit for you to hear."

She looked down at him, and smiled and said: "You talked a great deal about your mother."

He exclaimed: "Mother? My God!" There was such horror in his tones that the girl was shocked, and cried:

"What is it? Why do you speak so?"

He was white and shaken; he told her lamely: "Mother was killed, years ago, in a horrible way. I can't think of it without being sick and miserable."

She uttered a soft exclamation of sorrow and pity. "You imagined you were a boy again, most of the time," she said. "You even talked like a boy."

He asked casually: "Did I have much to say about—what's happened aboard here?"

She said: "No. I don't think so. You spoke of it, of course. That is, you spoke of Abner. And you had some terrible fights with him, when we had to hold you."

He was studying her so sharply that she felt uncomfortable. "Was that all?" he asked.

She shrank a little away from him, half afraid.

"Why—yes," she said. "You—cursed him, of course."

"I'm sorry you had to hear," he said, with abrupt contrition. That which had frightened her was gone from her eyes.

"I didn't mind," she told him. "It was all right."

He flung up his hand. "I don't want to talk about all that—yet," he said. "I'm still pretty weak—shaken."

"Of course," she agreed, and fell silent, so that they sat for minutes on end without

speaking, looking out across the water. The sun burned hot upon them, even through the shade of the sails above their heads. The breeze that drove the brig fanned their cheeks and sang in the standing rigging. All about them were the creakings and the snapplings and the hummings of a ship under sail. Beneath them the deck heaved and sank with the regularity of a cradle, as the brig climbed the long swells. The rudder chains clanked as the steersman eased her.

Hains looked toward the girl. Her eyes were away on the horizon, and she seemed unconscious of his scrutiny. Her head was bare, her hair flying softly. The dress she wore was open at the throat, and the breeze played on cheek and throat with a pressure like the touch of gentle fingers. Her lips were faintly parted; and as he watched he saw her sensitive nostrils swell with a deep-drawn breath, and her bosom rose with it. She looked toward him then, smiled, said softly:

"It's good to just breathe this air. I've been so long where it's always hot, and usually muggy."

"In the jungle?" he asked.

"Yes. It was really in the hills."

He said: "You've never told me what your father was doing there."

She hesitated. "There's no real reason for not telling," she confessed. "Except that I—promised my father."

He touched her hand reassuringly. "I didn't mean to pry. What was your home like?"

"Why, we lived in a native village."

"Any other whites?"

"No, not for the past four years. There was a doctor who used to come, but he caught some fever from a native he was tending, and died. He was a good man."

He said: "You must have been a child when you left home."

"Yes. Yes, a child."

Their chairs were side by side; he leaned a little toward her. "You are a woman, now," he said softly. "The most splendid woman I ever saw."

She sat still as a statue, her eyes afar, as though she had not heard him. Only he saw her bosom move more quickly with her sharper breathing. He sought words, scarce dared speak for fear he might break the spell. She was so beautiful as she sat there, so ardently to be desired. His heart leaped

at the bare sight of her; it pounded in his throat. But—what to say, what to do, what means to choose if he sought to move her. He whispered: "Don't you know it?"

Still she did not move, nor speak. He laid his hand on hers, where it lay on the arm of her chair, and drew it toward him, and pressed it against his breast.

"Look at me," he bade her.

She did not turn her head; he said again: "Look at me, girl."

She was trembling; and she was furious with herself for being so shaken. Did she love this man? God knows. No man had ever spoken to her of love before; but she was a woman, and her heart needed no teaching. She knew she feared him; she knew he attracted her; she knew he filled her thoughts. Her head turned slowly, her eyes closed. She fought to open them, to meet his. She felt him snatch her hand to his mouth and kiss it roughly, hungrily. He whispered something, huskily.

Then Storming John, behind them, said: "Here's dinner, sir."

Hains dropped her hand and scowled at Storming John.

She was not sure whether she hated John Brant, or thanked him for that interruption.

CHAPTER IX.

The next day, Hains came on deck alone. Storming John was there; the girl was by the after rail. Hains called to John: "Come here." John came toward him. Hains said: "I'm ready to take charge."

Storming John, thus abruptly deposed, touched his forehead with one finger in token of assent. "All right, sir."

"Have you kept up the log?" Hains asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Where is it?"

"I'll fetch it."

He went down into the cabin, and Hains stepped toward the girl and said quietly. "Good morning."

She turned and faced him, smiling a little uneasily. "Good morning—Captain Hains."

He laughed. "That has a strange sound."

"I want to wish you luck," she said. "If there is any way I can help—"

Storming John said, from the top of the cabin stair: "Here's the log, sir."

Hains took it from him. "I haven't asked any questions," he said. "I assume you've

got everything written up here—everything that has happened."

Hains tucked the book under his arm. "I'll go below, and look this over," he said. And he turned to the steersman. "Hold her where she is," he told the man. And to John: "If there's any need, call me."

John assented. Hains went down into the cabin. The girl, ait, watched Storming John. He went forward to the galley, and she heard the clatter of his pots and pans. Then she saw him sit down in the starboard door of the galley and begin to peel potatoes. He had resumed his apron; the badge of his office. He had not worn it since the tragedies. She watched him, eyes thoughtful and shadowed. What manner of man was Storming John? Steadfast and gentle, and strong as he appeared to be? Or—the sort of man who stabs the helpless? She moved uneasily, swung her back toward him, thought of Rufus Hains. She could not put Hains out of her mind. Was this, she wondered, because she could not put him out of her heart? Did she love him; was this love? Was fear a part of love? She knew she feared the man.

Hains came on deck presently, his face grim. He called Storming John, turned to the girl. "Now see here," he said. "It's time this thing was straightened out. There's a murderer loose aboard this ship. What have you done to find him, John?"

Storming John looked at the girl. "I've opened my eyes," he said. "I've looked; and I've considered."

"Hello!" said Hains, vigorously. "That's no good. Call aft the men. Or, wait! Miss Rowalton, what do you know of this whole thing? What did you see, or hear?"

The girl said quietly: "You mean the carpenter? His murder?"

"The others, first."

The girl told him her story straightforwardly. How she had been awakened by a rap, apparently on the planking above her head; how she had heard the chock of the ax into the captain's neck.

"That rap," said Storming John, "was, like as not, the ax hitting the shelf. The sound ran along the wall. Seemed close to you."

Hains snapped: "Let her tell it. What then, Miss Rowalton?"

"I got up—listening. I heard some one moving, out in the cabin. I heard a door open, and close. Across the cabin."

"That was me, going into my cabin," said Hains casually. "What did you do?"

"When I turned," said the girl, "I saw the door between my cabin and the captain's bulge, as though some one were pressing against it. I was frightened, and I stood still, watching. And then, after a little, some sounds outside, and then the shot in the cabin. The one that killed Mr. Stoll. Then I opened my door. Just after that. And saw you and the carpenter, fighting."

Hains nodded. "He jumped me as I stood in my doorway," he said. "Knocked me out before I could get into action."

"He went on deck, then," said the girl. "He seemed to be blind, walking right over you and Mr. Stoll. And I went up after him, and saw Storming John capture him, as he passed the galley."

Hains looked at John. "Did he still have the gun?"

"Yes, sir. Pulled it off without hitting anything. I got it away from him, and the ax."

"When Storming John threw the ax to one side," said the girl, "it fell over the rail. And poor Abner was furious, at that. He swore he'd kill Storming John."

Hains asked sharply: "Swore he'd kill?"

"Yes, sir," said John.

"What did you do?" the second mate—now captain—asked.

"Sewed him in a canvas sack and fastened him in the starboard bunk, in the steerage, sir."

Hains looked from one of them to the other. "What happened that night? Did you sleep?"

"I slept on deck," said the girl. "John fixed a place for me. He watched by the hatch. The carpenter kept up his howling till almost day. Then he quieted, suddenly. And when we went in to see if he was asleep, after breakfast, he was dead."

The mate asked: "Where were you, John?"

"On deck, the night."

"Did you see any one go down into the steerage?"

"No, sir. I was near the hatch, in sight of it, all the time."

"Did any one go down into the cabin?"

"No one came aft at all, sir."

"They cou'lnd't get in from the fo'c's'le, man."

"No, sir."

Hains stared into John's eyes, his head

lowered and thrust forward in a gesture of brutal strength. John met his gaze without flinching, unmoved. Hains gave over, in the end, and flung up his head. "Where was the steersman?" he asked.

"There was a man at the wheel all night," said John. "I saw them change. There wasn't a chance for them to get down into the cabin."

"What did the crew say?"

"They didn't like having Abner aboard," the girl answered, before John could speak. She had an uneasy feeling that the mate was accusing John; she had an instinct to defend him. Hains nodded abruptly.

"Naturally. But they couldn't get at him."

"No, sir," said Storming John.

"You're sure?"

"Sure."

Hains turned his back on them for a moment, swung toward them again. "How was he killed?"

"A knife stuck in his throat."

"Did you find the knife?"

"No, sir."

"What kind of a knife was it?"

"A slender blade, sir. The cut weren't wide. But it went deep. A stab."

"A clasp knife?"

"Might have been. Any kind of a knife, so the blade was slender!"

"How slender?"

"Half an inch across."

"Did you hear any noise in the night? Any outcry?"

John said whimsically: "I didn't hear nothing else, sir. Abner took on, the worst way, till toward morning. He stopped, suddenly, sir."

"That was when he was killed."

"It's like."

"Where were you?"

"In the waist, just forrad of the hatch, sir."

"What did you think stopped him? What did you do? Why didn't you go below and look to the man?"

"I 'lowed he'd wore himself out," said Storming John. "I took it he'd gone off to sleep."

"Why didn't you make sure, man?"

"I didn't want to rouse him. He'd kept the ship awake till then. The men needed sleep."

Hains stared into John's eyes. "I should

think you would have gone down to make sure."

"There weren't nought to harm him, sir. You was sick and couldn't move; and the professor wouldn't stir out o' his cabin; and there wasn't no one else could get at him."

"You could get at him," said Hains abruptly. "And he'd sworn to kill you."

"Yes," said John calmly. "Yes, I could get at him."

"Did you kill him?" Hains asked sharply. "Why did you kill him?"

"No," said John, unoffended. "No, I didn't kill old Abner. And if I did, I wouldn't figure to tell, right out, this-away."

Hains laughed frankly. "Pshaw, I was joking. Of course you didn't. Call aft the men, John. Let's see what they have to say."

The men came stumbling aft at John's summons, and grouped themselves raggedly before Hains. He looked sharply from man to man; and abruptly, he began to speak. He reminded them that with captain and mate dead, he was in command. He said this command put on him the responsibility for finding the man who had killed old Abner. He asked them whether they knew anything, any bit of evidence that would help him.

One man said: "It were good riddance, sir. He'd ha' killed us all, like he did Cap'n Murch and Mr. Stoll."

Hains said sternly: "That's no matter. What he did doesn't matter? Some one killed him. That's the man I'm after. Who had the wheel, that night?"

Two men spoke. One was on deck from eight to midnight; the other from midnight till four, when dawn came. Hains asked the first: "What happened? What did you see?"

The man said Storming John and the girl were on deck. He said John went down into the cabin and got bedding and made a place for the girl to sleep on deck. "That's all I saw," he said.

"What did Storming John do after Miss Rowlton went to sleep?"

"Stayed near the hatch, listening to Abner," said the man.

"Abner was yelling, after John came up from the cabin?"

"Yes."

"Did John go down into the cabin again?"

"No, sir."

"Any one go down?"

"No, sir."

Hains turned to the other man. "Did you see any one go down into the cabin?"

"No, sir."

"Where was Storming John when Abner quit yelling?"

The man's eyes flickered sidewise to meet John's. Hains rasped: "None o' that. Don't look to him for what you're to say. Answer up. Where was he?"

"On deck."

"Sure of that?"

"He didn't go down into the cabin."

"Are you sure he was on deck? Could you see him?"

"I wasn't watching him, sir. He was out o' my sight, in the waist or som'eres."

Hains swung to look at John; John stood impassive. The mate looked from man to man. "Any one else know anything?"

None spoke. He said impatiently: "Go forward, then. Get out of here." And when they were gone, he asked the cook:

"Well, John, what of that?"

"What of what, sir?"

"For all he saw, you might have done it."

"I might have. Yes. I've said I did not."

Hains said with abrupt good nature: "There; I believe you." He turned to the girl. "What's the matter with your father?"

"Why?"

"I haven't seen him."

"He's bolted himself in his cabin. He thinks this whole thing----" She hesitated, said shamedly: "He thinks the whole ship is against him, trying to rob him."

"Rob him? Of what?"

"Of—what he treasures," said the girl. Hains sensed the anger in her voice and said pleasantly:

"Don't blame me for asking questions. It's my duty, Miss Rowalton. Why should he think we mean to rob him?"

"I don't blame you," she said. "It is an obsession with him. My father's whole life centers around a single thing. He is convinced that the whole world is against him."

Hains turned abruptly and went below. The girl and Storming John looked at each other, wondering. Then they heard his voice in the cabin. "Open the door, professor. I want to talk to you." The professor's muffled answer. The girl ran to the cabin companion, called:

"Please be careful. He will shoot."

As an echo of her words came the roar of the professor's weapon, the splintering crash of a bullet. She dropped down the stair, Storming John at her heels. She cried: "Father, don't—" At the same time, John swept her to one side, out of the line of fire if the professor should shoot again. They saw Hains crouching back at the farther side of the cabin. John called:

"Hit, sir?"

"No." Hains laughed good-humoredly. "The man's in earnest."

"Oh, he is, he is," the girl cried. "Be careful. Please don't anger him."

Hains called warily: "Professor, I just want to ask what you know about the killing of the carpenter. Anything you can tell me."

The professor answered huskily, through the bolted door: "I give you warning, gentlemen. I'm not to be trifled with."

"Did you hear anything, that night, or see anything?" Hains asked.

"I have not left my cabin since I came aboard, nor do I propose to do so till we are safe in port."

"Did you hear anything?"

"I heard the man's howls. I heard them cease. He was insane."

"Did you hear any one come down through the cabin?"

"No. I heard nothing but the man's own clamor."

"Can't you help us at all?"

"Your own eyes, your own brains can help you," said the professor huskily. "Let them do so. Give them a chance. Leave me to my work."

Hains started to speak again, changed his mind. He crossed to the door of the captain's cabin, signing to the two to join him there. They went in together. The girl saw the log book open on the bunk. Hains closed the door behind them. "John," he said, "there's one thing. In your log you describe this dent where the ax hit when Abner swung it up for the second blow. You give measurements, and the like. What's your idea, man?"

Storming John smiled. "No idea, sir. But—I've read that such things are important, sometimes. A man that knew how might be able to tell much about him who struck the blow, by studying that mark, sir."

"How?"

"The way the ax struck. You'll see it

shows the blow swung upward toward the captain's neck. I've tried to figure how it was made, sir; that dent. And I can't. Looks like to me it ought to be six inches nearer the head of the bunk. Do you mark what I mean?"

Hains laughed. "John, you're seeing things. You've been reading tales. It's facts we need, John. Not dents in a pine board."

"Yes, sir," said Storming John. "Yes, sir, it's facts we want, sir."

"I'm going to move into this cabin," Hains told them. "The instruments are kept here, and all that. But I don't want to lie and look up at that dent and imagine I'm Cap'n Murch, with the ax coming down on me. The thing doesn't matter, anyway."

"It was only that I didn't want to overlook anything, sir."

"Naturally. Just the same, I don't want to sleep in a haunted bed. So I'm going to take one of Abner's planes and smooth that dent away. Right now."

"Very well, sir," said Storming John. "And—I hope you may sleep easy in the cap'n's bunk, sir."

Hains stared at the cook truculently. "Now what do you mean by that."

"Just my good wishes, sir," said Storming John.

CHAPTER X.

With the recovery of Rufus Hains and his assumption of the duties of master of the brig, a lull came in the swift rush of events aboard the *Annie*. She worked steadily northward, and nothing broke the smooth surface of the days. Outwardly, all was well aboard her. But as a matter of fact the tension increased, rather than slackened. It was inevitable that this should be so. Whether men spoke of it or not, it was certain that the murderer of old Abner was still aboard, and still free. Till he was found and laid in bonds, there would be no sound sleep for any one.

Hains and Storming John worked together in apparent amity. Hains was master of the ship; John, with his capacity for doing two or three men's work and having time to spare, acted as mate, and as cook and steward, too. He had no official rank; nevertheless, he slept in the cabin, and the inherent strength of the man compelled absolute obedience from the seamen forward. The girl, watching, saw that he and Hains

were like two strange dogs together; they were stiffly courteous, and at the same time they were terribly alert. The strain of it wore upon her; her sleep was uneasy; she had long, wakeful nights. And the persistent seclusion of the little professor added to her burden. He admitted her, now and then, to his cabin; he talked with her. But she saw the little man had set a guard upon his very tongue. He was suspicious, even of her; he watched her slyly. Her old fears, those fears in which she imagined her father stealing into the steerage to quiet mad Abner with a blade in his throat, returned to her. She knew, better than any one else, the compelling force of the professor's obsession; she knew he held men's lives cheap by comparison with that which he guarded so jealously. And she was afraid.

She felt, more and more, her own helplessness; she was a pawn in the game, defenseless. And some ten days after Rufus Hains took the deck, she went to her father, determined to beg from him one of the weapons which she knew he carried in his luggage. When she asked him for a revolver, he was suspicious; he demanded:

"What do you mean to do?"

"Nothing. Except be ready. Something is going to happen, aboard this ship, father. I feel it. And I don't want to be helpless when the time comes."

"You'd best come in here with me," he said. "Stay in this cabin, as I do. I'll undertake no one shall harm you here."

She shook her head. "I couldn't. I'd feel shut in, like a prisoner. I've got to be able to be out on deck."

He said harshly: "You'd never shoot a man, even if there was need."

She flung away her head. "I don't want to shoot a man."

He chuckled suddenly, and bent toward her. "My dear," he said, "you're in no danger, aboard here. I think I can guarantee that. Not yet, at any rate. But I am minded to have a small jest of my own. So——"

He told her she could have a revolver, but no cartridges. "I don't want blood on your hands," he said. "And in any case, an empty weapon is as mighty as a loaded one, till it is fired."

She contented herself with that. There was, she knew, a box of cartridges in the lockfast in the captain's cabin. She thought she might be able to possess herself of them.

The professor gave her a tiny weapon, a twenty-two caliber. "It was your mother's," he said. "Hammerless, you see. You need only pull the trigger." He laughed at himself, huskily. "But there, you are not going to pull the trigger, are you?"

She slipped the weapon into the bosom of her waist. The professor asked: "Have you used eyes and mind as I bade you?"

She shook her head. "I'm—numb with it all, father. I can't think."

He looked at her slyly. "If Abner shot the mate," he said. "Where did he get the revolver? I asked you that before. Find me the answer, Patience, and wisdom will come to you."

She asked, abruptly: "Father, do you know more than you've told?"

Confusion fell upon the little man. He flung up his hands in protest, suspicious eyes shifting. "No, no. What a notion! Come! There, you're hindering my work. You must go. You must go!"

He slipped the bolts and held the door open; she went into the main cabin, and the door shut behind her. She heard him whispering huskily to himself as he bolted the door. The little revolver hung heavily against her body, conspicuous through the light folds of her waist. Rufus Hains came down from the deck, and she held her hand and arm across to hide the weapon, and slipped past him into her own cabin. He spoke to her, but she only nodded, smiling faintly, and shut the door. There was no pocket in her skirt in which she could carry the revolver; she made a loop out of a folded handkerchief, and fastened it against her leg, just below the knee. She could reach it, there, with a single gesture.

Hains had gone into his own cabin. She could hear him moving there. After a time, he went on deck; and when she was sure he had gone, she slid the bolt that barred the door between her cabin and his, and went into him. The lockfast was open. She picked up the box of cartridges and was back in her own cabin, the door fast again, in an instant. She tried, at once, to fit cartridges to her revolver; but they were of the wrong caliber, so that she was bitterly disappointed. Her first thought was to return the box to its place; then an impulse which she could not define made her lift it and drop it out through the cabin port, into the sea. Not till it was gone did she consider the significance of what she had done. She had

disarmed Rufus Hains. And Hains was the one man whom the logic of the situation bade her trust and support. She was worried and ashamed.

They crossed the line, and worked steadily northward, fair weather favoring them. Rufus Hains drove the brig as though he were in haste; he carried all the sail she would bear, day by day, till even Storming John looked with concern at the straining rigging and the cracking yards. Hains caught him at it one day, laughed at him.

"You're white as a frog, John," he jeered. The girl was near. "You've not the heart for sail."

"I'm not wanting to see the sticks go out of her, sir."

"They'll not," Hains promised laughingly. "Leave that to me." He swung to the girl. "John's a good cook," he said. "First rate. But he'll never make an officer. Doesn't want to be one. Now the talent of some men runs that way."

"I think yours does," she said frankly. "The ship is ever so much neater than—when Cap'n Murch was here. Cleaner; and it seems to go faster."

Hains' face twisted grimly. "Murch was no good," he said. "The man was really dead, for years before he got it, in his bunk, below there." She made no comment, and he asked sharply: "Didn't you see that he was no good?"

She said quietly: "*Nil nisi—*"

He looked at her suspiciously. "What's that?"

"Why—the old saying. 'Speak only good of the dead.'"

He said sullenly: "Oh! Latin?"

"Yes."

"I've had no time for it."

"Father taught me," she said. "He—loves the old classics. He used to read the 'Æneid' to me, aloud, by the hour—"

"What's that?" he asked.

"The story of Æneas."

"Who was he?"

She told him something of the ancient tale. He asked: "You mean the professor read this to you in Latin?"

"Yes."

He exclaimed: "Good God!" in mock dismay, and they laughed together. They were good friends, before this. The man seemed perfectly at his ease with her; he gave her a deference which she liked; and

he had a way of praising her that made her warm all over. Nevertheless, she was always a little uneasy under his words. And sometimes his eyes made her shiver.

One night they were on the quarter together; there was a moon that set the sea blazing with silver light. The air scarce stirred at all, so that the brig was barely moving. It was such a night as dreams are made of, and there was the light of a hot dream in the man's eyes as he watched the girl beside him. He had been talking of himself, while she listened, her eyes off upon the water. He had fallen silent, and she had no mind for speech. She was stirring under the strange spell which this man always laid upon her; a fascination which she could not evade; a terror which she could scarce define but could never overcome. He leaned toward her and asked abruptly:

"Listen. I want to ask you something."

She looked up at him. Her lips were parted.

"What do you think of me?" he demanded.

She said softly: "I—— What do you mean?"

"Just that," he said. "What do you think of me?"

"Why—I don't know," she told him.

He laughed. "Has any man ever told you what you're like?" he asked.

She moved uneasily, her eyes shifting from his. She said nothing, and he laughed again, with a reckless note in his laughter. "Well, I'm going to tell you," he said. "I'm going to tell you you're the finest-looking woman God ever made!"

Her eyes swept up to him once, in a long glance; and there was fright in them, and wonder. He leaned above her. "You've hair so wonderful it drives a man——"

"No, no," she cried, under her breath. "Please don't. I—— Oh, I don't know what to say."

She was stirring, tense and confused and frightened. He whispered into her ear. "Don't say anything. Just turn around here—— I'm going to——"

His arms were reaching for her; but she was up, alertly, like a bird taking wing. Before he could move, she had passed around him, almost running, and reached the cabin stair. He saw her disappear, made as if to follow her, then marked the watching steersman, and checked himself, and turned back with a careless air to the after rail.

But his heart was pounding, and his blood was boiling, and his hands clutched the rail so tightly that the finger nails turned white. He was afire with the moonlight, and the sight and vision of the girl; he could not stand still. He whispered, fiercely to himself.

Below, in the main cabin, Patience had hesitated for an instant, then slipped into her own quarters and bolted the door. She did not light the swinging lamp; she did not want light. She sat down on the edge of her bunk, and pressed her hands to her burning face. She was sick and shaken and ashamed as though she had been defiled; yet at the same time she was trembling with something like a happiness of a sort she had never known. She was not sure whether it were happiness, or tremulous alarm. The man wrought on her so powerfully that she could not think. She was frightened, terribly frightened. She was sure of that. She dreaded the thought of him, dreaded seeing him again in the morning. His profanity had shocked her; the coarseness of his phrases had jarred and bruised. But he was a man. Were not all men so—rough of tongue, harsh? Must not a woman—— She could not be too critical. Did she love him? Was this love—this madness of fright and horror, mingled with a pang that was strangely sweet?

She wished for her mother; and so wishing, slipped to her knees beside the bunk and prayed. When she lifted her head again, she thought of Storming John. It was almost as though the thought of John were an answer to her prayer. It comforted her, quieted her, stilled the turmoil that was tearing her. She got up, smiled at her own confusion, lighted her lamp. There was a small mirror against the wall; she studied her face in this mirror, and after a little began to loose her hair, and brushed it over and over, the strokes of the brush soothing her and bringing peace. She divided it in two great waves at the back, drew these waves of richness over her shoulders, began to braid them for the night.

She was finishing the second when she heard Rufus Hains come into his cabin, next to hers. She stood, frozen, her fingers intertwined in the end of the braid. He moved to and fro in his cabin for an instant, then was still. She sensed him, listening; she could almost feel him pressing against the intervening door.

Then he knocked, faintly. When she did not answer, he knocked again, and called softly: "Patience! Girl! Are you asleep?"

She said: "No."

"Why did you run away?"

She made no answer; he asked again, and her eyes moved like the eyes of a frightened animal, flickering about her tiny cabin. He whispered: "Let me in. I want to talk to you."

She said: "I can't."

"Why not?"

"I'm—going to bed."

For a moment he was silent; and when he spoke again his voice was thick and hoarse. "Oh—just open the door a crack. I want to tell you something."

She was suddenly in a panic, and she ran and pressed against the door to bar him out, and cried: "No, no, no, you can't come in."

He laughed, as though to make his words a jest. "By all that's holy," he threatened, "I'll break in the door."

She said instantly, in desperate fright: "I've a pistol. If you do, I'll shoot you."

He was silent at that for an instant; then he said: "God! you're your old man's kid all right!" She said nothing. He called: "All right. But you don't want to be afraid of me. Lord, girl; I won't hurt you. Pleasant dreams."

She held silence; and he called: "Good night!"

"Good night," she said.

A little later she heard him lie down. Without undressing, she stretched herself on her own bunk and lay wide-eyed for hours through the night.

Next day neither of them spoke of what had passed. Hains stayed below much of the day; and the girl was on deck. At noon, wandering forward, she found Storming John in the door of the galley, taking the sun. He did not see or hear her till she was almost upon him; and when he did, he swept the instrument out of sight, his face a mirror of guilt. There was something amusing in the sight: she laughed at him, and he grinned sheepishly.

She asked: "What are you doing?"

"Just trying to figure out the sense of this thing, ma'am," he said, and held up the instrument.

"Whose is it?"

"I bought it in a pawnshop, ashore. Always carried it in my chest."

"I thought you told me once that you knew something of navigation."

"Lord, miss, I'm a bragger. I couldn't tell where we are within a thousand miles. I never was a hand at numbers."

She nodded, turned ast again. But that afternoon she saw, with some uneasiness, that John was perplexed and disturbed. Twice during the afternoon he made occasion to look at the log.

That night was stormy, and Rufus Hains was on deck. The girl's weariness drove her to sleep; and when she woke it was day. A dull day, with a driving rain slatting against her closed port, and a sea that pumped the brig rackingly. She had no garments fit to face the storm, and stayed below that day and that night. The next day dawned clear and fine, and the last turmoil of the gale tossed the ship drunkenly.

As she finished dressing, some one knocked at her cabin door; the door into the main cabin. She asked: "Who is it?" and Rufus Hains answered.

"We're passing a clipper," he told her. "Full sail. It's worth seeing. Can you come on deck?"

She said: "Yes. I'll come in a minute." She heard his steps recede, gave a last touch to her hair, stepped to the door and slid the bolt and opened it.

Hains was there, in the doorway. He must have walked away and soundlessly returned. He smiled, held out his arms, stepped toward her. She was so surprised she had no time to stir before he swept her against his breast and pinned her there. She heard him swing the door shut behind him; then he was whispering into her ear:

"Now. Now. You little kid. Now—"

He was kissing her hair, and trying to wrench her face up to meet his, while she pounded at him with futile fists, and fought to be free. He got his hand under her chin and dragged it up; her lips escaped his for an instant as she flung her head to one side, against his shoulder. She felt his breath on her cheek.

Then something was dragging them both, jerking them both this way and that. Even as her dizzy senses yielded to him, he released her, and she saw that he was in the grip of Storming John. John swung him back and out into the main cabin; he stepped after, his broad back to the girl, barring Hains from her cabin. She looked past John and saw Hains snatch a revolver from

his pocket and level it at John, and heard him say hoarsely:

"Get out o' my way, damn you!"

"No," said Storming John.

"What butt-in is it of yours? The girl wasn't kicking. She didn't ask for you."

"You're going to let her alone."

"She could yell if she wanted you, couldn't she?" The man's lip twisted harshly. "Get sense, John. Get out of the way before I drill you."

"No," said John steadily.

Hains went into a fury. "By God, I've stood a lot from you. You think you're lord and master o' this craft. You hulking horse butcher. I've stood all I'm going to. I'd ought to have ironed you, a month ago. This time, I'll do it. Damn you! Damn your hide!"

John stood still; Hains barked: "Come here. Out of her way, so the bullet won't drill her, too. Hiding behind a woman."

John stepped to one side, his face flaming. Hains sneered: "Lord, but there's murder in your eye, man. I believe you'd like to do me!" He laughed, abruptly. "Like to do me, as you did the skipper and the mate. And poor old Ab."

"Me?" John cried. "Me?"

"Yes, you." Hains laughed again. "Why not? You're no Mary's little lamb. Why couldn't it be you? It was you, or the professor, or me. And Lord knows it wasn't the old prof. So it was you or me, John, old dog."

John repeated, thoughtfully: "You or me, Mr. Hains. It must have been."

"It was, you throat-cutting hound."

"You or me," said John again. "So—"

With no warning word, he leaped. Six feet separated him from the other man. He covered the distance while Hains' gun blazed once. Then he was upon the other, overthrowing him. They rolled over and over in an indescribable confusion of deadly strife.

CHAPTER XI.

The main cabin of the *Annie* was not commodious, and what room there was was largely taken up by the table, built around the mizzenmast, with folding leaves that could be let down when the table was not in use. The place was cramped and small; and the battle between the two men filled it with a roar of strife. The girl, in the open door of her own cabin, was the only spectator; the

professor kept behind his bolts and made no move, and the men on deck did not attempt to interfere.

Hains was standing, when John attacked, beside the table. John's smothering charge drove him back against it, splintering a hanging leaf. Hains had the pistol in his right hand; John flung his left arm about the other's waist, and with his right gripped the wrist of the hand that held the pistol. But that gave him no chance of victory; and as they rolled on the floor where the impetus of his attack had flung them, he shifted his grip, got his left hand on the other's pistol wrist, and drove his right into Hains' face in an effort to stun the other. Hains jerked his head to one side; the blow glanced and John's knuckles were bruised and crushed against the floor. Then they were rolling over and over like a ball!

The pistol was the focal point. Who held that weapon and could bring it into play would win. Hains had it; but he could not use it. John pinned his wrist to the floor, in such fashion that the muzzle of the revolver pointed away from them both. He gave all his energies to keeping it there, allowing Hains to wear himself out in the struggle to free the pistol hand. And Hains got his left hand at John's throat and tried to sink his fingers into it. John bowed his chin on his breast, crushingly, tensing the thick throat muscles as an armor against the strangling hand.

The girl in the doorway watched this struggle with an impersonal horror. It was, at first, meaningless to her. The men seemed to roll and scramble and strike without accomplishing anything. They did not seem to be in earnest; they were so still. Neither spoke or cried out; they fought grimly and silently. It was like watching a picture of fighting men. She had a curious feeling that it was all a game, a spectacle presented for her benefit.

Something caught Storming John's shirt at the shoulder and ripped it half away, as easily as though it had been wet tissue paper. The girl could not understand. Then she saw a dark smear upon Hains' face, and when she realized that it was blood, she became very cold and still. She was no longer afraid; she was interested, and her mind worked with an unnatural acuteness. She bent toward them, watching intently, trying to understand what it was they sought to do. Thus she perceived that Hains still held the

pistol in his right hand, that Storming John pinned it there. And she understood, abruptly, that the pistol was the key to the situation. Instantly, she remembered. She had a revolver. She bent, lifted her skirt, grasped the weapon. She raised it at once and leveled it at the battling men.

They were, at the moment, frozen still in the rigidity of clashing muscles. She thought they were resting, until she saw the swelling trowsers in John's bare shoulder, and saw Hains slowly give back and yield. Nevertheless, they were so nearly motionless that she could have shot either. She did not at first understand why she did not pull the trigger; she had forgotten that her weapon was empty. She tried to tighten her finger for the pull; and abruptly, she understood. She did not know which man she wished to shoot!

Hains, the captain of the brig, who loved her? Should she lend a hand in his defeat? Or Storming John? She thought back, swiftly. John had attacked, because Hains accused him of the murder. By his very attack, he had in a measure confessed his guilt. She tried to think, tried to choose her course. She believed in John's guilt; she could not help believing. Her duty lay, then, with Hains. She had no hatred for Hains. She did not utterly condemn him for forcing his caresses upon her, because she did not completely understand what had been in the man's mind. She only knew that he loved her; and for that she could not but feel kindly toward him. And John was a murderer.

She nerv'd herself and moved on tiptoe nearer to the struggling men. Storming John was in the wrong; he was a mutineer against authority. Her duty lay in supporting Hains. She had made up her mind to that. When she was within three feet of them, the men twisted in a sudden convulsion that brought Hains uppermost, brought him facing her, with John flat on the deck. John still gripped Hains' pistol hand; but as he came atop the other, Hains' left hand flashed down to his side and back and came up with a knife.

She saw the knife's gleam in the dimly lighted cabin as Hains whipped it up. And her heart cried out, and without knowing what she did, she jammed her pistol forward into Hains' very face and screamed:

"Drop it! Drop it! Drop it!"

Hains was paralyzed into inactivity. In

that instant, Storming John flung him to one side, was up, had Hains' revolver, held the other helpless. There was a coil of line, hung on a peg in the cabin wall. He swung Hains that way, while the other crouched alertly, ready to reopen the battle; he got the line, and forced Hains to put his hands behind him, and noosed the man's wrists and ankles till he was trussed like a goose. And the girl, still swaying and dizzy from the rush of emotions that the sight of Hains' knife had evoked, watched with her hand at her throat, unsteady and disturbed. Storming John had murder on his hands—and she had helped him defeat the master of the ship. Why? Why? Why?

John, busy securing Hains, paid no heed to her. Hains, helpless in the bonds John had drawn around him, found tongue. He flung an oath at the girl.

"You're a pretty pair of mutineers," he said hoarsely. "John, you'll swing for this."

John said nothing. He was making sure of the bonds. The girl, leaning against the cabin wall, her revolver hanging limply, groped for strength. When Storming John looked at last toward her, she asked unsteadily:

"John—why did you —— Why did you do this?"

He said gently: "I have to thank you, miss, for taking a hand. He had me."

"Why did you, John?"

"Did you mark," he asked, "that the man used his left hand for the knife? Ever so handy and natural."

"What is it, John?" she insisted. "I don't understand."

John did not even look toward Hains. He said to the girl: "He killed Cap'n Murch and the mate and Abner."

Hains laughed harshly. "Cripes, that's rich," he jeered. "John, you're a wonder."

The girl looked from one of the men to the other. "He killed them?" she repeated. "He killed them? But he said you killed them. And you attacked him."

Storming John said slowly: "I was wondering from the first about Mr. Hains, ma'am. He'd had an old trouble with the captain; and I thought of him, first off. And little things made me half sure of it; but it was Mr. Hains himself that made me wholly sure, ma'am."

"How?" she asked. "What do you mean?"

"You remember," he said, "that he told

me, just now, either him or me had done it?"

"Yes."

"That's right, miss. You can see that, now. It was either him, or me, or the professor that killed old Abner. And we know it wasn't your father, the professor, ma'am. And I know it wasn't me. So it was him."

Hains laughed aloud. "That's neat. You ought to be a lawyer."

"He knew it was him or me, ma'am," said Storming John earnestly to the girl. "But he didn't try to iron me. If it wasn't him, he knew it was me. If he knew it was me, he'd ought to put me in irons. I'd never thought so plain that it was him or me till he put it into words. Then I saw it must be him. And I had to get him, ma'am, after that."

It was as though he pleaded his cause before her. The girl drew her hand across her eyes. She could not think; her mind would not function. She said wearily:

"But John, John--what proof have you?"

"I didn't need proof, ma'am. Not to make me tie him up. Not when I know he's killed three men."

"How do you know?"

"It was him or me, ma'am. He said so. And it wasn't me."

Hains chuckled. "Come, Miss Rowalton," he said cheerfully. "Tell this madman to let me loose. You can see for yourself he's talking folly."

Storming John looked at him with level eyes. "You'll not be loosed, to spill more blood, Mr. Hains," he said. "Content yourself."

Hains ignored him. "Don't let him bully you, Miss Rowalton," he urged. "I think you know me well enough to trust me. You know how I feel toward you; you know how you feel toward me."

She looked at him wistfully. "How do I feel toward you?" she asked. "I do not know. I do not know what I think, or what I feel."

He said gently: "You love me as I love you."

"I love you?" she asked, while Storming John watched with impassive face. "I love you?"

"Yes, yes. You know you do." His voice made her tremble, as it always had.

"But?" she asked uncertainly. "But--if I love you, why did I help Storming John beat you?"

He laughed. "You were mad at me for kissing you. But you know I meant nothing by that; that it was only because I'm mad over you."

A slow wave of color overspread her cheeks as she looked from Hains to Storming John. John said nothing; the girl looked at Hains. "No," she said. "I wasn't angry with you. But when I saw you were going to--hurt--Storming John, something made me stop you."

Hains nodded. "That was natural. I don't blame you. A woman doesn't like to see blood spilled. John and I were both excited. He's beginning to see, now, that he's wrong. Tell him to let me free."

John said again, in a level tone: "You'll not go free, Mr. Hains. Your race is run."

Hains' face purpled; he lost, for an instant, his self-control, and he cried: "You damned mutineer! There's not a port in the world you dare put into, after this. I'll see you hung if it's the last thing I do."

Storming John said nothing. The girl asked him softly: "Don't you think you could---- Don't you think, perhaps, you were wrong? You've really no proof, have you?"

"I know he did it," said John. "So I had to arrest him. Let them find proof, when we make port. Time enough for that, then."

Hains laughed, and he said in a straightforward tone: "Come, Miss Rowalton. It is one of the obligations of passengers to support the authority of a shipmaster. I'm the captain of this ship. You've helped a mutiny against me; but you've a chance to repair what you have done. Bid John let me loose."

There was a compulsion in his tones which the girl could not wholly deny. She said softly to Storming John:

"Don't you think it would be better?"

"No. The man must stay in bonds."

"Please? If it weren't for me, he would have killed you. You ought to let him go for me."

He said: "Are you mindful that Mr. Hains has killed three men?"

"Oh, I don't know," she cried desperately. "You say so; he says you killed them. How can I know?"

"Because I tell you."

Hains laughed: the girl shook her head. "Please let him go."

"No."

There was fire smoldering in her. It

flamed to life. Her revolver was still in her hand and she leveled it at Storming John.

"Let him go," she said sharply.

Storming John shook his head.

"Then I will," the girl cried, and would have run to where Hains stood in his bonds. Storming John stepped quietly between. "Let me pass," she cried, and sought to slip around him. He held her shoulders, held her facing him. Her hands were free, and she raised the revolver and thrust it against his breast.

"Let me pass," she bade him.

"No."

She remembered, abruptly, that her weapon was empty; and she cried out: "Ah, you knew it. You knew I had no cartridges. No wonder you are brave."

Hains exclaimed: "No cartridges? In that damned gun?"

"No," she told him, not understanding the significance of his rage and surprise. "No."

He swore: "That's hell. You stuck me up with an empty gun."

"I thought it was l-loaded," she stammered apologetically. "I forgot."

"Good Lord!" said Hains. The girl cried:

"But he's got to let you go."

"If you hadn't interfered," Hains told her harshly, "I'd have settled this myself."

She looked up to Storming John. "Please let him go."

John hesitated; his eyes clouded sorrowfully. At last he said, in a quiet tone: "I think you've got brains, miss. I think you can see things for yourself if you're given a chance. I don't think you trust Mr. Hains, no more than I do. I think you know I never killed these men; and if I didn't, you know he did. Ain't that so?"

"No," she cried. "No, no, no. It's not so. I don't know what I think."

"You know he killed them."

"No."

Storming John pulled from his pocket the revolver which he had taken from Hains. He examined it. "This here one is loaded," he said. "You're a woman, grown, old enough to decide for yourself. You ought to know whether you want to be alone on this craft with Mr. Hains. If you do, it's for you to say. Take this gun, ma'am."

He held it out to her. She took it, wonderingly, not understanding, and looked up at him to see what was in his mind. He said gently:

"Now you'll never turn Mr. Hains loose again while I'm alive. If you want to turn him loose, all there is to do is put that thing against me and pull the trigger. Then you can do as you choose."

She was flooded suddenly with a fury of impatience at his obstinacy.

"You big, stubborn man," she cried angrily. "Get out of my way, or as sure as I live I will shoot you. I'll not be bullied by any man."

He lifted the hand that held the revolver, laid the muzzle against his breast, and said gently:

"Then just pull the trigger, ma'am."

There was a long moment when their eyes clashed, his firm as granite, hers hot as molten steel. His were ever so steady; but at last the fire began to die in hers, it faded slowly till her eyes were dim; then they flooded full with tears, she trembled, and abruptly the revolver rattled on the floor between them. She flung herself on his breast, her arms clung about his neck, she sobbed against his shoulder and wailed like a child:

"Oh, John, John, I love you so!"

His big hand clumsily patted her brown head. He said gently: "There, that's all right, ma'am."

Rufus Hains, in his bonds, cried aloud:

"Well, I'll be damned!"

CHAPTER XII.

With Storming John in command, and Hains ironed in his cabin, the *Annie* drove on the last leg of her homeward way. Hains was at first inclined to laugh; he philosophically assured Storming John that he could wait, well enough, till they should make port.

"You'll get yours, then," he said. "I'm in no hurry."

They were in his cabin at the time. Hains was ironed, foot and ankle; and a chain about his waist was secured to a staple in the wall. He could lie down; he could sit in his bunk; but he could not move about the cabin. John had taken pains to make sure there was no weapon, not so much as a penknife, within the man's reach. He would not trust any sailor to stand guard, and so himself assumed that duty, and came upon Hains at odd intervals, every hour of the day. Also he enlisted the girl in his aid.

"If you hear him, from your cabin, start-

ing any trouble, ma'am, just sing out to me," he bade her, and she promised.

On the second day of his captivity, when Storming John came with his dinner, Hains asked jeeringly: "How's the navigation, John? Know where you are?"

"Oh, aye," said Storming John.

Hains laughed. "You must be a good guesser, then."

"Why, no," said John. "I told you I could not navigate; but that was because I mistrusted you, you understand. I can find the way about the seas, well as any man."

"You're a bluff, John," Hains told him, loudly enough so that the girl in the next cabin could not fail to hear. "You don't know where we are from Adam. And if you do, you're planning a trick. Because you're off your course, John."

"I reckon not, sir," John told him.

Hains exclaimed, as one with a sudden inspiration: "By God, I wonder if you've got the nerve to put in somewhere and make a get-away. Is that what you're planning, John?"

"Why, no, sir," said Storming John. "I figure to make New York, inside the fortnit."

Hains laughed. "Pshaw, man! That proves you're off in your reckoning. Look at the log."

There was a moment's silence; then the girl heard John say: "You'd cooked the log, sir. You had a fake position, there. That's one thing told me you'd killed the men. Though what you planned to do with the *Annie* I don't see."

"You're crazy," Hains swore. "Why would I doctor the log with a fake position?"

"You'll understand you're wasting words, sir," said John, "when I tell you what our position was, the day I arrested you." He gave latitude and longitude. "You'll mark that I'm right, and that you had us recorded three hundred miles east o' that."

Hains said jeeringly: "Stuff! That's a fairy tale. Get out o' here, John. Let a man rest."

The girl in the next cabin thought there had come a weakening in the bravado of the man. His voice was less assured. She heard Storming John leave his cabin. Her own door was open, and John went past on the way to the deck. He did not look in, though her eyes were waiting to welcome his. He ignored her; and she flushed uncomfortably.

John had ignored her consistently, save when he came with matters that concerned the ship, since that night when she had cried out that she loved him. He was as courteous as he had ever been, as gentle and as kindly; but he gave her no opportunity for casual talk with him. He avoided her. On the morning after the capture and imprisonment of Hains, she had met him in the cabin and had waited with lowered eyes for him to take her in his arms. She knew, knew blindly, that she loved him; she knew that he must know. She was sure, as a woman may be sure, that he loved her. She was his, utterly; and yet he did not claim the pledge of her word and her lips. Blind at first to the revelation of herself which had made her save his life even when she thought him a murderer, her eyes had been finally opened when he barred her way to the bound man with his bare breast. He was gentle, and kindly, and strong; and she loved him.

But he, it appeared, would have none of her; and at first she was pitifully hurt and shamed; and then she was furiously angry with him; and then she was puzzled and tried to reason why.

She was only a girl, and there were no reservations in her love for the man. There were no doubts in her. No doubts of herself. She had given her heart to him with the abandon of a child. And he avoided her. The woman in her loved him enough to be half impatient and half amused at his reticence. He was, she told herself, diffident. He would come to her when the fitting time arrived.

Meanwhile, they were making steady homeward progress. John had told Mr. Hains that they would make port within the fortnight; the actuality cut three days from that period. They raised land late one afternoon, and the fallop fetched up a pinch of dark sand that told John they were too far toward Nantucket. They worked slowly southwestward during that night, and the next day picked up their tug and were snaked into harbor and dropped anchor off quarantining to wait the boarding officers.

When they came alongside, Storming John reported the ship by name and sailing port and gave owners and cargo. Then he added: "Captain, mate and carpenter murdered in the South Atlantic, sir. Mr. Hains, the second mate, under arrest for the murder."

The port doctor asked sharply: "What are you?"

"I was cook and steward, sir. John Brant. Took command and arrested the second mate."

"Where is he?"

"Ironed, in the captain's cabin. And I'd be glad to have him took off my hands. I haven't slept, to mention, for two weeks."

"Let's have a look at him."

Storming John nodded. "Come below," he bade them.

It was thus there convened in the cabin of the brig something like an informal court of justice. When Hains saw the uniforms, he exclaimed cheerfully: "By heavens, I'm glad to see you gentlemen. This damned fool cook let his zeal get away from him and put me under arrest for murder. He's a mutineer, out and out. I think he did the killing himself. Certainly, I know no more about it than he does."

The newcomers looked at Storming John. "How about it?"

Storming John loosed the chain that held Hains fast in the bunk, and helped the ironed man out into the main cabin. He knocked on the girl's door and asked her to come out, and she came. Then he produced the log book and gave it to the men and bade them read the grim story there.

"That tells it, better than I can," he said.

They read. The port doctor asked: "But how about this? This says the second mate was hurt in trying to overpower the murderer—Says the carpenter killed the others."

Storming John said: "I writ that so, because it was the best I was sure of, at the time." He looked at the girl, as though for support, then went on:

"I'll tell my story, gentlemen. You can hear for yourselves. And judge."

Hains jeered: "Yes, spill the yarn, John. Make it strong. You'll need a good story."

John paid no attention. "I was in the galley, forrad, the day the thing happened, sirs," he said. "I'd paid no heed to what went on, aft. The skipper was in his cabin, the mate was on deck. The second mate was below. Abner Hatch, the carpenter, was working about with his tools, and I paid him no great matter of attention. But I looked aft in time to see him go down into the cabin."

"He had nothing in his hands, sir. He didn't have the ax. He went down quiet, looking around him in a funny way. Always crazy, he were."

"It was maybe five minutes after that, sirs, that I heard a shot, aft. And I jumped out of my galley and started that way, and then I saw Abner come up out of the cabin. A revolver in one hand, he had; and the ax in the other. A light ax, not full size; no more than a big hatchet."

"He came toward me; and I see he was crazy. Talking to himself. He didn't see me. I ducked back into the galley. He came on forrad, and when he passed my door, I jumped out and landed him and got the gun and the ax and tied him up."

"We put him in the longboat, sirs; and Miss Rowalton, here, told me he'd killed the mate, I think it was. So I went aft with her, and down."

"Mr. Stoll—that was the mate—was lying against the stair foot, dead. The bullet had smashed into his mouth and into his head. Mr. Hains, there, was in the middle of the floor. He'd had a clout on the head, and he had a deep hole in his back from the ax, and a slice across his arm from it. Miss Rowalton had seen the carpenter and him fighting, and the carpenter hit him on the head with the pistol, and in the back with the ax." He looked to the girl for confirmation. "That's right, ain't it, ma'am?"

She nodded. "Yes. They were fighting, when I opened my cabin door."

"I tended Mr. Hains, sirs," said Storming John. "I fixed him up, best I could, and put him to bed. I'd no thought then but Abner—that was the carpenter—had done it all. I sewed Abner in a canvas sack, like a strait-jacket, and roped him in a bunk in the steerage. And I buried the captain and the mate that day. Cap'n Murch's head was chopped near off with the ax, sirs. I buried them overside."

The port doctor asked: "Couldn't the bodies have been kept?"

"No way, sirs. It was hot."

He hesitated; and when no one spoke, he went on: "Well, sirs, in the morning I found Abner was killed, too. He'd had a knife in his neck."

"Killed in his bunk?"

"Yes, sir."

"How did the man that killed him get into the steerage?"

"There's only two ways in, sirs," said Storming John. "One's the deck hatch. I was in sight o' that all night. The other's from the cabin. No one went down into the cabin that night. I know that. Mr. Hains

was in his bunk, bad hurt. But he got up and went in and killed old Abner."

Hains laughed. "That's what you say, John. But it's a lie."

"No, sir," said Storming John respectfully. "No, sir. It's no lie."

The port doctor asked quietly: "How do you know?"

John said slowly: "First place, sir, Abner didn't kill Cap'n Murch. Mr. Hains did."

Hains laughed. John went on: "The skipper was hit twice with the ax, in the neck. There's a shelf above his bunk. The ax came up between the first stroke and the second and hit the under side of the shelf a crack. It left a dent there. Mr. Hains had that dent scraped off—he planed it off himself, when he took the cabin.

"But that dent, sirs, was right over the captain's chest. Not over his head. And the head of the ax struck up into the wood square and even."

He stepped toward the captain's cabin. "I'll show you," he said. They crowded in after him, and he bent beside the bunk and went through the pantomime of a man striking two blows. "You'll mark," he explained, "that I'm striking right-handed. Abner was right-handed. Now see where my hand strikes the shelf." He went through the pantomime again. A right-handed man," he said, "would swing the ax up this way, and it would strike six inches from where the dent was, where it's whittled away, sirs. A left-handed man would swing the other way, right at the dent. And besides, the places where the blade struck were cut up, from below, like; not down, from the ear toward the shoulder."

The port doctor nodded. "I see what you mean," he agreed. "It's suggestive. Not convincing. Is Mr. Hains left-handed?"

"Hell, no," said Hains harshly, from the cabin outside where he stood in his bonds. "The man's crazy."

"He writes right-handed," John admitted. "But I've seen him knock many a man down with his left, never with his right. And I've seen him throw with his left. And when I arrested him, he tried to knife me with his left hand."

"He had my right hand pinned down," Hains exclaimed. "That's simple enough."

The port doctor asked: "What else was there?"

John said: "For one thing, he'd reason to hate the skipper. Cap'n Murch had rode

him, and licked him in one fight. I figure he only aimed to kill the captain and lay the blame on Abner. The rest came out of that. I don't know how Abner came into the cabin. But I figure Mr. Stoll came down the stairs and caught Mr. Hains coming out of the captain's cabin, and Mr. Hains shot him. Then Abner and him fought, and Abner laid him out. Abner went crazy; but I told Mr. Hains I thought he'd be quiet enough to tell his story next day. Mr. Hains couldn't stand to have that told—I cal'late. So he got out of bed to kill Abner and shut his mouth."

"What else?" asked the port doctor quietly.

Storming John considered. "There was one other thing," he said. "Before I arrested him, he'd run us off our course, three hundred mile, and put the wrong figures in the log. You'll see the corrections, a fortnit' back. So there was a reason for his wanting to do it, and he was down in the cabin and could ha' done it. But the thing that decided me, and the reason I grabbed him was the killing of Abner."

"What do you mean?"

John looked toward the girl. "One morning, two weeks back," he said, "him and me had trouble. Words! He said then he thought I'd killed Abner. Abner had threatened to kill me for throwing his ax overside. He loved the ax, sirs, like he did all his tools. Mr. Hains said I'd killed Abner; and I asked him what made him say it. So he told me that either him or me had done it, because nobody else could have got in where Abner was. He said: 'It was you or me.' And I thought a minute, and I knew it wasn't me, so I knewed it must have been him. So I grabbed him."

Hains laughed. The port doctor looked from one man to the other and said slowly: "Then if I understand it, the thing lies between you and him. It's a question of which one of you—lies."

"Yes, sir," Storming John agreed. "It's simpler than that to me, because I know. But that's the way it would look to you."

The doctor asked quietly: "There was no one else who could have done it?"

"No, sir. Nobody in the cabin but Miss Rowalton's father, the professor."

The doctor looked surprised: "Who?"

Abruptly, then, they heard the sliding of bolts; and the door of the professor's cabin opened, and the little man himself appeared.

His brass-bound box was under his arm. He bowed to them stiffly.

"I am Professor Rowalton," he said.

The doctor studied the little man. "How do you do?" And after a moment: "I wonder if you can help us any in this matter."

The little professor asked huskily: "You mean the murders?"

"Yes, sir."

"I know nothing about the murder of the captain, except by deduction," said the professor. "I do know, however, who killed the mate, and I've a fair idea who killed the carpenter."

"Who?" the port doctor demanded, and no man drew breath until the professor said briskly:

"Mr. Hains."

"How do you know?"

"I saw him," said the little professor.

CHAPTER XIII.

When Hains heard the straightforward accusation of Professor Rowalton, the courage of the man deserted him. He went into a smothering fury of curses and cries; he flung himself forward, ironed as he was, in a desperate effort to come at the little man. He beat at Storming John, who intercepted him, with his clenched fists, so that John was hard put to it to hold him for the moment necessary while the others came to his assistance and made the man secure.

He still mouthed and swore; and the port doctor turned to his men and gave an order. Mr. Hains was dragged on deck, between them. Those remaining in the cabin could hear his hoarse voice for minutes after he disappeared, until it was muffled and lost as he was taken aboard the quarantine boat for transport to the shore and delivery to the authorities. Then the doctor turned to Professor Rowalton and said quietly:

"Will you tell us just what you know, sir?"

The professor nodded; he said huskily: "To be sure; to be sure. So long as I was at the mercy of these murdering madmen, I kept to myself and kept my tongue in my head. But there is no longer any reason for reticence. I am an archaeologist, sir. It is unlikely that you have ever heard my name heretofore; but I may say that within five years the world will know it well."

He was stiffly silent for a moment, as though expecting assent. The port doctor

looked curiously at Storming John, then back to the professor.

"I've no doubt of it, sir," he said.

"Ten years ago," the professor declared, in the tone of one who lectures a class of students, "ten years ago, I was a member of an expedition into the interior of Africa. We found some matters of importance to the world; but I learned enough to make it my life's ambition to return and continue my study of that dark continent. Five years ago, I was able to do so. My wife, my daughter——" He nodded toward the girl. "My wife, my daughter and I went into the interior; we have lived there since then. I have been successful!" The little man's eyes blazed. "I may say, gentlemen, that I have discovered certain evidences which will completely overthrow the present theory of the development of the human race from ape-hood. I may say——"

The port doctor looked at his watch nervously. "I beg your pardon, sir. I am forced to be off within a few minutes. Would you mind giving me what facts you have as to this murder?"

The little professor's eyes blazed angrily; for an instant there were hot words on his lips. The girl crossed to his side and touched his arm, and whispered something. He collected himself.

"I merely stated these facts," he said. "These facts which you consider of so little consequence, to explain—to explain, gentlemen, my decision to isolate myself, aboard this vessel. The fruits of my work, gentlemen; the notes of my discoveries, on which my book will be based, are inclosed in this box. They are inestimably precious, a booty to tempt the shrewdest villains. I took no risks with them: I guarded them with my own life; I fortified my retreat."

"You said," the port doctor reminded him gently, "that you witnessed this murder?"

The professor drew himself together. "I did," he said curtly.

"Tell me just what you saw," the doctor suggested.

"I was attracted," said the professor instantly, "by a sound in the main cabin, a suspicious sound, a sound as of some one moving stealthily. I have given you my reasons for caution. However, at this time I had not appreciated the seriousness of the situation. My revolver was in my coat, which hung by my bunk. I opened my door to look out.

"I saw Abner Hatch, the mad carpenter, emerge from the cabin of the second mate. He looked about him uncertainly. He did not see me. He was whining about his ax, and questing like a dog on a scent. At the same time, the door of the captain's cabin began to open, slowly. I shut my door to a crack. I saw Abner dive to hiding, under the table. He must have expected to see the captain; he had reason to fear Cap'n Murch. But it was Mr. Hains who came out, with a revolver in his right hand, and a bloody ax in his left.

"As he came into the cabin, I heard a step on the stair that leads down from the deck, there. Mr. Hains jumped forward, past the table, so that his back was turned toward it. He met Mr. Stoll, face to face, at the foot of the stair; and he shot him dead.

"As he did so, Abner, from beneath the table, snatched at the ax that was dangling from the mate's left hand; and he swung it up and brought it down across the other's pistol arm, from behind, and Mr. Hains dropped the pistol. Abner snatched it; Mr. Hains jumped at him. And I shut my door, and bolted it fast, gentlemen."

"You made no attempt to interfere?" the doctor asked.

"To do so would have jeopardized my life's work. Against that, men's lives are of no account. Of course I did not interfere."

The doctor looked around the cabin at the others; and Storming John moved across to the professor's side, as though he were supporting the little man against the doctor's unspoken criticism. The doctor asked:

"What is your idea as to the thing—the background of it all—the motives?"

The professor said: "It is perfectly clear, to a trained mind. Mr. Hains took the ax to kill Cap'n Murch, so that he might accuse Abner of the murder. But Abner must have seen him take it, or guessed; and he loved his tools with a blind sort of passion. He followed the second mate into the cabin, to recover his ax. He snatched it at his first chance. For the rest, I believe the shock of the tragedy threw him into absolute madness; he struck down the second mate without knowing what he did."

The doctor got up briskly; he said to Storming John: "I'll turn the man over to the marshal. You'd best all stay aboard here till they come off and see you." They heard him cross the deck and drop into his boat.

The professor was in haste to be ashore;

but the delay was inevitable. The United States marshal sent deputies to take the testimony of them all, to warn them that they would be wanted as witnesses. The professor and his daughter were permitted to go ashore when they chose, on promise to return; the crew were held to testify, under guard of a man left aboard the brig.

That night—the professor and the girl would go ashore next morning—they lay at anchor. The deck was deserted, except for the anchor watch, calmly asleep under the bow of the longboat. Storming John was on the quarter. The professor was below. The girl sought out John; she wanted to talk to him, and she thought there must surely be something he wished to say to her.

She found him as gentle and as courteous as he had always been, and she was as tenderly charming as she knew how to be. But John did not say that which she wished to hear him say. They talked for an hour or more of impersonal things. But her heart was pounding, and her arms were aching, and her throat was full of longing for him, and she did not want impersonal conversation. She wanted conversation liberally sprinkled with the first and second personal pronouns, and with that verb which is the first that a beginner in any language is taught to conjugate. Because John was so stubbornly matter of fact, she hated him almost as much as she loved him.

She said, "Good night!" at last in a tone that was sharp with impatience; she went below and left John standing there; and there by the after rail he stood, that long night through. Immovable for the most part. Immovable as a cavern man. His elbows rested on the rail, his head was lowered so that it rested with a strong solidity upon his shoulders. There were many lights, off across the water; he stared at them as though he were hypnotized by their starlike gleam.

Perhaps it was the glare of these lights that made his eyes misty; perhaps it was the rigidity of his posture that made his jaw so rocklike and so firm; perhaps it was the damp night airs which distilled a single drop of moisture that ran down his cheek. No knowing. John was never a loquacious man; he was silent, silent and strong.

Once, during the night, he sang softly, under his breath. The song he sang was the one he had sung to her that night upon this same deck. He crooned it ever so gently;

but the girl's port, almost beneath his feet, was open; and the girl was as wakeful as he. She heard, and smiled at the hearing, and so went happily to sleep at last. He would speak, in the morning, before they left the brig.

But Storming John did not speak, in the morning. He was courteous and ready to help them get away; he superintended the shifting of their belongings from the cabin to the boat. He assigned the men to row them ashore in the dinghy; he helped the little professor down into the boat, and he swung the girl down to her place beside him. The professor said huskily:

"Good-by, Mr. Brant."

"Good-by, sir," said Storming John. "And I wish you luck with your book, sir."

"Thank you. Thank you, very much," the professor told him. "You're a discerning man."

The girl looked up at John. He smiled at her and said: "Good-by."

She could scarce breathe. But she said: "Good-by, Storming John!"

The oarsmen set their blades against the brig's hull and thrust off, and dipped, and the dinghy slid away.

It was in that last possible moment that the girl cried: "Wait!" The oarsmen ceased rowing. "Put back," she said. "I've left my — I've left something in my cabin."

They started back, and Storming John watched them approach, and called: "What's wrong?"

"I've left something," she said.

"I'll get it. What is it?"

But she was lifting up her hands to him for help; he caught them, and she swung aboard. "I don't know just where it is," she said. "Come help me hunt, Storming John."

So they went aft together, and down into the main cabin, the girl ahead. Into her own cabin. Storming John stopped in the doorway and looked about the little compartment. The girl turned and faced him. He said gently:

"What is it you've forgot, ma'am?"

The girl swallowed hard. "John," she said. "Storming John. I—couldn't say good-by, like that. Not before them all. I came back. To——"

She looked at him pitifully, her face working; and John's eyes were troubled. She began to cry; and she was furious with herself for crying. John said evenly:

"There, now, ma'am. Don't you do that. Don't you go and do that."

Then she was furious with him. She stamped her foot, and she exclaimed: "You great big, bullying brute of a man!" John looked his dismay. She stamped her foot again. "Aren't you going to say anything, even now?"

"Lord, ma'am," Storming John protested. "What was you wanting me to say?"

She stepped toward him and took him by the lapels and shook him back and forth; that is to say, she shook herself back and forth, while his big body remained motionless.

"Say you love me! Say you love me," she commanded. "That's what I want you to say."

His face twisted with trouble. "Ma'am, I'm not the sort to say I love a woman like you. It ain't fit."

"Fit?" she cried. "Fit? Well, I love you, Storming John." Her tone was the tone she would have used in saying: "I detest you." She said again: "I love you. I suppose you think that's not fit."

He smiled wistfully: "Ma'am," he said, "you're not much more'n a girl. You've not seen any men at all, except me. You don't know what you're a-talking of. I'm a seaman, a cook, a rough-living, rough-talking, salt-cured fool. And you—you're a lady. You don't mean what you're saying, ma'am."

"If you call me 'ma'am' again," she told him, "I'm going to slap you in the face."

Storming John said: "You're the kindest and the finest woman I ever saw. And I'll always remember you."

"Always remember me?" she echoed. "I should hope so. You're going to marry me."

He shook his head. "You don't 'know what you're saying, miss. It's the kindness of you——"

"Kindness?" She turned, reached under the pillow of her bunk, and drew out the little weapon her father had given her. "Kindness? I'll show you how kind I am." She leveled it at him. "Now," she commanded, "Say, 'I love you, Patience Rowalton.'"

John hesitated; he said slowly: "I'm not ashamed of that, miss."

"Say it, then."

For a long moment he did not speak. There was a slow fire in his eyes. At last he said, his voice steady and calm: "I love you, Patience Rowalton."

A wave of color overspread her checks.

Her eyes fell for an instant; she said softly: "That's better!" She looked up at him. "And I love you, Storming John." She came nearer to him. "Kiss me," she bade.

He shook his head. The revolver whipped against his breast; her left arm went around his neck, tugging at his head to draw it down. She cried, softly: "Kiss me, Storming John."

There was something working in him, sweeping aside his scruples; but the slow humor of the man did not fail him. He asked, whimsically:

"Is it loaded, this time?"

"Yes."

"Why, then," he said, "I reckon I'll have to—"

There was no reservation in him, once he had thus surrendered. The girl yielded gloriously, her arms encircling him. She was crushed in his. They stood thus, swaying with the ardor of their kisses, when the little professor appeared in the cabin door. He looked in; and instantly, he smiled.

"Patience, my dear," he said in a husky voice. "I'm glad to discover that you know when you've found a man."

They flung apart, at that. The girl nodded coolly: "Of course, father." She

linked her arm in John's. "Come, now," she said. "We'll all go ashore." And she stooped and picked up the revolver from the floor.

Storming John held out his hand for it. "Best give that to me," he said.

She shook her head. "No. I may need that again. I shall keep it, till we're married hard and fast."

He still held out his hand. "Give it to me," he said.

Her eyes went up to find his; and before his the girl's gay defiance gave way to something infinitely sweeter. In that meeting of their eyes, she surrendered herself to him, surrendered her heart and soul to his command. Meekly she gave him the weapon. Meekly, she said:

"Yes, Storming John!"

They went up to the deck together, and Storming John put the girl and the professor into the boat together. She looked at him wistfully.

"You're not coming?"

"Not now. I've the ship in my charge."

"You'll come, when you can."

"Aye! Aye! I'll come," said Storming John. And for the first time Patience saw the fire in his eyes that she wanted to see.

COMING IN THE NEXT NUMBER:

ROY NORTON:

WITH A BIG NOVEL:

"THE LIBERATOR"

A Story of Romantic Adventure in the Caribbean

MR. DUPUY WANTS TO KNOW

MAJOR CUSHMAN A. RICE, one of the first Americans to show the Boches that the Yanks could fly high and shoot straight, came home on leave after being terribly gassed. He stopped over in Washington and made an address to the National Press Club, describing what the air service is and what it does.

Among other things, he pictured in great detail "the wardrobe of the clouds," the various articles of clothing an aviator must wear in order to withstand the intense cold of great altitudes. The crowded assembly room was as quiet as the proverbial mouse. The newspaper men and their guests wanted to miss no word of the officer's discourse.

Suddenly there spoke up a voice from the vicinity of the last row of chairs.

"Major," called out William Atherton Dupuy, always a greyhound on the trail of information, "does an aviator put on all that before he leaves the ground?"

"Yes," returned Rice without cracking a smile. "There are no dressing stations up there yet."

Even the Shells

By J. Frank Davis

Author of "Arrows of Circumstance," Etc.

Mr. Davis does not tell you what town this is in which he lays bare some political work behind the scenes. But it is your town—if you live in a city of more than 100,000. This is the first in a series of clever political stories by the author which we are going to give you

ATROLLEY car, perfectly empty except for the motorman and conductor, came nervously around the corner from Lincoln Avenue into Commerce Street. It attracted considerable attention from the noontide crowd, because it was the first car that the principal thoroughfare of Eddystone had seen for two hours and only the third one that day. It hitched forward jerkily, as though the motorman was not sure of his technique. The conductor did not stand facing the interior, but with his back to the door, and his eyes shifted alertly from side to side.

Leisurely moving downtown, a big three-horse coal truck sprawled across the track in front of the car. The strike breaker at the motor banged his gong. When the coal-truck driver merely looked over his shoulder and sneered, the motorman used poor judgment and bad language. There were recriminations. A crowd instantly gathered. Somebody seized the trolley rope, dragged the trolley from the wire and cut the line. The car thus marooned at once became a center of excitement.

Patrolman Michael J. McQuade, standing on post at the corner of Commerce and Washington Streets, had been watching the approaching trolley with an eye trained to analyze trouble in its incipiency. He waved, now, to the coal-truck driver to get off the track, and moved authoritatively toward the car.

He saw the conductor—a dare-devil soldier of ill-fortune known among his fellow members of Scallan's strike-breaking outfit as "Texas Tierney"—appear on the top of it, having gone out of the rear vestibule window and swung himself up. Grinning contemptuously at the jeering crowd, the man reached the shortened rope and pulled

down the arm until the wheel was in its normal place on the wire.

"All right, ol'-timer!" he shouted to the motorman. "Let's go!"

But the ol'-timer was unable to respond. Certain individuals in the crowd at the forward end of the car, while Mr. Tierney was replacing the trolley, had decided they did not care to have that motorman run the car any farther, and at the moment that his partner advised him that the break in the electric current no longer existed, willing hands were pulling him out through a smashed vestibule door. His attempt at defense with a controller availed him nothing.

Into a milling, shouting turmoil dove Patrolman McQuade, as unceremoniously and successfully as a dreadnought bucks a sea.

There was some sputtering on the part of those whom he hurled out of his way, but no real resistance. Most of the men in the crowd were only there to see and shout; the fight had not become general enough for the mob spirit to spread, nor was the hour of high noon and the location in the very heart of the business district favorable for mass disorder. In the center of the swarm, when he speedily reached it, he found the motorman, half conscious, prone on the pavement, while a big, dark, unpleasant-looking young man, whom McQuade recognized as the one who had broken in the vestibule door and dragged out the strike breaker, was trying, as well as the density of the crowd would allow, to kick in his ribs.

McQuade's left hand closed on the dark young man's collar and yanked him back with a force that nearly upset several citizens who had been in a terrible hurry to get to the center of the disturbance and were now in an equally earnest hurry to get away from it.

"Stand back, there!" he cried, with all the arrogant authority of the veteran policeman. "Get back, or I'll take in the whole of you!"

The dark young man wriggled around and aimed a swift punch at the patrolman's face, which failed to land full but left a red track on the cheek where it glanced. McQuade's right fist came up, jolting, under the other's jaw. At the second jarring blow the young man wilted.

"Get back!" he snarled. "Get back farther!" The circle widened.

Mr. Texas Tierney, while public attention was focused on the front of the car, had succeeded in descending from the roof to its interior unharmed, and now came running through to the front platform. He showed neither fear nor especial anger; this sort of thing was what one expects—and gets paid for—as a professional strike breaker.

"You, conductor!" McQuade snapped. "Can you run the car?"

"Sure."

Stooping, the policeman got a grip on the motorman with his disengaged right hand and heaved him through the wreckage of the vestibule door. The controller lay on the ground and McQuade picked it up also and handed it to Tierney.

"Beat it!" he commanded curtly.

The strike breaker, who was an expert on the psychology of mobs and knew that this little one had probably made all the trouble it was going to, adjusted the controller without another look at the crowd, applied the juice and went speedily and somewhat dangerously down the street. Some hoots and yells followed him, but there were no stones to throw in that part of town, and nobody quite dared to attempt any more intimate form of violence. Officer McQuade again turned his attention to the dark-faced young man, who was groggy, but reviving.

"Come on! We'll walk to the box," he said.

"You'd better not," the young man growled threateningly. "Believe me, McQuade, you'd better not."

"Come on!" was the officer's only reply. "You can't start nothing like that on my beat, Mixer."

"I can't! I'll get your buttons, you——"

"Don't say it, or I'll maybe give you an excuse to get 'em by beating you up *right*. Come on!"

At the patrol box, after sending in his sig-

nal, the officer stood like a blue statue until the wagon came, seeming neither to see the crowd that surrounded them nor to hear the mutterings of his prisoner. The wait was only a few minutes, for the central police station was not four blocks away. He led the man to the wagon step. "Malicious damage to property and assault," he perfunctorily informed the officer who reached down from the back of the patrol to seize the prisoner and help him up the steps in the usual way. The officer's reply was an incredulous gasp, as he recognized who his passenger was to be, and he looked at McQuade with a mixture of reproach and admiration.

"Listen to me, McQuade!" the prisoner called, with no effort to lower his voice now that he was out of reach of the patrolman's heavy hands. "I'll be back here on your beat in fifteen minutes. Hear me? And you won't be on it after next roll call. Get that, too. There ain't any flatty in this town can get away with this with me. Why, you big stiff, if you wanted to quit the force why didn't you resign and be done with it? You great, big——"

The voice faded as the wagon, its gong chattering, rolled away. Patrolman McQuade, his face still expressionless, opened the door of the patrol box.

"McQuade. Wagon's gone," he reported.

He slammed the door shut and turned with his most usual routine manner toward the crowd, now beginning to thin.

"Move on!" he commanded, not ill-naturally. "Can't have the sidewalk blocked."

Not until then did he wipe the blood off his face and dust a leg of his trousers, where the prisoner had kicked him during the first moment of combat.

Orson Kendall, member of the Common Council from the Eighth Ward and one of the youngest and ablest city fathers in Eddsfeld, had witnessed the whole scene from a vantage point in the entrance of the Second National Bank. He made it his business, now, to cross the street to where McQuade was resuming his usual place at the corner. McQuade greeted him in his usual way:

"Good morning, councilman."

"I happened to see that trouble," Kendall told him, "and if it goes any farther I'll be a witness that you didn't do any more than you had to."

"Thanks. It'll go farther, all right. He'll never let it drop. But what could I do? I

can't stand for anything like that on *my beat*."

The councilman appreciated the situation fully. He knew Jerry Meehan—better known as "Mixer"—and he knew that it took a brave policeman to have trouble with him. Jerry was leader of the loosely organized coterie known as "the Meehan gang," and his nickname referred not solely to his social qualities, but to a certain knack at rough-and-tumble disputation. And he was a tower of strength politically in the second ward, down by the river.

"He can't break you," he told McQuade. "The mayor can't remove you without the consent of the aldermen, after trial, and I'll guarantee the aldermen won't stand for it."

"That's kind of you, Mr. Kendall," the policeman said, "but there are plenty other things the mayor can do without asking anybody. Well, let him do 'em. I won't quit."

"Stick it out. We need policemen in this town that dare arrest the Jerry Meehans. Tom Curtley won't be mayor always, you know, and as long as he can't fire you your job is good."

"It's a job, but I don't know how good it'll be," McQuade replied soberly. "I'll know that at roll call to-night, I guess. I think it's me for the long grass, and I've been holding down this corner for seven years." His jaw set stubbornly. "I s'pose I ought to have looked the other way until Mixer got him kicked half to death, and then sworn I didn't see who done it, but that ain't my idea of running a beat. Why the thunder couldn't he go to pulling his rough stuff out in the suburbs somewhere?"

His eyes narrowed and his face set in its professional lack of expression.

"Look who's here!" he exclaimed, under his breath.

Mixer Meehan, his dark face disfigured by a nasty lump under the jaw, came up briskly and truculently.

"I stayed at the station just four minutes," he sneered. "Just long enough for the captain to telephone the mayor and ask him what he ought to do. And now here's where you get yours. I'm on my way to the mayor's office, now, to tell him about it. When he gets through with you, you clumsy fathead—"

"That's enough!" McQuade broke in, low-voiced, swinging his hundred and ninety pounds a half step nearer the gang leader. "No more talk out of you, or you'll go back

to the station, and you won't get out in four minutes, because it'll take longer than that for the doctor to bring you to. You can't call me names on my beat—or anywhere else. On your way, or I'll run you in for threatening an officer. And while I'm doing it, I'll beat you to a pulp!"

Meehan fell back. His face contorted with rage, but for all he was nearly as big as the policeman, he did not dare take the chance of McQuade's keeping his word. "All right, Mister Smart Cop," he replied. "I'll be on me way—and you can think of me when the lieutenant reads the general orders at roll call." Scowling, he headed toward city hall.

"I guess he's right," sighed McQuade. "I will."

"Cheer up! I'm going over and see Web Judson."

"Say, Mr. Kendall, you haven't got me mixed up, have you? It's good of you to offer to do it, but I don't know. I've always voted Democrat."

"I supposed you had. This isn't any matter of politics; this is a matter of saving this town from a riot. There's one due by to-morrow or next day, if this strike keeps up."

McQuade's eye fell on a clock that ornamented a column in front of a jewelry store. "I'll have to be moving," he said. "Time to pull my box."

Webster C. Judson, Republican leader—his enemies called him "boss"—of Eddsfeld, was sitting at this moment in his inner office up near the top of the Merchants' Trust Building, listening coldly to a perservid oration delivered by Holder Trask, president of the Eddsfeld Traction Company.

Mr. Judson was a middle-aged man with neat, unostentatious clothes, a poker face, and a head as smooth and shiny as an egg long from the nest. In wintertime or when forced to sit in drafts he affected a black silk skullcap, beneath which, viewed from the rear, the little fringe of gray hair just above his neck gave rise to the singular illusion that he was equipped with a halo. He was a lawyer by profession, although he had not practiced for years. Officially, his position with the Republican party was treasurer of the city committee.

The traction president had evidently been making some argument that fell on deaf ears, and was losing his temper.

"I tell you you've got to give us protec-

tion. Somehow. I don't care how. We've contributed to your campaigns for—”

“Got value received for all you chipped in, didn't you?” Judson interrupted. “Got some pretty valuable franchises at one time and another, didn't you? Been protected from the radicals, haven't you?”

“We're getting no protection now. With the mayor in charge of the police force—”

“I didn't have anything to do with drawing our city charter,” Judson interrupted again. “If I had, perhaps I wouldn't have left the executive control of the police department in the hands of the mayor, while giving the board of aldermen a check on it by making them pass on all charges. At least”—he smiled slightly—“I'm sure I wouldn't unless I had felt reasonably certain the right party would control the mayor. But that's the way the charter is, and Curtley has told the chief not to help you run your cars or interfere with anybody that starts anything against you.” He looked serious. “I think you'll have some real trouble when the tough nuts around town really get it into their heads that they can damage your property without being pinched for it.”

“These lawless strikers—” Trask began, but Judson cut in:

“Forget it! Up to this minute there hasn't been a single striker mixed up in the disorders. Outside of the pickets, who are keeping within their rights under the law, the conductors and motormen are staying around their headquarters, making parades and distributing these 'We Walk' badges to get sympathy. The gang that is smashing your car windows and the glass in your power houses is the general riff-raff that will damage property any time they can get away with it. As a matter of fact, your strikers aren't lawless. Besides that, they're right and you're wrong, and the whole town knows it. I told you not to have a strike.”

“Maybe you thought I'd let somebody else tell us how to run our business.”

“No. To be entirely frank, I didn't. But that didn't stop me telling you how you ought to run it. You had your say, with the other railroads, at the hearing before the legislature. When they passed the nine-hour law—”

“But the law is unconstitutional. Some of the best lawyers in the State say so.”

“I know they do. But the courts haven't said so. You fellows are putting yourselves

above the law of the State by not obeying it until you get a court decision.”

“They made it effective too soon. They didn't give us a chance to take it to the supreme court.”

Judson waved a hand wearily. “We went into all that last week, before the strike,” he said, “and I told you not to do it. You did it, and now you want me to get you out of the mess.”

“But we can't afford to pay the same wages for shorter hours.”

“Save the bull for the public!” the politician exclaimed, impatiently. “Remember that I know whether you can afford it or not.”

“Well, we claim the right to manage our own business. The question is: What are you going to do for us?”

“Nothing.”

“But the Republican machine—”

“Wants to remain in power next year, and year after next, and the year after that. And it won't, if it takes your side against a strike that this city believes is justified—that this city knows is justified. If we were to side with you, Eddsfield would have more than a Democratic mayor, next year; it would have a Democratic city council.”

Mr. Trask made a tactical mistake:

“Well, by Jupiter, I'll tell you this, Judson! You fellows will do something or it won't be worth while coming to us for a contribution, next campaign, or any other campaign.”

“All right,” Judson agreed, after the briefest pause. “All right; we won't.”

“I propose to arm our strike breakers and tell them to shoot anybody that interferes with them,” the magnate threatened. “I'll have—”

“Before you do anything like that you'd better see your lawyers,” Judson advised him coldly. “Before you talk about it, too. Some one of those roughnecks might kill a man, and if you've been spilling too much talk about that sort of orders, you might do an unpleasant bit of time as an accessory before the fact.” He looked at his watch. “If you'll excuse me—”

Trask stamped out in a rage. He was not used to having people look at their watches when he had done them the honor of calling upon them. He passed Orson Kendall in the outer office with a short nod. Kendall went in to see the party leader.

Judson welcomed the young man cordially.

He had been responsible, originally, for getting him into politics, and Kendall had made his expectations good. He listened with interest to the councilman's account of the recent near-riot and Mixer Meehan's threat.

"Tough on McQuade," he commented, at the finish. "He's a good officer."

"Isn't there anything we can do?"

"We can refuse to remove him, if Curtley suspends him and brings charges—but Curtley won't. He won't make it a matter of formal record that he wants a policeman punished for doing his plain duty. No. He'll punish him, all right, but not that way."

"But can't we do something to stop this rioting? It's getting steadily worse; I wouldn't be surprised to hear any minute that somebody had been killed. It's our business as much as it is the mayor's."

"Of course," Judson agreed. "But there isn't anything we can do short of asking the governor to order out the guard."

"I suppose that—even if he would do it—would be something like committing political suicide for the whole of us."

Judson nodded gravely. "You have the temper of the town sized up right," he said. "They're so sore with the railroad company they'll stand for anything, and Curtley is shrewd enough to make capital of it."

"I'm going to see him," Kendall decided suddenly. "I'm on the committee on street railroads; that gives me an excuse."

Judson considered this. "I see no objection," he said. "But you won't get anywhere. He is going to run for re-election and he had less than seven hundred plurality last fall. The Socialist candidate had over a thousand votes. Curtley is after that Socialist thousand."

"He is giving the city a black eye it will never get over."

"What does he care, provided he gets re-elected? He is no fool. He sees how the radical vote is increasing in the cities of this State. He isn't but forty years old. The radicals *may* get strong enough in the next few years, he thinks, to elect him governor."

"And he's willing to encourage murder to make good with them."

"He'd encourage anything to get votes from anybody. But go talk with him. I don't see that it can do any harm. Come back and let me know what he says."

Kendall found the mayor in his office at city hall. The executive looked up from his

desk with his stock political smile and said: "Hello, councilman. What can I do for you?"

Curtley was tall and dark, with a shrewd, intelligent face and hair that he wore a trifle long thrown back from his forehead. But for the shadow of a sneer that habitually marked his mouth he might have been esteemed good looking. He had a gift at quick debate and all the shifting ability to make platitudes sound like principles that marks the natural demagogue.

Kendall went at his errand directly:

"I happened to see that trouble with a motorman on Commerce Street," he said, "and I thought I'd come over and tell you about it. The officer did only his duty; he couldn't have done less."

"Couldn't, eh?" Curtley repeated. "How long since Mike McQuade has been one of your constituents?"

"He isn't. This call of mine is merely because I want to see a good policeman get a fair show, and he——"

"He'll get a fair show," the mayor broke in, with his most unpleasant inflection. "He'll get it quick, too. Jerry Meehan told me you were talking with McQuade when he came by. Maybe you'd like to go tell him what he's going to get. It will save him waiting for the six-o'clock roll call."

Curtley's mouth pulled down hard at the corners, and his white hand on the flat desk before him clenched a trifle.

"There is a nice little beat out near Mercer Park," he said. "It is two miles and a half long, with a signal box at each end of it. The rules call for them to be pulled alternately, once an hour. There are about fifty houses on the whole beat, and it starts half a mile from the street-car line. The last car at night—when the cars are running—leaves downtown on that line at eleven-thirty. The officer who goes on duty there at one o'clock in the morning can take his choice of going out on that car and waiting out there in the brush until it is time to go to work, or he can walk from the station. It's a three-mile walk. Well, councilman, your friend McQuade is going to get that beat. He's going to get it on the morning shift—from one until nine, starting to-night. It will give him exercise and plenty of time to think."

"But mayor!" Kendall protested. "What effect is it going to have on the whole force to know that one of the best officers in the

city is punished that way for doing exactly what he ought to do?"

"Ought to do? Who says he ought to interfere in the traction company's troubles? I tell you the EddsfieId Traction Company"—unconsciously he let his voice roll as though he were making a speech—"is the greatest lawbreaker in all our community. And a deliberate lawbreaker has no rights that a law-abiding public is bound to respect. When the other policemen in this city hear what has happened to McQuade, they'll know enough to mind their own business in this street-car strike."

"And somebody will get murdered."

"If so, it will be another count against the predatory corporation. I refuse to allow the police force of this city to be used to protect them in their violation of the law."

"Listen, mayor! Suppose I break some law—the excise law, say. Suppose I sell liquor illegally. You come and raid me and arrest and try me, by strictly legal process, but you don't send a mob to smash my front windows and burn my house down. I agree with you that the traction company is wrong—absolutely. But there are ways to stop them breaking the law outside of encouraging mobs to destroy their property."

"Let the mobs cut loose!" the mayor declared positively. "They won't be stopped by our police force while I'm running it. If the railroad people don't like it, let them obey the law."

The mayor's secretary had gone to lunch and the outer office was vacant, which explained why, following a tap on the door and Curtley's "Come in," the ponderous figure of Emmet Tansey, the chief of police, came into the room.

"Oh, I didn't know anybody was in here with you," he apologized. "I'll wait. Howdy do, councilman."

"Come in," the mayor said. "Is it anything private?"

"Why—" the chief hesitated. "Some reports I'm getting on the strike."

"Talk right before Mr. Kendall. He and I were just discussing the strike."

The chief looked a trifle embarrassed. He was a policeman of long experience with changing administrations, which meant that he had well learned how to trim his sails to varying winds, but he knew his business; left alone, he would have enforced the laws with a reasonable degree of impartiality.

"It's this way, mayor," he said. "Cap'n

Mallett just got me on the phone and says there's a mob gathering on Water Street. They've been running cars there all morning, about one every half hour. The cap'n says there's been some trouble there this forenoon, but not very bad—some stones thrown, and some eggs." He made a lumbering jest. "Not many eggs—not at the present price. One of the eggs though, hit an old lady passenger. And a traveling man from out of town got his head cut with a rock; he said he didn't know there was a strike. But that wasn't what I came to say. Mallett says the gang down there is getting *real* ugly and he thinks about the next car that comes along they're going to beat up the strike breakers and maybe set the car afire. They're talking of doing so, anyway. They've got some stumps of trees and things to roll on the track, so's to make the car stop. There's about a hundred and fifty young fellers in the mob—you know that Water Street gang, mayor—and Mallett thought—." He coughed apologetically. "Well, maybe it wouldn't do no harm if I sent a wagon load of men down there and let—."

"How many times have I got to tell you to mind your own business?" the mayor demanded angrily. "Here's what you do, and it's all you do. It's all they're entitled to, and more. You tell Mallett to go up the street and meet the next car that comes along and tell the crew that he doesn't order them to go back—they can do as they please—but that if they go on, they do it at their own peril. After that, what happens to them is their own funeral."

"Yes, sir," the chief said. "Of course they won't turn back. Scallan's men never does."

"Then let them get what's coming to them."

"Yes, sir. Well, I guess that was about all I had to say. Er—I'll be getting back to headquarters."

He went heavily out.

Kendall rose. "It strikes me, Curtley," he said, stiffly, "that such orders as that are an outrage."

"Does it?" the mayor challenged, nastily. "You don't dare get up on the floor of the council and say so. And your crowd doesn't dare say so. I wish you and they would; it would make things easier for us next election. If you fellows want to take the EddsfieId Traction Company's side against me in

this mess, just go to it and see where you'll come out."

The riot on Water Street took place according to Police Captain Mallett's prophecy. A hundred thugs, not one of whom had ever been employed by the railroad company and many of whom had never been employed by anybody, joyously wrecked a car and beat both members of its crew into unconsciousness. Mallett, from an observation post behind a billboard, identified not less than twelve of the rioters as young men with whom he had come into professional contact, and gnashed his teeth as he realized that he must report to the chief that all the culprits had escaped before he arrived. He meant to be a good policeman—but the city charter allowed the mayor to order the chief to reduce a captain to the ranks, and he had already heard what was going to happen to Mike McQuade at next roll call.

After the height of the excitement had passed, approaching with sufficient leisure to allow the rioters to disperse without uncomfortable haste, he rendered first aid to the motorman and conductor and sent a lone patrolman, who had also witnessed the incident from behind a tree and now told his superior, unconvincingly, that he had been at the farther end of his beat, to summon an ambulance.

This was not long after two o'clock. At four, a serious company assembled in Webster Judson's office.

Judson faced around from his roll-top desk in the corner and in a way presided over the conference. Catley, president of the board of aldermen, was there, and Woodhull, president of the common council, and Blanding, the veteran city clerk, and Thornton Desbro, the prim, fussily dressed city solicitor, and Lawrence Neal, State senator from Eddsfeld, and Merrill Hart, a manufacturer and banker who had never held political office in his life. These would have been recognized by any one familiar with Eddsfeld politics as the upper steering committee of Republican municipal affairs. They passed on most important matters before either branch of the city council did; Judson, Neal and Hart—although the others didn't know it—decided what to advocate in concert before the others were called in; and Neal had long suffered from a suspicion that Judson and Hart settled things before they sent for him. And Judson controlled Hart, without Hart's ever guessing it.

Orson Kendall was there, also. It was the first time he had been privileged to attend a meeting of the real powers; Judson had invited him because he wanted them to hear at first hand the story of Patrolman McQuade and a repetition of the mayor's orders to the chief. They all knew the details of the Water Street riot; the afternoon newspapers were out with big headlines about it.

"Socialist!" cried Bunker Hart, when Kendall had told them what the mayor said, not omitting Curtley's challenge to the Republicans to fight him on the issue. The banker called all radicals "socialists." The word, to him, was a synonym of "I. W. W." and "anarchist"—he made no distinction. If it had been a few years later he would have included "Bolshevik" and "Spartacide" in the group that the word embraced.

"The thing to be considered," Judson said, "is what to do about it. Somebody has got to stop this rioting. The mayor won't. That puts it up to us, doesn't it?"

Several of the company talked at once, the sum of their remarks being that there didn't seem to be anything to be done.

"If it were presented to Governor Bearse, right, I think he would take the responsibility of ordering out the guard," Senator Neal said when a pause ensued.

"He wouldn't do it without letting it get out, sooner or later, that we asked him to, would he?" demanded Catler, president of the board of aldermen. "Well, we can't stand for that."

"Why?" Judson asked, softly.

"Why? Because it would lick every one of us at the polls next fall. That's why."

"The city is getting a bad name with the business interests of the State," Hart said, and Desbro, the city solicitor, added: "If we don't do what we can to stop lawbreaking we share the responsibility."

"That's all right, but the business interests of the State don't do anything to help us out if we get ours next election," Catler insisted. "It seems to me we'd better keep our hands off. The mayor's got the authority. All right. If anybody criticizes us, pass the buck to him."

"That is pretty good logic in an ordinary situation," Judson said, "but this isn't exactly ordinary, is it? Somebody is going to get killed within a day or two. I'm afraid that is the business of everybody that could do anything to prevent it."

Catler hitched uneasily in his chair.

"This duty thing is all right, but we'd have to pay too big a price. Great Scott! Don't you realize it might lick every one of us?"

"I don't want to be licked any more than anybody else," Senator Neal said, "but I'm willing to be one of a committee to go see the governor."

Hart approved briskly. "So am I."

"Easy enough for you. You haven't got any office," Catler retorted.

"I guess we all agree that Hart stands to lose as much as any of us if the city goes Democratic," Judson put in smoothly. "Personally, under ordinary circumstances, I wouldn't touch a situation like this with a ten-foot pole. It's loaded with dynamite. But— Danger of a riot that will kill a lot of people isn't exactly ordinary circumstances."

Catler recognized the combination against him. Woodhull had not said a word; he seldom did at a conference. But he could be depended upon to side with Judson. So could Blanding. The president of the board spread his hands in a gesture of abnegation.

"Go ahead!" he said, disgustedly. "Scramble the eggs! But you hear me. There'll be no unscrambling 'em."

"Then that's settled," Judson said, quite as though Catler had indorsed the plan without reservation, and reached for his desk telephone. Ten minutes later, the gathering in the meantime having discussed without getting anywhere the pros and cons of the strike and its uncomfortable complications, he got the governor's secretary on long distance and made an appointment to meet the governor at the State House at eight o'clock.

"Will you all go?" he asked, after he had replaced the receiver.

"I can't," Catler replied. "I'd like to, but the wife has made an engagement for this evening that I just can't possibly break. That is, unless you insist on it. If you do, of course—"

Judson's pleasant smile told the board president that he was not deceiving him at all. "I guess there'll be enough without you, Joe," he said. "We can tell the governor that you and the majority of the board are with us."

"Of course," Catler agreed, with a sigh of relief. "I'm with you, whatever you do. You know that. Sure. Always."

"We'll take Frank Burden and Bill Knapp

along," Judson remarked. "Burden can talk for the smaller business interests that Hart doesn't represent, and Bill will tell the governor the situation is out of hand. We can get the five-twenty-seven. Shall we meet at the train?"

Governor Bearse, at half past eight o'clock, sat back in his big chair in the executive office at the State House and surveyed the men before him with deep seriousness. Before they came he had already read in the newspapers of the day's disorders at Eddsfeld. Now he had listened to Councilman Kendall's account of the mayor's orders, and to the urge of Merrill Hart, representing the manufacturers and banks, and Francis Burden, president of the Eddsfeld Chamber of Commerce, that he take action to protect life and property. City Solicitor Desbro had summarized the law, with which the State attorney general, who had been called into the conference, agreed. The governor possessed unquestioned power to order out the State troops, provided either the mayor of a city or the sheriff of a county informed him officially that order could not otherwise be maintained. Sheriff Bill Knapp of Eddsfeld County told the governor he could not keep the peace without assistance.

The governor fingered a paper weight and sighed. He was an elderly man of means with a taste for politics, against whose private or political character no opponent had ever been able to raise a worthwhile criticism, honest and conscientious. It was his first term as governor.

"I suppose you appreciate exactly what you are asking me to do," he said, speaking with slow emphasis. "If I order the guard into Eddsfeld, I shall not call out one or two companies—that, I think, would inflame the mobs and perhaps make violence more likely. No. If I act at all, I shall send a whole brigade. Eddsfeld will be full of soldiers. The mob will be overawed—but Curtley and his crowd will have material for a hundred speeches regarding Capitalism ordering out three thousand soldiers, at enormous cost, to help a lawbreaking corporation—which is exactly what the Eddsfeld Traction Company is. I can sign the order to the adjutant general—he is where he can be reached, and his plans are all made, because I saw this coming when you made your appointment, this afternoon—and pretty nearly the entire brigade can be patrolling the dangerous sections in Eddsfeld by to-morrow."

He paused and looked around the little circle almost pleadingly.

"I can sign that order—and you gentlemen understand, as well as I do, that I shall be signing my political death warrant."

There was an uncomfortable silence.

"It's tough, governor," Judson said. "Well, you know how things are. I guess you have to decide for yourself."

"I saw a mob once," the governor mused, after a minute's thought. "I know how the contagion spreads. If I kept my hands off, and one person got killed—." He turned to his secretary, listening respectfully in the background. "Telephone General Ball," he commanded sharply, "and tell him to call out the second brigade and then come here for further orders."

Eddsfield awoke the next morning to find men in uniforms, with rifles and machine guns, on the streets, and more companies pouring in on trains. Mayor Curtley, soon after daybreak, driving toward the armory where the brigadier general in charge had his headquarters, found a soldier with a fixed bayonet standing in the path of his car.

"You can't go through this street," the man told him.

"Get out of the way. I'm mayor of this city," the executive cried.

The guardsman was unimpressed. "I don't care if you're Charlie Chaplin. My orders is not to let nobody go through this street. I'll call the corporal of the guard, if you want."

Thereupon, to his summons, a corporal came running.

"Send word to General Haggard that I demand to see him at once," Curtley commanded. "Tell him I want to consult with him."

A lieutenant who showed the loss of his night's sleep came to the lines. "The general's compliments, Mr. Mayor," he said politely, "and he very much regrets that he cannot possibly see you now. He's too busy. Some time after noon, perhaps, or in the evening—."

There was no more disorder. Everybody could see, before night, that the opportunity for it had passed. They saw, too, that an army of strike breakers had come into the city. Without many passengers, but on something approaching the usual schedule, the street cars were running. Another two or three days of this, any one could foretell,

and the backbone of the strike would be broken.

Orson Kendall called at Web Judson's office at five o'clock that afternoon. He met Senator Neal and Merrill Hart coming out, neither of them looking downcast.

"There isn't a particle of trouble down in that Water Street district," he reported to Judson. "The soldiers kept me moving, but I got about freely enough. The mayor sent word around on the quiet that if anybody got arrested and put in the police station he would order the chief to release them and the guard officers couldn't help themselves, because the police stations are absolutely under control of the mayor. So a couple of tough chaps tried it, about three o'clock. Perhaps you have already heard about it."

"No. What happened?"

"They threw rocks at a car and the general knew a lot better way of handling them than turning them over to the police for the mayor to let out. They are under guard in the armory."

He shook his head resignedly. "Well," he said, "I'm glad we aren't going to have any killings on the city's conscience, but—I hear how the people are talking, on the streets. The eggs are scrambled, good and plenty."

"Maybe," Judson agreed, with a surprising lack of dejection. "Maybe. But scrambled eggs can be *un*scrambled, notwithstanding what a famous financier said."

The young man's voice was eager. "Do you see a possible way?"

"The mayor has called a citizens' mass meeting for Saturday night, you know. He hasn't had much to say in his interviews in the papers, except to deprecate calling out the guard and to insist there was no need of it. He hasn't flatly accused us of doing it, at all, but of course he knows. He's waiting until the mass meeting, and then he's going to cut loose, and put the responsibility all up to us, and give us our never-get-over."

With the palms of both hands, Judson went through the motion of smoothing his absent hair back from an imaginary parting—a little gesture he had when he was pleased.

"It's Saturday night he's saving this slam for—and to-night is Thursday night," he said. "You haven't seen the city messenger, I take it."

"No."

"He is serving notices on all the members,

calling special meetings of both board and council for to-night."

"What's the plan?"

"You will pass two joint resolutions. One of them will take full responsibility for asking the governor to order out the guard, and show that the object had nothing to do with helping the traction company, but was purely to protect life and property. Thereby beating the mayor to the public with the information."

"Will the people believe it—I mean as to our aim?"

"They will, because the other resolution will be in the morning papers alongside of it. This second resolution will declare the Eddsfeld Traction Company to have violated its charter by breaking the laws of the State and to have thereby forfeited its franchises in the streets of the city, and it will instruct the city solicitor to take steps at once to have the franchises annulled and the company forbidden to do further business."

Kendall grasped the point. "One resolution gets the conservatives and the other the radicals!" he exclaimed. "We go on record for law and order, but we get after the company harder than the mayor himself. But is there any chance that the franchises——"

"About to-morrow—or perhaps the day after, or the first of the week," Judson interrupted him, "Mr. Holder Trask is likely to show up to find out what he had better do to have the dogs called off. He might be able to make his franchises stick, but it would cost him more than the fight is worth, and he knows it. So he will bluster and howl and wind up by asking what he's got to do. As a friend, I shall advise him to obey the new nine-hour law, pending a decision by the courts, and notify his strikers that they are to come back on their own terms. He'll scream with agony, but he'll do it. And if Mr. Thomas Curtley can make any capital out of that, he is welcome."

"You were right. They *can* be unscrambled," Kendall enthused.

Judson chuckled whimsically.

"I should say, speaking from several years' political experience," he predicted, "that we might even get the shells back on."

There will be another political yarn by Mr. Davis in the April 20th POPULAR. It is called "Who's Who in the Eighth."

In the ground-floor lobby of the building, as he went out, Kendall met Patrolman Michael McQuade.

"I was just thinking," the policeman said, "of going up to see Mr. Judson, and then I was thinking perhaps I'd better not, and I was kinda standing here studying it. I wonder if you'd be willing to give him a sort of message from me."

"Certainly. I heard about what happened to you at roll call, last night. And if there's anything we can do——"

"Thanks, councilman. You didn't hear what happened to this Mixer Meehan *after* roll call, did you?"

"No."

"Well——" Patrolman McQuade looked vaguely about the lobby and then brought his gaze back to Kendall's face. His features were grave, but his eyes were twinkling ingenuously. "It seems he was out walking in a dark place down there in the second ward, where he lives, walking all alone, and he met somebody and had a fight and got beat up something crool. He's over in the City Hospital, and I hear 'twill be three weeks and more before he's out. What was done to him was a shame. Well—seeing as me and him had a little trouble yesterday and he's a suspicious sort of guy, like, he might be saying it was me and asking the mayor to prefer charges again' me and bring me before the board. I thought I'd like to get word to Mr. Judson that if the mayor done so, not to try to stave it off out of sympathy for me at all, but to go ahead and have the hearing."

Patrolman McQuade held up two enormous fists and studied them reflectively, and Kendall saw that they were both shockingly skinned and bruised.

"You might say to Mr. Judson," the officer grinned, contentedly, "that three other police officers—it's only one of them coincidences that the whole three are also doing punishment duty ordered by the mayor—will testify that at the moment of this outrageous, aggravated assault on Mixer Meehan, I was wit' them in a movin'-pitcher show, far fr'm the scene of the battle, so that I have a perfect alibi."

The Companions of the Ace High

By Edgar Wallace

Author of "The Man Who Knew," Etc.

III.—THE KURT OF HONOR

THEY called Kurt of Wennigen the Kurt of Honor, and Sullivan, who was chargé d'affaires at the embassy for a long time, has left it on record that he was the only gentleman in Germany.

That may or may not be true, but Dexter, of the Ace High Squadron, who had fought the prince until his only gun jammed, always said: "There are Germans and Germans—but I only met the Germans till I met Kurt of Wennigen."

For Kurt, seeing his enemy's helplessness and recognizing that he was the victim of bad luck, had broken off the fight with a cheery wave of his hand and had glided around in search of somebody better able to defend himself.

They called him the Kurt of Honor because he was the final arbiter in matters touching honorable dealing. In the days before the madness came, he was the Bayard of the German army, possessing a power surer than Von Hertzell's, more complete than that of his imperial highness.

He fought and killed Major Count von Rathskell on the nice question of an initial—the initial being that of a lady mentioned by Graf von Rathskell. He suffered close arrest in the fortress of Ingolstadt for killing Von Bernardi, the dispute arising out of a money-lending transaction in which Bernardi had acted as agent, and it is rumored that he had challenged a very high one, close indeed to the imperial successor, and that it had taken the united efforts of the imperial chancellor, backed by the minister of war and the chief of the general staff, to convince the army that the challenged highness could not in propriety accept such a challenge.

His mother, the old Duchess of Wennigen, held views which were not dissimilar to those of her austere son.

When Adolph of Karlhuhe came to spend the week-end with this lady, who was his aunt, the Seventeenth Corps Aérial Com-

pany of the Engineers let up four captive balloons, one at each corner of the house. These rose to the height of five hundred feet, and each was tethered by the fine steel cables in such a way that, in addition to the perpendicular wire, there were two at an angle. By this means there were formed four Saint Andrew Crosses of wire in the air. At night the cables were let out to a thousand feet.

The prince, smoking a cigarette, came out on the terrace to watch the lengthening and was satisfied.

"But, my dear Adolph," said the grand duchess with good-natured derision, "you do not imagine for one moment that these absurd people—what do you call them—the High Aces—?"

"The Ace High Squadron," said the prince, making a little grimace as though the words hurt him, "yes, I mean all that I said. They will follow me and they will bomb me, or at least one of them will."

"You mean the American?"

The prince nodded.

The old woman looked at him keenly.

"What have you done to him?"

The prince shrugged one shoulder impatiently. He was a sallow-faced young man with a trim dark mustache and the high cheek bones which are characteristic of the house of Karlhuhe.

"It's a long story," he said. "Anyway, Aunt Sophia, we know—a damned English prisoner who escaped from our cage at Senkelager saw it and found out my name—"

"Oh, that!"

The duchess understood. So many events had been crowded into the past two years that she had almost forgotten the story. It had to do with the war of East Prussia and an American girl who had been touring Germany and found herself in Gumbingen when the Russian tide of invasion had swept through the pleasure ground of the junkers. The Russians had treated the girl with con-

sideration and courtesy, and then Hindenburg's army had appeared and had swept Samsonov into the Masurian Lakes. From thence onward all trace of Jean Lexington had been lost.

Then one evening a British prisoner who had escaped from Sennelager, while making his way by night to the Dutch frontier, had stopped at a big house to burgle food and clothing. He had seen a weeping girl and an insolent young officer in the uniform of the Prussian Guard, had caught a few words in a language he understood, such words as: "My good Miss Lexington—it is an honor that I, Adolph of Karlhuhe—." But had not realized that anything was very wrong.

At any rate, he could have done nothing, for he was unarmed and the darkness about the great house was filled with the voices of servants and orderlies. Nevertheless, on his arrival in England, he had spoken of this experience to the examiner who takes the statements of escaped prisoners, and the facts had been forwarded to the American embassy. More than this, they were published in the American press, and Prince Adolph had been summoned to great headquarters to give his version. He had certainly been in Gumbingen on the day the girl had vanished, it was as certainly possible that he, a great feudal lord commanding cavalry recruited from his own retainers, could compel their slavish obedience, and it was an undoubted fact that he was on his Westphalian estate on the very day the English soldier had seen him in conversation with the girl; but he denied all knowledge of her, produced his adjutant and his personal servants, who swore that they had no knowledge of her existence, and the matter was promptly dismissed as being the invention of a malicious prisoner of war.

This the grand duchess remembered, slowly swinging her fan.

"So the squadron believe that you—know." She was a shrewd old lady with a profound contempt for the Prussian branch of her family—she had been a Saxon princess before she came to Wennigen in the seventies. "And they're knights-errant—."

"It is one fellow," said the prince explosively, "one tradesman named Lane. Ah, yes, our intelligence have given me full particulars. A storekeeper! Without birth of any kind, it is monstrous!"

The grand duchess smiled coldly.

"Storekeepers have hearts, my dear Adolph, especially American storekeepers. Kurt, who knows America, says that many of them are college men and are quite well educated. This Lane was—"

Adolph of Wennigen controlled his temper as best he could. He could not consign Kurt to the devil for reasons.

"Affianced to Jean—Jean Lexington," he corrected himself hastily. "I call her Jean in my mind," he went on lamely, meeting the old woman's cold eyes. "She has become almost a real person to me—I have heard so much of the girl."

The grand duchess nodded and looked up at the four swaying balloons with their interlacing stays.

"And do you usually do—this sort of thing"—she jerked her head to the air trap—"wherever you are?"

He went red.

"Only when I am in bombing distance of the line," he said, licking his lips. "My father thinks it is wise, and the All-Highest-the-Same-Ones. I am, as you know, the heir to the throne of Ahnt-Darmstadt and Karlhuhe."

She looked at him, noted the confusion and the shame, caught, for the first time, a momentary hint of his terror, and nodded.

A shrill bugle call split the evening air and the slim figure of the young prince went rigid.

"There is an enemy machine coming," he said thickly. "That is the signal. I have telephone connection with the Seventeenth Army Corps. May I take my leave, gracious lady?"

He did not wait for an answer, but pushed his way through the guests and into the great house. For he knew of cellars hewn in the solid rock which formed the foundations of Schloss Wennigen.

The duchess looked past her startled guests. With never a muscle moving, she turned back to the terrace and raised her lorgnette to survey the skies. The moon had risen at its full, but no moon gleams on the dead black of a night bomber. Those daring souls who had not melted away to the security of the house and who now stood in a semicircle about the grand old lady of Wennigen—here, without exception, were all the officers of the party—heard without seeing, the machine.

Snarl—zoo—o—o—snarl—zoo, fitfully rising to a hateful buzz-saw howl, sinking

to a complaining drone, the noise of the air plane drew nearer. Then a light appeared in the skies, a full blue bubble of light that grew in size and intensity until the whole countryside was illuminated with a brilliance that made the moonlight insignificant.

"Parachute flare, your serene highness," said a man's voice. "I suggest we stand close to the house."

But no bombs dropped. The noise of the air plane rose to a deafening and continuous thunder, and then they saw it circling like a gray moth shape in the light which the magnesium flare reflected back from the earth.

In such a light the four balloons were visible and the man in the big Spad could even see the metallic gleam of the wire guys.

He circled for half a minute and then began to climb westward. Presently the snarl was a drone and the drone a hum and then there was silence.

"Adolph's balloon guard was effective," said the grand duchess lightly, and beckoned her major-domo. "Keller, tell his serene highness that there is no further danger. You will probably find this serene highness in the moselle vault."

On the Monday, the prince came to her boudoir to kiss hands on taking his leave.

"I fear I have given you a great deal of trouble," he said, but she cut him short.

"Adolph," her voice was like steel, "if this unfortunate American woman is in your keeping, marry her."

"Gracious lady!"

"Marry her, or I think this storekeeper will kill you sooner or later, but that is immaterial. What is to the point is this: that you should not bring the House of Princes into any worse odium than that in which they already are."

"I swear to you, dear aunt—"

"You lie," said the old woman quietly. "Get rid of that American girl by marriage or—"

"But she wouldn't marry me—she wouldn't—she wouldn't!" he burst forth.

"Oh!"

She got up, closed the folding doors which led from the outer reception room, and came back to her place by the gilt writing table where he had found her.

"Now tell me everything—where is she?"

The young man wiped his streaming brow with a shaky hand.

"You swear you won't tell—my God! If the All-Highest should know—"

"You overrate the humanity of the Hohenzollern," she scoffed. He shivered and seemed inclined to cross himself. "There was never a member of that house who would not regard your adventure as a joke. No, it is not William and his breed that I care for—it is for my own house. For the honor of my son, all of my race that has gone before, all that will come after. You'll tell me the truth or Kurt shall come to you and demand it."

His shaking hands went out in protest. Kurt of Wennenigen, that slim gray colonel of cavalry, with his fanatical code and his wrist of steel—

"She's dead!" he blurted. "She died—in the lake at my castle in the Odenwald. I never harmed her, I swear it! I was afraid—after all the scandal, so I hid her in the Odenwald, and she escaped and Heinrich found her body in the Little Lake."

The old woman pursed her lips and looked past him.

"Go, now," she said.

"As God lives, gracious lady!"

"Go, now."

He left the castle plucking at his lips with nervous fingers. This was on a Monday. Adolph of Karlruhe went back to his home and waited for a summons to great headquarters. As the days passed and no summons came his spirits rose. Ten days went by and Adolph came to army headquarters and was favorably received.

The companions of the Ace High were not a communicative body. Their conversation at such meals as they took together had mostly relation to the weather, the strength and the direction of the wind, for they were holding many secrets besides those private grievances which grew in every heart save one.

The most eccentric of organizations have a tendency to form part of an ordered system contributing in their very eccentricity to the rounded completeness of the general plan. The orbit of the companions of the Ace High, nominally owing allegiance to fifty square miles of an Italian republic, and actually a body privately organized by an American citizen, was gradually conforming to the movement of the greater body

and was becoming if not absorbed by, at least moving with the big army machine.

More and more the aces were requisitioned for intelligence work. More and more frequently came the "A-a Confidential" to the Archie batteries telling them of strange machines which would fly over at extraordinary hours, and these warnings were in turn from French, British, and American headquarters.

Pilot Hookey Patterson, whose heart sang glad songs, and who emulated that Theocrite of whom Browning said:

Early morning, noon, and night
"Praise God!" said Theocrite.

supplied all the joyousness that the squadron knew.

"You sing in your sleep 'Ooky, truly!'" complained little Beauclerc, his roommate. "Name of a pipe, you make chin wag eternally, truly!"

"Son of France," began Hookey.

"Belgium," corrected the other quickly.

"Pardon, you speak French—"

"You speak English, 'Ooky, yet you are not Scotch," said Beauclerc confusingly.

"Listen, brother," said Hookey Patterson, poised a large cup of steaming coffee, "you wonder why I sing. I will tell you—two nights ago I saw the moon rise over Cologne. Oh, the wonder of it!"

"Cologne?" It was Dexter, sitting at the head of the table. "I thought you were escorting the raid on Metz-Sablon?"

Hookey waved a lofty denial.

"Metz-Sablon bores me, colonel. No, sir, I joined an English squadron outside left. I didn't know where they were going, but I was good for four hundred miles, so I went along. My! I guess that English skipper was mad. He kept signaling to me, asking who I was. I just kept on answering 'O. K.' And it was fine! I flew low to get a better view—wonderful! You know how the cathedral towers rise, 'prayers frozen to stone' bathed in gray-green moonlight and throwing mysterious shadows upon shadows deeper still. A symphony in green and purple—that's Cologne in the light of a full moon—and the English got two lovely bursts on the railway station!"

"I saw you."

It was Steve Lane, whose taciturnity was remarkable even in a community so sparing of speech as this, who spoke.

A grave young man with lined and hag-

gard eyes, he now broke the silence of a week.

"I saw you coming over Treves. You were a mile to the right of the squadron and losing height."

Hookey grinned and nodded and drank his coffee in one movement.

"Sure thing," he admitted. "I was parting company and trying to pick up the Metz-Sablon crowd, but I guess they must have gone on without me—and, anyway, I was down to my last pint of juice when I landed home."

"Anybody at Treves you know, Lane?" asked Dexter.

The other nodded.

"I believe so. French army intelligence had word that—somebody was there."

F. A. I. sent word later in the day that Prince Adolph of Karlhube would visit the headquarters of Von Gallwitz's army for lunch, and Lane went over with a tray of bombs and a sickening sense of coming failure in his heart.

Between Treves and Metz he met a solitary German airman and made no effort to avoid him. Lane was a sharp and daring fighter and a brilliant airman and he was flying a fast Curtiss. The German, though solitary and unsupported, swerved to gain the sun, but Lane went parallel and took the upper position first. He dived with the sun at his back and got in two bursts at fifty yards, but his opponent side-slipped and flew to the flank of his attacker. Lane stalled and fell back on his tail, but the other man dropped as quickly, banked round, and fired as he turned.

Lane straightened his machine, shut off his engines, and glided down. He wanted to die on the ground, and with every sobbing breath he drew his heart cried out against the injustice of this sudden ending to his quest.

His wheels touched the ground lightly and the machine ran smoothly over the stubble of a newly reaped field. He pulled feebly at the strap which bound him to his seat, and then his head fell forward and the light of day went out.

When he recovered consciousness he was lying on his back, a folded coat was supporting his head, and he had a drowsy sense of comfort. He opened his eyes slowly.

An officer was kneeling at his side, and some German soldiers were grouped at a respectful distance.

The officer was a man of fifty, clean cut of face and very gray about the temples. This Lane saw as in a dream. He knew that this man had shot him down and felt no sense of resentment. It was fair, but, oh, if he had had another day—a few more hours!

"I am afraid you are in a bad way, my friend," said a gentle voice. "You have no identity badge on your wrist. Will you tell me your name?"

"Lane—Ace High."

"Lane?" There was distress in the officer's voice. "Lane of the Ace High? Incredible!"

Lane closed his eyes. He knew he was dying and he was at peace, only an uneasy sense of work left undone troubled the serenity of his soul. And the officer was speaking:

"I am sorry. I know all about you. My mother told me. I am Prince Kurt of Wennigen. You have heard of me?"

Lane nodded. All the army had heard of the fifty-year-old airman and his single-handed victories. Kurt bent down his eagle face and spoke slowly and deliberately into the American's ear, and Lane nodded and smiled and smiling, died.

Prince Adolph lunched with the staff of Von Gallwitz's army, but his cousin, Kurt of Wennigen, came too late for the meal, but in time for the coffee.

The next story in this series is entitled "Hokey Who Played With Germans," and it will appear in the next POPULAR, on sale April 20th.

A TRIBUTE TO TRAVELING MEN

IN the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia there is a little town called Madison. In the village there is a store which sells anything from buttonhooks to four-horse plows and buys anything from eggs to wheat. In the store is its proprietor, James W. Banks, a man of wit and penetration.

Not long ago, when the news in the papers had to do with nothing but the victories of the American troops on the Marne, the holocausts to which they subjected the Boches and the valorous way in which they captured German trenches, a traveling salesman, known as a "drummer" in that section, drove a dusty horse and buckboard up to Banks' store and lugged half a dozen sample cases into the building.

"I see," said the drummer, having washed his hands in the tin basin back of the hardware counter, "they're having a great time over there in Europe."

"That so?" inquired Mr. Banks, completing victoriously at that moment a thirty-minute and unrelenting pursuit of an unusually pesky fly.

"Yes," informed the drummer, peering into the cracked mirror above the water bucket and adjusting a diamond pin that weighed half a pound, avoirdupois; "a great time; *some* fight, I tell you!"

"I declare," said Mr. Banks, removing his spectacles, "you drummers certainly do pick up the odds and ends of country gossip, don't you?"

"This morning," said Kurt, as they sat under the great elms of the Château Framelis, a gay group of staff officers which included Adolph, greatly relieved by the courteous greeting he had received from his cousin, "this morning, I fought with an American hero."

Adolph caught his eye and laughed. His laugh meant nothing but polite evidence of his interest.

"Your highness laughs," said Kurt easily. "Perhaps your highness doubts my word?"

It may have been his fourth liqueur which blunted Adolph's sensitive instinct for danger.

"I certainly doubt your word, my dear friend, when you tell me that an American—"

Kurt flung the contents of his coffee cup straight at the smiling face.

"It is unpardonable to doubt the word of a Wennigen," he said.

That evening, in the tactful absence of the general and his staff, they fought the matter out in the rosary of the Château, and Kurt killed his man at the fourth pass.

He wiped his sword and delivered himself to custody. To the officer of the guard he made this request:

"Will you be so good as to wire to her highness, the grand duchess, and tell her that the affair of Fräulein Lexington is satisfactorily ended?"

Quicksand

By Henry C. Rowland

Author of "The Arbiters," "Lobster Pots," Etc.

As a rill may lead to the ocean, so did the button which opens this story lead to international matters. Another case of "you never can tell"

CLIMBING up over a trawler to reach the quay Durfee felt a sudden tug on his raincoat and heard a little splash. "Hang it," he growled, "there goes a button."

It made him very cross. He had lost a button off that raincoat some time before and had had no end of bother in matching it. Apparently after producing this particular class of buttons the factory had been bombed. And now the button was gone leaving an unsightly gap in the front of him.

Two days later Durfee went for a stroll along the docks to see what was going on and to talk to some of the sailors engaged in running the blockade. He was straying along the edge of the inner basin when, happening to look down, he saw in the coal grime the exact replica of the button which he had lost. He picked it up and discovered to his pleased surprise that it matched the others absolutely. It was even handsomer, less scratched and brighter.

When he got back to his hotel, which was overcrowded like all of the hotels in French ports at that time, he rang for Ernestine and requested that she sew on the button immediately. But Ernestine was very much occupied, so she compromised by the loan of a needle and thread, when Durfee sewed it on himself, very skillfully.

Shortly before noon Durfee went down to a certain café on the quay, where he had made rendezvous for déjeuner with a French naval pilot named Berdou, only to find that his acquaintance had been called away and had sent a friend to make his apologies. Durfee had never seen this friend, but was himself immediately recognized from the pilot's description of his size and beauty. So the two sat down at a long cold table of which the leatheren banquet was equally long and cold and apparently designed to slide the client under the table, and there

being nothing of greater importance to talk about as they squirted saccharine solution into their chickory, Durfee told of his finding the button. His acquaintance did not appear particularly interested, but the man next him was intensely so.

The two were speaking French and their neighbor eavesdropping with a passionate eagerness. Durfee observed that he was listening and seemed spellbound at the thrilling tale, but this did not arouse his suspicion. When one has sat long enough in a café it does not take much to attract the interest. A fly walking across the table opens deep vistas of thought.

But this man had apparently some personal objective for as Durfee finished his story and his acquaintance had grunted "*hein—c'est bizarre*," then politely taken his leave, the other man began to fidget. It was evident that he had something on his mind; some serious mission to fulfill. He plucked nervously at his scant beard, glanced at himself in the mirror, squared his shoulders, in fact organized for action. He was a decent-looking man of about Durfee's age, which is to say about forty, and from his general air of respectability might have been a leading merchant of the town and brother-in-law of Monsieur le Maire.

Having got himself well mobilized he suddenly sprang his offensive. "Pardon, m'sieu," said he impressively, "but that is my button which you have found."

"*Tiens!*" Durfee exclaimed. "Your button, monsieur? But how is that?"

The claimant plunged into detail. He was a shipping agent named Ducros, and had bought his raincoat in London not long before the war. He had been down on the quay the day before and on his return had discovered the loss of the button. He had called the attention of his wife to the fact that it was improperly secured, but madame

had not occupied herself about it as she should have done. She was working for the French Red Cross and giving French lessons to a select class of American officers, and had no time to bother about her husband's buttons, especially as the French lessons fatigued her greatly. She was coming into the cafe presently and would testify.

But Durfee balked. While acknowledging strong circumstantial evidence, he did not feel like cutting it off his coat after the way he had pricked his thumb in sewing it on. So he politely but firmly declined to do so. He told the agent that he could hope to reclaim his button only by a *procès verbal*. He explained the flotsam and jetsam laws and a few other legal findings, including that of actual possession. The two were in the heat of the debate when there was a draft in the place and a thing of beauty entered.

This was a young female person with a great deal of ruddy hair, pink cheeks, a large mouthful of very white teeth and lambrequin lashes over a pair of clear verdigris eyes. She was trim as a racing yacht. And to Durfee's naïve surprise she proved to be the wife of the excited individual who was so violently insisting that his button be excised and returned to him.

Madame came to rest alongside her spouse, whereat he plunged passionately into the history of his wrongs. She did not appear particularly interested in the button, but told him that if he did not want to miss his train for Bordeaux he had better shut up and get going. These were literally her words. He reached for his satchel and umbrella, at the same time imploring her to occupy herself about the button, at which she gave Durfee a saucy, appraising look and remarked that he did not look like the sort of imbecile who would be apt to cut off a button, once having got attached to it.

Durfee's answer to this was diplomatically polite. He said that as soon as convinced of his ethical duty to surrender the button he would do so, but not until. Also, as her husband was obliged to leave immediately, he would be honored to take up the matter with madame, and that if she were able to persuade him that honor demanded the restoration of the button it should be done even though his general cosmetic effect were to be destroyed. At this solemn assurance madame shot him a suspicious look from her green eyes, but before she could answer her husband interrupted. He scrambled to his

feet, glanced at his watch, then turning to Durfee cried passionately:

"*Alors, madame*, you insist upon depriving me of what is rightly mine?"

"*Pas de tout, monsieur*," Durfee answered gravely. "It is only that I have yet to be convinced of the justice of your claim."

"But I cannot wait," protested the man. "I shall lose my train."

Durfee shrugged. "In that case," said he, "perhaps I may take up the matter with madame."

The shipping agent glanced dubiously at his glowing wife, then at Durfee, when apparently deciding that the latter looked more like an explorer of jungles than of boudoirs, he snapped out something unintelligible, embraced his wife on both rosy cheeks and bolted. Durfee looked questioningly at madame, who shrugged.

"I have no time to argue about this silly button, monsieur," said she. "I have a French lesson to give in fifteen minutes."

"That is most unfortunate for me," said Durfee. "Being a scrupulous person, I should like to regulate this matter. Perhaps when your lesson is over you might do me the honor to take *dejeuner* with me, when we could discuss the matter at our leisure."

She shot him another suspicious look, and noting his general air of breeding and distinction apparently decided to take a chance. It is to be feared that she was a young person rather fond of taking chances with handsome and well-dressed strangers.

"You are American?" she asked.

"Yes, madame," Durfee answered, "I am an American war correspondent—a journalist."

"In that case," said she, "it would give me pleasure to accept your invitation."

So the rendezvous was made and Durfee returned to his hotel. It may be thought that his invitation had been inspired by loneliness and the desire for the society of a pretty and vivacious companion, but this was not the case. The truth of the matter is that only the day before Durfee had seen this charming bourgeoisie walking on the street with a person about whom he desired greatly to be informed, and whom he knew of only as a French concert singer whose stage name was "Bella Zarina."

Wherefore the unusual pair lunched at the best restaurant which La Rochelle could boast, and did themselves excellently well;

food restrictions not being rigid in the coast towns. Madame's appetite was excellent, and under the influence of good food and a bottle or two of vintage Pouilly her manner gradually relaxed. She seemed to find her companion *bon camarade* and sympathetic.

"Your husband appears to be a very nervous man," Durfee observed over the coffee.

"Yes," she sighed, "and hopelessly jealous. But one must not blame him too severely as he has recently lost a great deal of money. Only last year six of the ships in which he had an interest were torpedoed."

"Where?" Durfee asked, and she told him the general locality. "He says that their departure must have been signaled to a Boche submarine," said she. "He believes that there is a complete system of Boche espionage all along the coast and that the movements of all the convoys are known to the Germans."

They were discussing the possibility of this when there entered a boyish American naval officer accompanied by a very pretty young woman, and his first glance in her direction showed Durfee that it was Bella Zarina, the singer about whom he wished to be informed. As she seated herself she looked across at Madame Ducros with a smile and bow.

"That is Zarina, the singer, and one of my most intimate friends," whispered Madame Ducros. "Don't you think she is beautiful? She is a great favorite with the American officers, but I am surprised to see her in a public place with one of them, because they are obliged to be so very discreet, and so is she."

Durfee remarked that the singer looked Spanish and was undoubtedly very pretty, but that he, personally, preferred blondes. His companion looked pleased.

"La Zarina is French," said she, "though no doubt she may have Spanish blood. We became acquainted not long ago when she gave a concert here for the benefit of the Femmes de France, of which I am a member. She is very talented and speaks most perfect English. She comes very often to our house."

The singer began to chat in an animated way with her companion, who seemed to Durfee to be rather ill at ease. Their table was in a far corner of the room and it was impossible for Durfee to overhear so much as a word, but he rather guessed that the

young ensign was being quizzed and finding it difficult on the spur of the moment to find ambiguous or misleading answers to possibly pointed questions. At any rate, his pretty guest did not appear to notice his constraint nor that he merely tasted the champagne which he had ordered.

Madame Ducros, whom Durfee had correctly placed as of little above the peasant class, and with a head turned by admiration and what would be considered in a provincial town as an excellent marriage with a rich bourgeois, proved a fountain of local gossip and point of view, which made her a highly desirable guest for Durfee. They made an excellent déjeuner and presently got up to leave, when as such things sometimes occur they ran plump into Monsieur Ducros, just outside the door.

It appeared that he had missed his train, done an errand or two and then returned to his house for déjeuner, which he had been obliged to hunt for himself in the *garde manger*, the maid also having stepped out. No déjeuner, no wife, and now here was madame coming out of a frisky restaurant café with the button pirate. His pointed black beard shot off sparks as he voiced his wrongs, but he did not attempt to make a scene. In fact, for all of his vexation his manner and appearance was that of a man who had suffered a very recent shock. His swarthy face had a greenish pallor and his splutter about having missed his train and returning home to find nobody there sounded less angry than complaining. Of Durfee he took notice in a merely half-hearted and perfunctory way. His mind was apparently upon something far more vexatious. Durfee felt rather sorry for him and decided on the spur of the moment to cheer him up by making good his loss.

"About that button, monsieur——" he began.

Ducros turned on him with a snarl of impatience. "Zutt! If it had not been for that cursed button I should not have lost my train!"

Apparently Durfee's having taken madame for déjeuner was the least of his cares. He probably had taken it for granted that the moment his back was turned somebody was going to take her for déjeuner, and thought that it might as well be this *comme il faut* American as some more youthful cavalier. But madame had in the course of the luncheon come to entertain a certain respect

and esteem for her host and may have felt that it was not quite decent to bid him an abrupt farewell, for she said to her irate spouse:

"Monsieur is a distinguished American journalist, *mon ami*, and I have asked him to come and see us."

The effect of this information was peculiar. Ducros spun around and stared at Durfee eagerly. He was on the point of saying something when Zarina and her naval officer came out of the restaurant, and as Ducros caught sight of the singer his worried face lost what slight remaining color was left it. Zarina on her part seemed quite unmoved, and passed them with a pleasant: "*Bon jour, mes amis.*" Ducros glanced after her in a frightened sort of way, then turned to Durfee.

"Pardon, monsieur," said he, "but could you spare me a few minutes of your time?"

"If it is about the button——" Durfee began, but Ducros made a violent negative gesture.

"It does not concern that miserable button," said he. "It is a matter which is of importance to you as an American. It has to do with our allied relations." He looked at Durfee imploringly, his pale face drawn and haggard. "If you would be so very obliging as to come to my house for a little half hour," he entreated.

"Very well," said Durfee, wondering if perhaps the man might not be touched in the head. "I am quite at your service, monsieur."

This idea became confirmed as Ducros hurried them through the quaint, crooked streets, finally to pause and open a gate in a wall which inclosed a really charming little house and garden. Madame disappeared somewhere, and Durfee was shown into a nicely furnished study and offered a chair by his eccentric host, who sank into another as though in a state of collapse. This, however, was but momentary, for he suddenly roused himself and leaning forward stared at Durfee with eyes in which the light of insanity appeared to burn. Durfee examining him curiously was wondering if his mind might not have got unhinged from worrying over the flirtation of his young and pretty wife with the American officers of which the town was full.

"Monsieur," said Ducros earnestly, "is it indeed true that you are a distinguished American journalist?"

"That is what my credentials say about me," Durfee answered. "I have been sent over here to gather some material for a series of war articles."

Ducros studied his face intently and seemed reassured by the scrutiny. His own became less tense and suffering. He was in fact a bizarre change from the ridiculous figure in the *café*, mowing and jowing about his silly button.

"Monsieur," said he, in a melancholy voice, "you see before you the most wretched human being in the world. No doubt you think me mad, and one cannot blame you. In fact, for some time past I have feared for my reason. But my torture has been incredible."

"Oh, come, don't take it so hard, man," said Durfee. "Madame is very young and very pretty and possibly sometimes indiscreet, but——"

"Sapristi!" snapped Ducros, "I am not referring to my wife. I make all allowance for her frivolity. I am a man of forty-one; she is twenty-two. *Que voulez-vous?* No. I am speaking of something really terrible. I am going to throw myself upon your mercy; your greatness of soul. Even while acting the fool this morning I felt you to be a personality. You have the face and bearing of a man who has seen much of suffering humanity. You have the air of a savant, a philosopher and a man of heart, one in fact to whom a trapped and miserable wretch might safely confide his misfortune. When I learned that you were also a distinguished American journalist I said to myself: 'Arsène, here is a man sent from Heaven to advise you in your distress.' "

He paused and mopped the cold rime from his forehead while Durfee, whose varied life had frequently brought him in contact with paranoiacs and other insane, sat quietly waiting for what might come next.

"As a distinguished American journalist," Ducros went on, "you may find an interesting human document in my case, while as one who has influence with the American press you might bring to bear some pressure upon the French. At this moment France would refuse nothing to America. We regard you as our saviors. Ah, monsieur, if you could but move the French military authorities to give fair and merciful consideration to the case of a miserable person like myself!"

Durfee began to prick up his ears. There

might be, after all, some method to the agent's madness, and his apparently ridiculous agitation over the button merely an outlet for nerves severely strained by some situation of actual gravity. But Ducros having got thus far appeared suddenly frightened at what he had said and lacking the courage to proceed. He stared at the American in a dumb, stricken way.

"Well," said Durfee quietly, "suppose you tell me the trouble."

Ducros pulled himself together with an effort. He seemed to be drawing strength from this big, broad-shouldered foreigner with his lined face and sympathetic eyes. "Before I can tell you, monsieur," said he, "you must give me your word not to betray me. Even if unwilling to interest yourself in my case, you must promise not to employ my confidence to my injury."

It was Durfee's turn to hesitate. He had no desire to be the confidant of a crime, especially if against the state, as the agent's words seemed to imply. But he reflected swiftly that even if required to keep secret the identity of its source, the information might be valuable in other ways. Ducros had stated that it was a matter of importance to Durfee as an American. Possibly it might have to do with some international conspiracy against the allied cause. In any case, it appeared to promise a story which he as a writer could not afford to lose. So he passed his word not to use the knowledge to the damage of Ducros.

And then the whole confession came fizzing out as if relieved from long and painful pressure, and as his moral system was rid of it Ducros gradually regained his color and composure. It reminded Durfee of opening an abscess. Briefly, the case was this:

Two years before the war Ducros had been approached by a German agent of what was represented to be a German mercantile marine concern, and persuaded to accept a well-paid position as private correspondent. From time to time he received requests for reasonable information in regard to demurrage rates, wharfing, docking and the like, in various ports from Brest to Bordeaux, which coast was his particular section.

But gradually these demands became more detailed, and when finally they began to touch on French naval affairs Ducros grew first suspicious, then alarmed, as he had already answered certain queries which

seemed innocent enough. He therefore tendered his resignation, when it was pointed out to him by a smiling woman agent sent to interview him on the subject, that his resignation could not be accepted and that a refusal to continue his service would oblige the German Intelligence Department, for whom he had been working, to place his voluminous correspondence in the hands of the French authorities. And this, Ducros feared, would not only be his commercial ruin, but might even get him exiled or imprisoned. So the unhappy man felt obliged to continue his espionage--now realizing that it was nothing less--and his pay was doubled.

Then the Great War burst on unsuspecting Europe, and the wretched Ducros, from being merely an informant, found himself suddenly in the position of a traitor, with the death penalty hanging over his head. Six months previous to this he had married and was infatuated with his charming young wife, who appeared to reciprocate his affection. If he fled he would be denounced and lose both wife and property. If he remained it must be as spy and traitor.

Lacking the moral force to confess and accept the consequences, Ducros remained in bondage of the enemy, hoping and praying that the war might be quickly over and that, England remaining mistress of the seas during its course, there could be no benefit to Germany in such information as might be demanded of him. He could not then anticipate submarine warfare with its murderous and destructive results.

Up to this time, which was that of the Americans establishing a patrol of the coast and policing the ports, Ducros had not been required to furnish any information at all, though living in daily dread of such a summons. Either the enemy had paid him the compliment of considering that his loyalty would triumph over his fears, or what is more probable, possessed a sufficient espionage of its own breed. But within the last few days the thumbscrews had been again applied, and the wretched man was desperate.

Furnish information which might lead to the sinking of allied ships he would not, though fully realizing that his refusal would result in his ruin. The ante-bellum correspondence which he had held with the Germans would, he felt convinced, if placed in the hands of the French military authori-

ties, cost him his wife, his good name, his fortune, and very possibly his life, which last without the others he did not value in the least.

In a frenzy of apprehension he had written to the French press explaining his situation and asking absolution for a full confession. The answer was a stern refusal and the statement that sooner or later he would be apprehended and summarily dealt with. On the heels of his open letter came an ominous warning from the hydra-headed beast. He knew that he was being closely watched and his every movement observed by the enemy. He had reason to believe that there was in that very city a spy whose sole mission was to see that he made no effort to escape, and if he did so, to encompass his destruction.

And now he felt that in Durfee, as "a distinguished American journalist," lay the last chance of salvation. If Durfee would take up his case in the American press and use its influence with the French, there might be the hope of pardon. Ducros was willing to pay the price of social ostracism and commercial ruin.

So here was Durfee faced with an ethical problem. He had given his word of honor not to violate Ducros' confidence, nor use it to his injury, but, on the other hand, it was impossible for him to risk the agent's possible caving-in and in sudden panic furnishing information which might lead to the destruction of American lives and munitions. Durfee did not believe that he would, and felt convinced that the man told the truth in swearing that up to this time no traitorous act had been required of him since the war began. For this reason he did not feel that to befriend him would be giving aid and comfort to the enemy.

So he turned the situation in his mind while Ducros watched him hopefully. The agent seemed relieved to have made his confession, come what might of it.

"There is only one thing to do," said Durfee finally. "You must liquidate your property for what cash you can and bolt to some neutral country, preferably South America. Once you are out of France, I shall take up the matter and see what I can do for you."

Ducros looked relieved, but dubious. He did not believe his wife would go with him.

"Yes, she will," Durfee answered. "She's got the loyalty of her class, and even if she

is frivolous now and then, you'll find she won't go back on you."

Ducros was not convinced, but setting this doubt aside said that it would be impossible for him to escape.

"I am being closely watched, m'sieu," said he, "and at the first attempt to escape I should be denounced and arrested. As long as my wife does not accompany me, I am free to go and come as I wish, because the person detailed to keep an eye on me knows well that I would never leave the country without my dear Marie."

"All the same, go you must," said Durfee. "I am willing to help you the best I can, but one thing is certain: after what you have told me, I am not going to take any chances on your losing your nerve. I'd break my word, first."

Rather to his surprise, Ducros made no protest at this. In fact, he seemed to have expected it and to be grateful for any help at all. Durfee, watching him, surmised that the man had reached the limits of his endurance and had already made up his mind to refuse further service and take the consequences. He had been on the verge of insanity, possibly suicide, from worry and self-reproach, when the discovery of Durfee's profession, backed by his sympathetic personality, had lighted a ray of hope. Certainly the whole manner of the agent had undergone an extraordinary change.

"Perhaps you are right about Marie," said he, doubtfully. "I believe that at heart she is fond of me, and understanding my position, might forgive me and follow me into exile. It would, of course, mean the loss of practically the whole of my fortune, but that is the least of my cares. I do not desire a fortune of which the nucleus was at the cost of France and my honor. I have had business relations in Buenos Aires and I could lay my hands on money enough to give me a fresh start. But what am I to do about this accursed spy who keeps me under observation? If only I could be rid of her for a few days in which to get my papers and money, it might be managed."

"Her?" exclaimed Durfee. "Is it a woman?"

"Oui, *pardis*," answered Ducros. "Perhaps you noticed that pretty young woman who came out of the café with the American officer while we were standing in front of the restaurant? That is she."

"Zarina, the singer?"

"Yes. She has become intimate with my wife and knows my every movement. She has even warned me that if I were to escape alone, she would have my fortune immediately confiscated and persuade Marie that I was a vile traitor from whom she must demand immediate divorce. My wife is my unconscious jailer. If I go to Nantes or Bordeaux, La Zarina keeps her eye on Marie, because she knows that I would not run away and leave her. I prefer to be shot as a traitor or to blow out my own brains than live without my adorable Marie. In fact, monsieur, I believe it to be only a question of time before I would have shot myself, but now your sympathy has given me fresh strength. But I cannot give up my wife, monsieur, and on the other hand, I have not dared tell her my position. It is this doubt which has been the final torture, the supreme agony. It is true that she may sometimes deceive me, but I can pardon that considering her youth and temperament and feeling that deep down she is loyal to me."

The situation was bizarre. Durfee felt that as a good American his duty was to denounce Ducros before the military authorities. But he had given the man his word, and, besides, the situation did not call for revenge, but merely for the suppression of the evil, and there could be no doubt of the agent's sincerity. Durfee was not precisely sorry for him, but he could appreciate the subtlety of the methods which had got him into such a bog and made a potential traitor out of an entirely harmless and highly nervous man. Ducros had been exempt from military service because of defective vision.

Durfee did not feel any doubt about Marie. He understood her class, which was actually that of peasant stock, though she had married into the bourgeois, and he was sure that once she understood the situation she would not desert her husband in his danger and distress. He was convinced that she would run true to type. Deceive him she might, but forsake him she would not. So he said to Ducros:

"Voyons, mon ami, I am willing to make myself responsible for the loyalty of your wife. She told me at lunch that she was very sorry to see you so worried and unhappy, and that you were not to be blamed. Now tell me, if La Zarina were to be suppressed for a long time, would you make

a bolt for it? That is, of course, if your wife went with you?"

"*Oui, monsieur,*" answered the agent, "but how is she to be suppressed? You may be sure she has nothing incriminating where it could be found, and that her French papers are in perfect order. But if she suspected me of planning my escape she would go to some corner, get a batch of my correspondence and put it in the hands of the police, when, even with several hours' start, I would be pinched (*pincé*) at the frontier."

Durfee pondered for several moments. He realized that he had saddled himself with a very great responsibility. The man must be got out of the country at once, if this were possible. But to accomplish this the first necessity was to secure the co-operation of his wife. So he said to the agent:

"I must talk to Madame Ducros. Suppose you go out and don't come back for at least an hour. Tell your wife that I want to see her here, and then make yourself scarce."

The agent looked a little startled. "You are going to tell her?" he asked.

"Yes. We can do nothing without her assistance. Leave it all to me. I desire to help you, and also to save myself the dis-honor of breaking my word—a thing which I never do when it can possibly be avoided."

The irony of this remark was lost on Ducros, who sprang to his feet. "I shall do whatever you say, monsieur," said he. "I feel that I can trust absolutely to your honor and ability. You Americans are known to be wonderful in your resource."

He bowed profoundly and went out, closing the door behind him. A few moments later the bell of the garden gate jangled, and almost at the same time Durfee heard a rustle in the doorway and turned his head to see Marie standing on the threshold.

"*Nom de Dieu!*" she gasped. "Has he gone altogether crazy?"

"Not yet," Durfee answered, "but he is apt to any day unless we interfere. In fact, something very much worse might happen to him. Your husband has been living for over three years in danger of being shot as a traitor."

"What?" she cried. "What are you trying to say? Arsène a traitor?" Her face turned very pale, and Durfee wondered if possibly she might not have suspected something. But she did not look frightened and the blood began to steal back about her

temples. Durfee was pleased to detect a combative gleam in her sea-green eyes. "It is you who are crazy!" she said hotly.

"I have his own confession," Durfee answered. "Now listen to me, madame, and do not interrupt. I am trying to act as a friend to your husband and yourself, and save him from a fate which, under the circumstances, I do not think that he deserves. But to do this I must have your assistance. Otherwise your husband is lost."

With this calm statement Durfee proceeded to explain in detail the agent's desperate position and how he had come to be in it, laying stress upon the innocence of his initial actions and his growing anguish as he found himself sinking deeper and deeper into the quicksand. Durfee had a certain power of graphic description and was a master of the French language with all of its shades and figures of rhetoric, and before he had gone far Marie's eyes were brimming, yet flashing through her tears, The correspondent's assay of her deeper nature was correct. In the crucial instance her rugged peasant fidelity became the ruling passion.

"Oh, *mon pauvre Arsène!*" she wailed. How you must have suffered."

Then, having worked her emotion of pity to its perihelion, Durfee told her in a few raw words of Zarina's part in the affair, and as she grasped the full appreciation of the singer's perfidy and the actual reasons for an intimacy which had flattered her, a temperament controlled by scanty rivets of polite conventionality burst forth. She was a spectacle. She filled that little salon with steam. Anybody who has ever seen a full-powered Frenchwoman of the Gironde peasant class in a concentrated fury can appreciate the fireworks displayed. Such commentaries on La Zarina, her character and personality as slipped between those pearly teeth would have shamed the mate of a whaler and spiked the guns of a Paris truck driver. Marie's father had been a burly master stevedore of Bordeaux, and she had gathered a vocabulary from him when in his cups. She herself had received a good convent education, and had, therefore, an added flow of sacred speech.

But Durfee was not shocked. On the contrary, he was much pleased with this frank expression of partisanship. It proved his theory that Marie would stand by her husband through thick and thin. She was,

in fact, very fond of Arsène, who, when not harassed, was devoted, indulgent, and possessed of undeniable attractions. Marie admired and respected his superior mentality and the commercial ability which furnished her so many material benefits, while physically and temperamentally she found him to her taste. No doubt they would have been happy and congenial but for the nervous strain which had been wearing out his disposition, and for which she now made due allowance.

"So you see, madame," said Durfee, as she paused for breath, "the affair requires much finesse. La Zarina is keen as a knife, or she would not be a Boche agent. Now, this is my plan: Go quietly to the gentleman who has the authority of such matters and beg him to furnish you with a passport *visé* for Spain. Treat him to a tragic story. Say that you cannot stand Ducros any longer and that your life is actually in danger from his fits of insane jealousy. Tell him that Arsène is making your life a hell, and must be brought to his senses. Say that you do not wish to divorce him if it can be helped, but want to give him a fright."

Marie nodded and her green eyes began to sparkle.

"Then," Durfee continued, "when you have got your papers, make him promise to keep it secret. As soon as you have managed this, let Arsène go to the same person and tell *his* unfortunate tale. This will be to the effect that he has discovered your project and desires to follow you secretly and patch things up. The French authorities are always strong for a reconciliation of conjugal affairs and he should have no difficulty in getting his own papers, especially as they can scarcely refuse them to a business man of his importance and a highly respected citizen of the place. Keep the whole matter secret and be prepared to leave at an hour's notice."

"But what if this viper of a Zarina should have a spy at the railroad station?" asked Marie. "If she were to learn of our departure, there would be plenty of time for her to have us arrested before reaching the frontier. One must count eight or ten hours at present."

"Leave Zarina to me," said Durfee. "I shall occupy myself about that young lady. Never mind how. My plan is not yet made. But first I have got to make her acquaint-

ance. You might give a little dinner and invite me to meet her. Now I must go back to my hotel. When Arsène comes in tell him that I want to see him there."

Durfee returned to his quarters and about an hour later Ducros was shown in. The agent was a changed man. Hope appeared to have transformed him from a furtive, snappish, frenzied creature into a sane and normal human being of attractive personality. Durfee was astonished to discover him actually handsome, of a pure Latin type, with a broad, intellectual forehead, large, luminous eyes, lean cheeks, and a trim figure from which the droop appeared to have been ironed. He had apparently visited the coiffeur, as hair, mustache and vandyke were freshly trimmed, and he was soberly, but smartly, dressed. It was evident that he had undergone a mental, moral, and physical renovation in the last two hours, and Durfee could not repress a smile as he greeted him.

"You are my preserver, monsieur," murmured Ducros, the tears welling into his eyes. "I could not have endured it much longer. I should have made away with myself. Now, something tells me that we shall succeed. And Marie—?" His dark eyes glowed. "*Mon Dieu*, but what a difference! Now that she realizes what I have suffered, she lavishes affection on me. When I told her that if anything went wrong, I should at least die like a man, even if I had not lived like one, she stopped my words with kisses. Do you know, monsieur, I am now convinced that at heart she adores me?"

"Of course she does," growled Durfee, "and now that you have won her back, take care that you don't lose her. This is going to be a risky job for you, *mon ami*. Of course, you know what to expect if anything were to slip up."

"*Parfaitement*," answered Ducros composedly, "a firing squad. But it is worth it to have got back my adorable Marie, if only for a few days. As a matter of fact, I should rather be shot than to continue this hideous nightmare. But if I may be permitted to ask, monsieur, how do you propose to blockade La Zarina?"

"My plan is not yet worked out," Durfee answered. "I must first make her acquaintance and get on friendly terms with her."

Marie arranged this the following evening by giving a little dinner, as Durfee had suggested. His first examination of the

singer showed him that he had to deal with no cheap antagonist. The girl was smooth as olive oil, with a languid, almost sleepy manner, and a slow, bewitching smile which gradually parted her red, everted lips to reveal a wide row of white, even teeth. She was dark of coloring, except for a striking pair of brilliant blue eyes, of which the long, dark lashes seldom permitted more than a glimpse.

Durfee did not miss the slight involuntary flicker of these when Marie presented him as a "distinguished American journalist" who had been assigned the writing up of maritime affairs along the coast of France. When, a little later, he told her that he had been particularly interested in the distribution of convoys and the means of safeguarding them to their various destinations, one looking at Zarina might have thought that he was whispering welcome words of love.

Durfee had decided upon the rôle to play, which was that of a fatuous and highly self-satisfied American reporter, whose desire to make an impression might easily lead to indiscretion, for such he had decided to be the girl's particular prey. He knew the coast towns to be fairly sprinkled with informants of her ilk, and quickly decided that she was the queen bee. He was also convinced that good blood flowed in her veins. Her hands and feet were small and delicately shaped, her features finely chiseled, though slightly irregular, and her limbs, while soft and rotund so far as one could see, gave the impression of being as full of springs as the *sommier* of a French bed, for something in the way she moved suggested a feral resiliency masked by an affected indolence. And Durfee much suspected her qualities of mind to be of the same deceptive texture.

Nevertheless, he was not dismayed, being quite capable of playing a rôle himself when occasion demanded, and this he now proceeded to do, and with such success as to cause the artless Marie some anxiety. He drank freely of the Ducros' excellent wine and pretended to be slightly exalted, paying the ladies fulsome compliments and vaporizing fatuitously on the admirable qualities of the women of France. His object was to persuade Zarina that, if properly jockeyed, he would prove a garrulous fool, and in this he was markedly successful. But he also managed to convince her that he was likewise a fool from whom in his quality of

authorized journalist much might be learned of what she greatly desired to know.

In the next few days affairs progressed rapidly. Marie experienced no difficulty in getting her passports from the sympathetic official to whom she addressed herself, and Ducros, allowing a reasonable time to elapse, met with like success. He called upon Durfee fairly bursting with excitement and elation.

"The good old fellow thoroughly approved my action," said he, with a chuckle. "He said that he had given Marie her papers with deep regret, as it pained him to see a matrimonial rupture between worthy folk, and was convinced that I was not as bad as Marie had described me. I told him that she was a spoiled child, and he answered that he did not doubt it, and that, in his opinion, she was being even more spoiled by these American officers whom she has been helping in French conversations. He thought that, perhaps, I had been neglecting her through overwork and worry about my business losses, and advised me to give her a couple of weeks' change and amusement, and promised not to tell anybody of our plans for departure. It pained me to deceive him, and I trust that once out of her clutches that cat will not consider it worth while to betray me. But I wish that I knew, monsieur, how you hope to suppress her long enough for us to get across the frontier."

Durfee also was wondering this. Although he had been strenuously cultivating Zarina, no plan had as yet presented itself. Her engagement at the *Theatre Municipal* had expired, and she had announced her intention of resting through the summer. Durfee, under a rather raw camouflage of gallantry, had entertained her at luncheons and dinners and taken her to the cinema and for the various promenades the place afforded. In the course of these attentions, his manner was that of the harmless beau, quite content to think himself a bit of a rogue, and to have others think so.

Zarina for her part was always ready to accept his invitations. He was well bred, well dressed, unquestionably a gentleman, and apparently fond of spending his money. She often wondered how a man of his apparent intelligence and knowledge of the world could have remained an idiot, and even told herself that if his mentality had only been commensurate with his general appearance,

she might even have enjoyed a flirtation with him. But the labored acumen with which he evaded her naïve but leading questions sometimes exasperated her to the point of violence. He had a smug, complacent "I know but I won't tell" air which sometimes drove her nearly frantic, because she believed it to be true. He had told her enough to convince her that he actually did know a great deal. He made her feel like a burglar whose skill is baffled by a simple, big, old-fashioned lock merely because its inside is rusty.

But if Zarina was irritated and impatient, Durfee was even more so. He was now in a desperate hurry to get Ducros out of the country, and the singer was all that stood in the way. Durfee had hoped to persuade the obliging patron of the hotel where he was stopping to hire him his own small, two-seated car, and invite Zarina to make a run with him inland; then, after night had fallen, to get lost in some little back road and at the proper moment run out of fuel or stall the motor or something of the sort, which would prevent their returning before morning. But a new military order in regard to the circulation of private motor vehicles had made this impossible, and now, to his intense disgust, he found himself in a quandary.

Then fortuitous circumstances suggested a plan. It was not a very good one and entailed considerable risk to himself, as well as to Ducros, but Durfee decided to take the chance. It would save him from breaking his word, and he was by this time desperate, not knowing when Ducros might feel himself obliged to renew his hateful service.

The hotel was crowded, and one night at dinner Durfee found himself at table with a young American officer, who told him that he was the captain quartermaster of an American ship which had just arrived at *La Pallice* and was lying in the roads waiting for a berth in the *bassin* to discharge her stores. Durfee's name was well known to the quartermaster, who, in parting, invited him to run over and visit them aboard the ship. And even while thanking the officer Durfee thought he saw his opportunity.

The following morning he went over to *La Pallice* on the little tram, and there learned that it would be two or three days before there would be room for this vessel to go alongside the wharf. He then identified her lying well off the breakwater, after

which he returned to La Rochelle and called on Zarina, who had her apartment in a pension on the edge of the park.

"I have an invitation for you, mademoiselle," said Durfee. "How would you like to run over to Pallice this evening after dinner and go aboard a big American transport which is lying in the harbor?"

He did not miss the quick flutter of the singer's long lashes. Would she like to go? Would a hungry pussy-cat accept a piece of fat herring? It would be a feather in her cap merely to be able to report that she had been aboard an American ship, and an even greater one to have done so properly censored and certified by "a distinguished American journalist." But she hid her excitement at the prospect and answered doubtfully:

"I don't know. Do you think that it would be amusing? I did not suppose it was permitted for a lady to visit your ships."

"War correspondents are privileged characters," Durfee answered complacently. "Perhaps it is not for me to say so, but I may say that my name is one of the best known of our American journalists, mademoiselle. If you will do me the honor to dine with me, we can run over on the tram which leaves at seven-thirty, spend half an hour aboard and return by the one which leaves La Pallice at nine. There will be a launch waiting for us at the breakwater when we arrive."

To this arrangement Zarina consented, whereupon Durfee said that he would call for her a little after six, and went immediately to the Ducros house, where he found the pair at home.

"You are to leave to-night by the eight o'clock express, *mes amis*," said he. "Do not go to the station until a few minutes before train time. Send a commissionnaire to buy your tickets and register your baggage and let him meet you there on your arrival."

Although daily expecting such a summons, they looked tremendously startled. Marie turned very white and Arsène tugged at his spiked beard. But, oddly enough, neither questioned the order, nor did they express any doubts or fears. It was very singular. Here was Durfee, a foreigner and comparative stranger, uprooting them from the ground where they had been planted, as they supposed, for the remainder of their lives. Yet, there was no protest, no demur.

The god from the machine had so ordained it. They did not even inquire how he proposed to stall Zarina. All they knew or cared about was that the door to freedom was on the latch. To Ducros, who from the beginning of the war had been living under the sword of Damocles, the summons came with an abrupt relief of tension that left almost a vacuum. He leaned back in his chair, the perspiration beading his broad, white forehead.

"Courage, *mon ami*," said Durfee. "As soon as I can find time I shall see what I can do about your case. After all, I do not believe that it would be a capital offense. You have been guilty of no treason since the war actually began. The information which you furnished immediately preceding it was no doubt perfectly well known to them, already, and in any case they have not been able to profit by it."

Marie caught Durfee by the wrist and kissed his hand, then, gaining confidence by his demeanor under this caress, she threw her arms about his neck and kissed him on both cheeks. Durfee had never placed much value on the French fashion of cheek-kissing, but there was something worth while in the embracement which went with it.

The tears were running down Ducros' thin cheeks. "You are my benefactor—my preserver, monsieur," he said. "You Americans are as tender hearted as you are resourceful and courageous."

It was already dark when Durfee and his joyfully expectant guest boarded the little tram for the twenty-minute trip to La Pallice. Here a short walk brought them to the steps where the boat was supposed to meet them. But to Durfee's pretended annoyance, no such boat was visible. In fact, there was no boat of any sort whatever. The place was dark, silent and deserted.

"Let us walk out on the breakwater and see if we can't find a fishing-boat or something," said Durfee. "There must have been some mistake about the order, and we have very little time, as the last tram leaves here at nine. Possibly we may see the launch coming in. It might have been delayed."

As there seemed nothing else to do, Zarina sulkily complied. They made their way to the breakwater without hindrance, though Durfee thought he saw a dark figure in the shadowed doorway of the *douannier's*

bureau. When they had gone about twenty paces Durfee reached in the pocket of his raincoat and drew out a powerful electric torch.

"I happen to know the Morse code," said he complacently. "I'll signal to the ship and tell them that we are here." And before the shocked and startled singer could interfere, he began to flash his "blinker."

Zarina gave a gasp of anger and dismay. "Idiot!" she hissed. "Do you want to get us shot? Stop it—stop it, you fool—" And she grabbed at his arm.

But Durfee gave a silly laugh and fending her off as best he could, continued to flash his lamp. It was by no means easy. Zarina was lashing at him like a cat; first at his arm, then, finding that beyond her reach, at his face. She was a strong, active woman and in spite of his size and height Durfee had his hands full to continue the motion. But this was not necessary. The mischief had been wrought. There came the clatter of hobnailed boots over the stone blocks, and a rough, panting voice cried in outraged accents:

"Halte! O'est ce que vous faites là, nom de Dieu! Rendez-vous, vite!"

Durfee jumped in a guilty way, threw the electric torch into the water and turned to face a ferocious *douanier* who, no doubt, had been watching to see what they were about from the moment they started to walk out on the jetty. Zarina, incensed at his frightened, guilty manner, gave a gurgle of pure rage. The *douanier*, who was taking no chances, drew his revolver and covered Durfee's chest.

"Hands up!" he ordered. "To whom were you signaling?"

"To—to some friends—" Durfee stammered.

"To some friends! *Hein*, I well believe you," he growled.

"*Triple imbecile!*" snarled Zarina. "Can't you tell him what you were trying to do?"

"It is not worth while," snapped the *douanier*. "You can tell the commandant tomorrow morning. March on ahead of me, you two!"

"Tell him, you fool!" cried Zarina.

"I was signaling to friends on an American ship," quavered Durfee.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" grunted their captor contemptuously. "Then why did you throw away your lamp?"

Zarina stamped furiously. In wild, incoherent words she started to explain the situation, but the *douanier* cut her short. "*Taisez-vous!*" he ordered roughly. "March ahead of me. If you try any trick I shall put a bullet through you."

There was nothing to do but to obey. Every time the frantic singer tried to speak, the guard told her to shut her mouth, and he did not tell her any too politely. He was excited and elated. Had he not caught red-handed a couple of spies in the very act of flashing signals out across the roads? It was an achievement—a feather in his cap; possibly stripes on his arm. It was known that signals were being flashed to lurking enemy submarines along the coast, but the consummate cheek of operating from the very breakwater of La Pallice was the *n*th degree of Boche impertinence.

It was nearly a kilometer to the police post whither they were being marched. There came a sudden downpour of rain, and so with Zarina fuming like sulphuric acid in contact with water, and Durfee grinning inwardly, they plodded along, stumbling over obstacles in their line of march. On arriving at the post they were thoroughly searched, the stern sergeant impassive to Zarina's protests and explanations. She had no papers on her person, while Durfee had carefully locked his in a trunk before leaving the hotel. The sergeant merely took the names they gave him with no attempt at interrogation. Their case was one which must be examined by M. le Commandant the following day. So, deaf to Zarina's wild protestations, he curtly ordered them locked up in the same cell. Possibly there was only one cell.

This was rather more than Durfee had counted on, but he felt that he had no right to complain. The desired end had been obtained. In fact, he thought it possible that it might have been rather more than obtained, and that they would be lucky if, indeed, they got clear the following day. But, at any rate, by that time the Ducros would be safely across the frontier.

Zarina had fallen into a sort of stupefaction of rage. Durfee gave their jailer a twenty-franc billet and told him to get them some blankets, which he did, no doubt feeling that their few remaining hours might as well be made comfortable. It was not a pleasant calaboose; dock calaboozes are

not apt to be, but Durfee was entirely content with his accommodations. He much preferred them to breaking his word and having to carry in his mind the picture of Arsene's pallid face against a wall.

Zarina, after a few brief remarks on Durfee's qualities of mind, turned her own white face to the wall and slept. Durfee smoked cigarette after cigarette and thought of many things. Fortunately, the night was mild and they did not suffer from the cold.

At ten o'clock the following morning they were haled before an elderly major whose face was principally composed of eyebrows and mustache, and to him Durfee explained the situation with childish naivete, finally asking if he, the major, thought such treatment a good way to cement the entente cordiale between their two allied countries. The major seemed more astonished and amused at the imbecility of the whole business than outraged at the gravity of the offense. He had listened with great pleasure to Zarina's rendering of patriotic songs in the *Theatre Municipal*, and appeared to find much piquancy in her dilemma. His discernment showed him also at a glance that Durfee was no spy, but probably one of those American correspondents of whose phenomenal cheek he had heard amazing tales.

"*Mon Dieu, monsieur*," expostulated the old salt, with a twinkle under the corner of his enormous eyebrow, "you complain about our observation of the entente cordiale? But if it is not cemented by locking you up all night with as charming a French artiste as *Mademoiselle Bella Zarina*, I am sure I do not know what else we can do for you? *Mon Dieu, ces Americains!*" he sighed, then gave a shrug and ordered that a boat be sent to fetch the captain quartermaster. In due time this officer arrived and

There will be another story by Rowland in the next issue of the POPULAR. It is called "Sea Snakes." Look for it in the April 20th number.



"EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY!"

WHAT'S become of Sam Cappy?" asked the old gentleman who had returned to his boyhood home. "You remember: the fellow who used to be saying all the time, 'Eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die.'"

"Who, Sam?" replied Eph Jones, the shoemaker. "The doctor's got him eating only two meals a day now, and drinking nothing at all. We ain't had no bulletins on the 'merry' for quite a spell now."

identified Durfee, but said that he could not recall any definite time being fixed for his visit, at which Zarina looked very thoughtful.

It was by this time nearly noon, and after a short admonition on the folly of signaling in time of war, even though a correspondent, the pair were dismissed, though a guard was sent with Durfee to look over his papers. Zarina made her adieu at *La Rochelle*, assuring Durfee that of all the benighted idiots which she had met in her wide experience of such, he was unquestionably the one who deserved the medal.

Apparently, however, she found reason to alter this decision within the next few hours, for that evening as Durfee was dining cheerfully alone, she entered the restaurant with a brand-new beau, a young French army officer. Perhaps she felt fed-up on Americans. Discovering her erstwhile dungeon-mate, she stepped over to his table. Her face now wore a peculiar expression, one almost of admiration it might have been thought, and there was a twisted smile on her red, everted lips, as though they had been humorously deceived in the taste of something.

"I fear that I owe you an apology, monsieur," said she. "I have done you an injustice. You are very far from being the fool which you can sometimes act. It is I who was the fool. Such a situation never for a moment occurred to me, even though you went there so frequently. But you must have been very fond indeed of *Marie* to have rendered such a service."

Durfee smiled indulgently. "Ah, mam'selle," said he, "you are still very young and have much to learn about human emotions. '*Si la jeunesse savait*'— because, you see, my dear, sometimes it happens that '*la vieillesse pouvait*.'"

The Wild Bunch

By Dane Coolidge

Author of "Rimrock Jones," "Shadow Mountain," Etc.

The work of Mr. Coolidge is always welcome to our readers, we feel sure, and in giving them this latest novel of his, we are still surer that his popularity will increase. It is a great story of the Southwest, a region that Mr. Coolidge loves and lives in. Of his characters there are three that will fairly take possession of you—Ab Meadows, Butch Brennan, and Wild Horse Bill. Good or bad as they may be, one sympathizes with them and, above all else, knows that they are the "real thing." We would be glad to hear your opinion on the three men.

(A Four-Part Story—Part One)

CHAPTER I.

EASY MONEY.

IT was June, when the summer rains begin, and as the first great thunder-caps mounted majestically along its rim the tawny San Augustine Plain lay quivering in the heat. The white bed of the sink, now dry and glistening with alkali, became a lake once more in mirage; a circle of blue mountains, half lost behind the horizon, reached up gaunt phantom fingers to the sky; but the storm cloud to the west sucked all the moisture to itself, spreading out to cover the peaks behind Show Low. It rose higher into the heavens, gleaming like silver in the sun, and as its base turned black a slender trailer of rain reached down and touched the earth; there was a flash, a lightning stab, a zigzag of flickering light and then, long after, the rumble of distant thunder and the solemn reverberation of the hills. A wind sprang up, rushing straight from the east into the swelling bosom of the cloud, and the cattle raised their heads and lowed; then the burnished dome of the cloud rose higher till it cut off the sun and wind. There was a silence, a tense waiting, and out on Rustlers' Flat a lone cowboy turned his back and took the storm.

It swept down from the hills in a wall of falling water that roared like wind in the pines, and a cloud of dust rose up in its

path where the heavy drops struck into the dirt; then the sky was ripped open by a jagged streak of lightning and the horse cringed back on his haunches. At the crash of thunder he jumped and fought for his head, trying to break away and run for the hills, but the man on his back reined him around in dizzy circles and stopped him with his tail to the storm. So they stood, the horse trembling—and the man trembling too, for it brought up old fears in his breast—and as the earth seemed to rock beneath a second terrific crash he gave the plunging bronk his head. Across the broad flat they went like the wind, and up a gulch and on through the rain; but as they galloped over the ridge into Center-fire Cañon the cowboy pulled up with a jerk. There was a shod horse-track in the mud not half an hour old and it was heading for the Figure 4 pasture.

Abner Meadows leaned forward and scanned the tracks closely, then paused and glanced warily about. There was a wild bunch in the hills, robbing trains and stealing horses and hiding in the lava beds to the north, and this was no Figure 4 horse. He knew, for he had shod every one for two years—and broken the most of them, too—and their tracks were as familiar to his practiced eye as a baby's little bonnet to its mother. This horse was long and rangy, with exceptionally small feet, and he had been ridden at a swinging gallop—but

where, and with what purpose? Meadows' hand slipped down to where his gun should have hung and he looked at the tracks again.

"Well, here goes nothing," he said at last, and spurred along the trail.

The Figure 4 Ranch lay in a narrow, sheltered valley that opened out on the plains at Show Low, and the rich green *mesas* that lined the watercourse had been fenced to make a thousand-acre pasture. Twice already within a month this pasture had been entered and the top horses of the *remuda* taken, and in their places other animals had been left which showed marks of quirt and spur; and then, mysteriously, the stolen horses had been returned and the other animals taken away. Only now it was the top horses that were ridden down and quirt cut and the mounts of the outlaws were fat. No one had seen the horse thieves, when they came or when they went, and no one had ridden in pursuit. The times were troublous and men prospered best who minded their own affairs, but every one knew it was Butch Brennan's gang and that they passed that way to the railroad.

The storm which had driven Abner Meadows to the hills passed by as suddenly as it had come, and as the sun burst out his spirits rose also, and he followed the trail at a lope. The tracks grew fresher, though still half full of water; but they were heading now not for the Figure 4 pasture, but for the mouth of a boxed-in cañon. Up that, as Meadows knew, there were caves in the sandstone that offered a shelter from the rain; and as he approached the entrance he reined in to a walk and his hand sought the holster in his chaps. It was empty, of course, but old instincts are strong, and he rode with his hand beneath the flap. In the freshly formed mud not a sound was made as his horse swung around the point; and then, before he knew it, he came upon his man, crouched down like a rabbit in a cave.

He was a dark, handsome man, with a high Texas hat and a long-barreled pistol in his belt; and his eyes, big and startled, leaped from Meadows' face to the hand inside his chaps. It was there, and not in belts that dangled and flopped, that most cowboys carried their guns, and as Meadows returned his stare he saw in a moment the cause of the fugitive's panic. On the smooth rock before him, laid out in orderly piles each held down by a pebble or stick,

was more paper money than one comes by honestly, spread out in the sun to dry. So complete was his surprise that the robber's left hand still held to a great sheaf of bills; and his right, that should have been handy to his gun, was stretched out to lay down a fresh stack. But he had frozen like a rabbit or any wild animal that knows the cold terror of being hunted, and now as he watched, only his eyes seemed to move, though his hand was drawing back toward its belt. It would have been easier by far for Abner Meadows if he had come upon a grizzly over its kill, for at a single false move this wild Texas fighter would shoot him before he could wink. But now the man was frightened and, believing himself covered, his desire was to placate and stall.

"Good evening," he said, slowly laying down the bills, while his lips drew back in a smile, and Meadows nodded grimly.

"How-do," he returned with another glance at the money, "I see you've made a good haul."

"Damned right," agreed the bandit picking up a bunch of twenties; "how'd ye like a little stake for yourself?"

"Nope," answered Meadows. "don't let me deprive you. I was just coming by when I cut your tracks and I thought it might be one of the boys."

"Oh," observed the robber and his tense face relaxed as he sensed the ring of truth. "Riding for Starbuck?" he inquired going on with his work like a man who resumes a game of solitaire, and Meadows slumped down easily in his saddle.

"Breaking bronks," he replied, and as the talk went on he withdrew his pistol hand from his chaps.

"Nice horse you got there," spoke up the outlaw at last, looking at the bronk with a quick, appraising eye; and then he rose slowly to his feet. His hands, which all along had been so carefully outstretched, dropped naturally down to his side and as Meadows made no move the right one crept back toward the rag-wrapped butt of the long pistol. Meadows saw the wolf look blaze up suddenly in his eyes, and then he was facing a gun.

"Put 'em up, dad-burn ye!" shrilled the outlaw viciously, "up high, or I'll blow you to hell!" He stepped up closer, jabbed the pistol into Meadows' ribs and reached inside his chaps. "Where's your gun?" he

demanded, feeling fretfully about, and then he broke into a curse.

"You ain't got none!" he repeated. "Well, by the holy, jumping Judas, why the devil didn't you say so before? Git down off'n that horse and let me search them boots—how come you don't pack a gun?"

"Don't need one," answered Meadows, and the bandit grinned cynically as he stepped over and gathered up his money. He stuffed the half-dry bills into the slack of his wet shirt and then he broke into a laugh.

"Like hell you don't!" he said at last. "Do you know how much reward I've got on me? Well, it's nigh onto fifty thousand dollars!"

"I haven't lost any reward," returned the cowboy shortly, and the outlaw chuckled to himself.

"All right, pardner," he said, "let it go at that. And now, if you don't mind, we'll just trade horses for a spell—my mare is plumb rote down."

"You're the boss," returned Meadows and, stripping off his saddle, he transferred it to the bandit's tired mount. This latter was a tall and golden-bright sorrel, with wonderfully muscled shoulders and chest and the slenderest of slender legs. At first glance she looked like a thoroughbred running horse, but the small, flintlike feet and flowing mane and tail spelled "broom tail," without a doubt. It was one of the thousands of hardy mustangs that ranged on the far North Plains and which Butch Brennan and his gang, in the intervals of their robberies, took a wild delight in chasing.

"Take care of that horse," admonished the outlaw, "I'll be back to git her, some day."

"All right," assented Meadows, "and if you don't mind my suggesting it, be as easy on that colt as you can."

"That'll depend," observed the bandit, cinching his saddle up tighter, and then he tied a bulging mail bag on behind and hung a pair of Mexican saddlebags across the horn. These last were filled to the very top with something that was heavy as lead, and as he balanced them up he grabbed out a handful of silver dollars and threw them impatiently away.

"Well, so long," he said as he swung up into the saddle; but now that he was free to ride off when he pleased he seemed in no hurry to go. "Say," he began, with an in-

gratiating smile, "have you been working for old Starbuck long? Well, I need a young feller like you to kinder keep a lookout around here—how'd you like to make a little easy money? All you'd have to do would be to watch out for the officers and give me a change of horses—and I reckon we wouldn't quarrel about the pay."

He slapped his shirt and laughed indulgently, showing teeth that were long and thin and white, yet no wider than those of a squirrel. They gave him a curious, catlike look, as though, in another mood, they might sink into the flesh and rip and crunch and rend. But Meadows, though he was loath to oppose the man, drew back and shook his head.

"Nope," he said, "little out of my line. Just as much obliged, but I'll work for what I get—old Starbuck is a pretty good boss."

"But he'll never know," urged the outlaw eagerly. "Ain't you worked for him now for two years? Well, slip me the horses and say nothing to nobody—come on, boy, it's the chance of your life."

"No!" returned Meadows suddenly meeting his eye, and the train robber bared his teeth in a sneer.

"Oho!" he said, "you think you're too good, hey? Don't want no truck with the wild bunch! Well, lemme tell you something, my young Christian friend, you want to be careful what you say. I might take a notion to pull out my pistol and—"

"That's all right," broke in Meadows, his eyes beginning to burn. "I told you, and that's enough!"

"O-o-o!" shrilled the robber. "Say, you're a hot-tempered boy, ain't ye? I'm going to quit riding you, right now. But, jest between friends now, how come you to be out here without yore gun in your chaps?"

"Got into trouble one time," answered the cowboy grimly, "by having a gun too handy. Anything else you'd like to pry into?"

"No, that's all," replied the outlaw with a cheerful grin. "So long—jest wanted to know."

He threw the spurs into the half-tamed bronk, but as the animal plunged forward grabbed into one of his saddlebags.

"Take that, you damned fool!" he called over his shoulder, and threw a handful of money at Meadows. It fell at his feet in a golden shower—seven twenties, fresh and gleaming from the mint—easy money, to take or to leave.

CHAPTER II.

SHOW LOW.

The outlaw galloped away, grinning mockingly as he glanced back, and Abner Meadows looked down at the money. It was stolen, beyond a doubt, and the man who had left it was one of Butch Brennan's big gang. Twice already since spring they had robbed the train at Belen, and half of New Mexico was their stamping ground. There were bad men from Texas, and ex-rustlers from Montana, and outlaws from all over the West; and, loud in their boasts that no Mexican could arrest them, they rode the Western ranges at will. They robbed trains and looted stores, held up stages and ran off cattle, shot up towns and killed officers of the law; and in a Mexican-governed territory, with Mexican sheriffs and deputies, there was no man to say them nay. For, with all their faults, they were clean-strain fighting men, and the native population was afraid of them.

The time had been, in the early days of the occupation, when all the officials were Americans. There was an American governor, appointed by Congress, and judges and officers of the law; but those days were past and the newly enfranchised Mexicans had asserted their right to rule. Voting three to one, they had overwhelmed the white minority and elected their own officials; and in Papalote County, where the Figure 4 range lay, they had swept everything before them. But while Celso Baca, their so-called fighting sheriff, sat idly in his office at Papalote, half the outlaws of the West swarmed into his domain and set up a law of their own. They rode from ranch to ranch over all the wild country that lay west of the San Augustine Plains, and then they rode north, over the Datils and the Saw-tooth Range, to the plains and lava beds beyond; and if any lonely rancher tried to betray them to the Mexicans they treated him as a traitor to his kind. And so matters stood when Abner Meadows cut the horse trail that led to a parting of the ways.

The gold lay there in the mud, just as it had been taken from the safe when this bandit had held up the train; and as Abner looked it over and thought what it might portend, he turned and rode hastily away. There would be officers on the trail, and not all Mexicans either, for the express company had hired guards of its own; and if he

were caught with the money in his possession the affair would be hard to explain. Yet as he came out into the valley and found it still vacant he halted and looked over his shoulder. The money was still lying there, fresh and gleaming by the trail, and the first puncher that rode past would come back to the ranch with big tales of treasure-trove. He would show the shining twenties and the stray silver dollars that the reckless Texas robber had left; and when he, Abner Meadows, claimed to have seen the money first they would whoop and laugh him to scorn. But if he gathered it up now and hid it in some hole—Meadows turned back and rode for the cave.

Yes, the money was still there, but as he looked for a hiding place something told him to keep it in his pocket. It was his, for he had found it, and if he hid it near that spot the chances were good that it would be found. There would be a pursuit, a hunt through the hills, and since the fleeing outlaw had taken shelter there from the storm, the cave and the cañon would be searched. But down by the ranch, or up on Sawed-off Mountain where he had his lookout point, no one would ever come and he could leave it hid until Brennan and his gang were forgotten. And a hundred and forty dollars, with the silver dollars to boot, was some money for a hard-working cowboy. Put with some more that he had saved, it would hasten the day when he could have a little ranch of his own; and if he had a home—He thrust it in his chaps and swung up onto the sorrel.

The mare was gaunt and worn, but spirited still, and as he put her to a lope he saw that few pursuers could hope to catch her yet. Though she was a broom tail from the North Plains, she was a thoroughbred still, the descendant of some Morgan or Kentucky hunter that had escaped from the emigrant trains; and when he pulled her to a walk and patted her neck she gazed back with soft, luminous eyes. Yes, she was a beautiful horse, but she was the property of an outlaw—they got the best of everything.

A single trail led along the pasture fence, which ran far east and then south without a gate, and as he came to the southern corner he kept on to the butte that passed by the name of Sawed-off Mountain. This was no more than a round hill, shaved off flat on top, standing out on the point of the mesa; and on the farther side it broke off in short

benches to the treeless valley below. There in the midst of a huddle of corrals and adobe houses stood the store and saloon called Show Low, a mere nothing in itself, but the last outpost to the west of a shuffling and precarious civilization. There at least was food and drink, and a stock of clothes, and mail once a week from Papalote; while beyond for a hundred miles to the Arizona line there was nothing but scattered ranch houses, tucked away among the hills. It was a town, at least, and to make good its claim, there was a schoolhouse on the bench beyond.

It was upon this building, in fact, that Meadows' eyes were fixed, for Starbuck's flock of children made up half of the attendance and the school-teacher lived at the ranch. Every afternoon, at four o'clock or later, she came galloping up the road and it had come to be his habit when he was out riding bronks to accompany her home from school. The bronks must be taught to start and stop, and to turn at the touch of the reins; and where he rode them was nothing to the boss as long as he turned them in broke.

To the boss' son, Lute, the matter was somewhat different, for he often watched for the schoolma'am himself; but since he did his waiting in Chris Woolf's saloon and store, his company was not always so welcome. For Justina Edwards had a special reason for disliking both Woolf and his saloon, and so she rather favored the silent Abner Meadows who followed her with such worshipful eyes. But to-day all was changed, for his eyes were narrow and furtive; and he hoped for once that she was gone. There was the money to be buried, and the robber's mare to be turned out—but she had seen him as he rode out on the point and was galloping up the road to meet him. He glanced about hastily, threw the silver dollars down a dog hole, and rode moodily down the hill.

The air was sweet with the incense of wetted cedar and the fragrance of storm-lashed pines, on the *vegas* below the fat prairie dogs were running to sit by their holes as they passed; but when she dashed up with a radiant smile Abner Meadows barely met the schoolma'am's eyes. They were too honest, too serious, too much given to questioning glances and unspoken feminine reproaches—and now he had one more thing to hide. The exact history of his past life had never been revealed to any one since he came to the Figure 4—all Starbuck

knew, or wanted to know, was that he was a good man at gentling horses—and now, of course, here was this meeting with the outlaw which no one but the boss must know. He smiled a fleeting welcome, then dropped his eyes and rode silently along at her side.

An admiring artist, whom she had met by accident at an *alfresco* bohemian spread, had confided to Justina over his second glass of wine that she looked like Botticelli's Queen of Spring. Later on in the evening he amended his opinion to include also a Mona Lisa smile and he was frankly desolated when, upon later inquiry, he discovered that she had gone to New Mexico. Not gone, but returned, for this fair, demure maiden with her long lashes and peace-destroying smile had sprung by some magic from that land of untamed savages and swarthy, treacherous Mexicans. There her father had been a scout, living alone in the wilds with his wife and little daughter; until death had stepped in and the daughter, left alone, had been sent to New York to be educated. So much the artist learned, with the additional fact that her scout father had been suddenly killed; and there that story ended and another story began, only now no one likened her to Spring.

She was the schoolma'am in a place which had once been her home, and which her Indian-fighting father had owned and ruled as absolutely as any border baron; but now it was claimed by a clerk in the store who had won it at a turn of the cards. He was a dark, unctuous person, suspected of being half Mexican; and he had appeared from nowhere and gone to work for her father, who had soon placed him in charge of the store. That was the beginning of his downfall, for the shrewd Woolf had sensed his weakness and insisted upon installing a bar; and then, in the mad carousals that followed, he had won all his money and the store. But Edwards was a cattleman, and even in his madness he still held fast to his herds; until, in a passion, he staked them against Woolf's winnings, the loser to walk off and leave everything. The game was seven-up and Woolf had won six points, catching the jack and holding high, when the old scout made his last stand.

"Show low!" he shouted, striking his fist on the table, "show low, and the ranch is yours!" And Chris Woolf had thrown down the deuce and christened the ranch Show Low.

Whether he had used any tricks in dealing the cards is something that will never be known, for he was surrounded by his own gang of men; but Edwards rose up and went out into the night, and the next morning was found shot through the heart. It was to such a tragedy as this that Justina had been summoned, and when Woolf had shown her his bill of sale for the property she had no recourse but to go to work. The Starbucks took her in, delighted to get such a teacher, and for nearly a year she had ridden to and fro, glancing hatefully at the smiling Chris Woolf. But in spite of her troubles her beauty remained, demanding as of old its tribute of covert glances, pretty speeches and avowals of love. The cowboys were her slaves—even Chris Woolf had made advances—but this lone, silent horse breaker with his soft voice and gentle ways, had so far resisted her wiles. He was a man of few words, yet if she read his eyes aright he loved her more than all of them.

There was something mysterious, like the veil over his past life, which he always seemed to draw between them; even as now, when he rode on in silence.

"Well," she challenged, looking curiously at the strange mare and trying to rouse him from his reticence, "how's the Man of Mystery to-day?"

"Meaning me?" he inquired, with his slow, somber smile. "Rather damp—got caught in that storm."

"But the sun is out now," she went on rapturously. "Isn't the vega beautiful, now that the rain has come? Oh, I'd just like to ride, and ride. Come on, let's go; but we'd better look out—there's some train robbers back in the hills!" She reined in closer, glancing furtively up the cañon; but as he smiled indulgently she pouted out her lips and met his glance defiantly. "Well, there are!" she declared, "and Celso Baca and four deputy sheriffs are down at the store there, watching for them!"

"Honest?" he challenged, and as she nodded her head he looked back down the road.

"Yes, they are," she ran on, "and I saw one of them looking at you when you came out on the point of the mountain."

He drew in his lips and she smiled triumphantly, though not without a certain alarm.

"Oh, Ab," she exclaimed, "it isn't true, is

it? You haven't thrown in with Butch Brennan!"

"Who was telling you that?" he demanded fiercely, touching the jaded mare with his spurs, and she considered before she spoke.

"Well—Lute," she said, "and all the boys. They don't say it, they just kind of wonder." She was riding close beside him, her horse fighting for his head as he sensed the challenge to a race, but she held him resolutely in. "Can't you see," she urged, "what a mistake you make by not telling us who you are? We all know there is something wrong and so—well, you see—what can we say when they claim you've gone wrong?"

"Say nothing," he retorted savagely. "What do you care where I came from as long as you know who I am? It's what a man *is* that counts."

"Oh, then you *haven't* thrown in with them?" she exclaimed with great relief; but at the same time she waited for his answer.

"No!" he burst out. "Of course I haven't! There's some people that talk too much."

"Oh, I didn't mean Lute," she broke in apologetically. "It wasn't him, any more than the rest. They were all saying last night that they wondered who you were, and that maybe you were an agent for Brennan. But Mr. Starbuck broke in and told them to shut up—and then he went on and said lots of nice things about you, and that they'd better begin to worry about themselves."

"Well, they had," returned Meadows, and as he looked back again there was an angry glint in his eyes.

"And he said," she rushed on, trying to calm the rising storm, "that you were the best hand with horses he'd ever seen, and that he'd never even heard you swear; and that he liked to have you around, just to show his children that a cowboy didn't need to be tough."

She paused at last and glanced across at him hopefully, and the hard lines had disappeared from his face. Dave Starbuck was his friend, and had been from the first, and his praise was sweet to his ears; but this talk of Brennan had reached him before, and somehow it always came from Lute.

"Well, come on," he said, as he sighted horsemen in the distance, "there's those Mexicans, coming up the road. You see what I get from all this loose talk—they probably think they're going to arrest me."

He galloped on toward the ranch and Justina clattered after him, but she refused to

let her bay start a race. Those last words of Meadows had a sinister meaning which her ears had been quick to detect.

"But Ab," she appealed as he stopped at the ranch gate and turned to face the posse, "you surely don't intend to resist arrest?"

"Never mind," he said, "you go into the house. I'll attend to these gentlemen myself."

CHAPTER III.

THE LAW.

The Figure 4 Ranch was a cluster of log buildings, half a mile up the valley from where the main road turned off over the mountains toward Arizona. A long, broad lane, made for driving herds of cattle, led up to the ranch-house bars; and as they turned into this raceway the Mexican posse came spurring and lashing like madmen. They whirled in a half circle about the man at the gate and when they had covered him Celso Baca dismounted and prepared to make the arrest.

"Uhuh!" he said as he walked in on Meadows who was watching him with narrowing eyes, "so we've ketched you, Mister Brennan, after all. Put them hands up a little beet higher."

"My name is not Brennan," answered Meadows quietly. "What do you think you're going to do?"

"Oh, yes, that's all right," wheezed the sheriff good-naturedly, and then he halted and drew back. Meadows' hands had come down and there was a look in his eyes that Baca had come to know. He was a big, strapping fellow—a "light-completed" Mexican like most of the office-holding class—but his experience in arresting cowboys had already convinced him that discretion is the better part of valor. So he halted abruptly and stood breathing hard—for the ride had got to his wind—while he beckoned his deputies in. Then as they spurred in closer he heaved a great sigh and grinned at his man triumphantly. But in the meanwhile the commotion had brought Starbuck from the house, and he came with his gun in his hand.

"What's the meaning of all this?" he inquired in his deep, rumbling voice, and even Celso Baca flinched. He was a big man himself, but not like "Grizzly" Starbuck, who was a mountain of fighting strength, and instinctively the Mexican gave back. It was said of Starbuck that in his younger days, when he was mining in California, he had

met a two-hundred-pound grizzly bear in the trail and, being without the butcher knife which he ordinarily carried, had beaten him to death with his fists. However that might be, he had never omitted since to keep his trusty butcher knife in his boot, and in addition to that he had now buckled on his pistol, besides snatching up his rifle as he passed. He was a tall, rawboned Yankee from the backwoods of Maine, with a gray beard as broad as a spade; and as he glared at the deputies they became suddenly less arrogant, for he was known to have a prejudice against their race. Yet Celso Baca had ridden too far to be easily robbed of his prey and he answered him back defiantly.

"Thees is nothing of your beezness, Mister Starbuck," he spat. "I have taken thees train robber for my presoner. My men have chased him t'vee days!"

"Not him," returned Starbuck, "there must be some mistake—he's been right here at the ranch."

"Who--thees man here? Thees fellow, Butch Brennan? Not moch, we know him too well. We have chased that sorrel horse till we know her anywhere, and thees is the man what rode her."

He advanced upon Meadows with the sudden confidence that his words had roused in his breast, but once more he came to a halt. Dave Starbuck had climbed over the bars of the gate and was standing beside his broncho-buster.

"Now lookee here, Celso Baca," he said in warning tones, "don't drive a good citizen too far. I know you well, and the way you've been running things, letting these outlaws come in and steal my horses: but just because you can't get your hands on Butch Brennan is no excuse for arresting my horse breaker. This boy is Ab Meadows—he's been working for me steady for nigh onto three years now—and he don't even carry a gun."

"Hain't he got no gun?" inquired Baca with sudden interest, and then he whipped out his handcuffs.

"No, but I have," answered Starbuck significantly, "and I'm here in the interests of justice. If this boy is a lawbreaker and you can prove it, I haven't got a word to say; but until that time comes he's just like my son, and you nor nobody can't touch him!"

"Well, he's riding that sorrel mare!" burst out Baca indignantly after addressing his deputies in Spanish. "And my men know

that horse—they would know her anywhere—and they say certain she belongs to Butch Brennan."

"Where'd you get that horse?" demanded Starbuck of his horse breaker, and Meadows answered promptly.

"That's easy," he said, "I met a fellow up here and he threw down on me and made me change horses. He's gone away on my bronk."

"Good enough!" exclaimed Starbuck with a great sigh of relief. "You hear that? This man was held up. He met this danged outlaw and he made him trade horses. So that's all right, Mister Baca; quite a natural mistake, but you took a little too much for granted."

He laid his great hand on Meadows' shoulder and began to let down the bars; but at this the Mexican deputies, who had looked on uncomprehendingly, suddenly burst into a chorus of protests. Not understanding any English, they had improved the occasion to take another drink all around; which, added to the liquor they had imbibed at Show Low, put their reason in total eclipse. All they knew was that this prisoner—the renowned Butch Brennan with forty-five thousand dollars on his head—was being led away by a single American while Baca looked on and swore. They surged forward in a body, yelling and brandishing their pistols; and Baca, taking advantage of their petulant impetuosity, plunged in and made a grab at Meadows. There was a struggle, the flash of handcuffs, and then a sudden blow, and the sheriff staggered back, spitting blood.

"You keep your dirty hands off!" cried Meadows in a fury, and Starbuck stepped before him with his gun.

"Now!" he roared, still holding his rifle on Baca. "Will you listen to reason, or not?"

"I am the sheriff!" screamed Baca, whipping out a silk handkerchief and pressing it against his bruised lips. "You have struck an officer of the law!"

"Yes, and I'll kill you," returned Meadows, "if you touch me again. I won't be arrested by no Mex!"

"You're drunk!" bellowed Starbuck, glaring accusingly at the posse. "Go on now, get out of here—all of you!" He made a threatening motion with the muzzle of his gun, but the Mexican deputies stood firm. They might be drunk, but they were not drunk enough for that—only they wanted

their man alive. Most of the rewards on Butch Brennan called for his arrest and conviction, and how can you convict a dead man? So they stood their ground, their faces flushed and determined, while Baca poured out his anger on Dave Starbuck.

"Meester Starbuck," he cried, "I know what you have said about the ceneficiency of Mexican officials. You have said we are no good, setting the American people against us and making these dam' robbers bold; but now that I have thees outlaw in my power I will not geev him up for no man. He must surely come with me!"

"Well and good," retorted Starbuck, "if you can show some proof; but my wife and these children and the school-teacher here have seen this man every day, and so I say he ain't the man you want, and I refuse to see him abused."

"Maybe he ain't Butch Brennan," conceded the sheriff grudgingly, "but he is a member of his gang. I was told at the store that you had a man in your employ who furnished these robbers fresh horses. So I arrest thees man as an accomplice of the gang. There is no use—he must go to Papalote."

"*Seguro!*" echoed the deputies, catching the drift of their leader's talk by the motions of his eloquent hands, "*a Papalote! Adelante! Vamos!*"

They curbed their plunging horses as Baca beckoned them to one side and whispered hurried orders into their ears; and then, with their leader well up in front, they turned back and surrounded the Americans.

"Meester Starbuck," began Baca with a suave, oratorical flourish, "you say you are a good ceetizen, no? Your belief is in the law; only now, in thees case, you think we have made a mistake? But if I will show you the evidence that thees man is a robber; you will, of course, let him go? Very well, we will have thees man search him."

He made a motion to the largest deputy, who swung down promptly from his horse, but as he walked up to Meadows the cowboy drew back and shook his head at him grimly.

"Now, you see?" clamored Baca, dancing up before Starbuck and waving his arms in the air, "you see—that man is a criminal! He is afraid to be searched—he knows we will find the evidence! Meester Starbuck, you are protecting a robber!"

Then it happened—what they had counted

on—for as Meadows turned his head the big deputy jumped on his back. He went to the ground without striking a blow and, as the Mexican grabbed his hands and snapped on the handcuffs the whole posse piled on top of them.

"He is my prisoner!" screeched Baca, shaking a warning finger at Starbuck, but the man who had once wrestled a grizzly bear did not stop to count the odds. Striking the hand aside, he strode to the pile and caught the first man up bodily; then, swinging him above his head, he hurled him at Baca who went down as if struck by a log. Man after man was caught from behind and flung upon the struggling mass and when it was over all the Mexicans were in one pile and Abner Meadows was free. But as he stooped to lift him up Starbuck halted in his tracks and stood staring at something on the ground. It was a twenty-dollar gold piece that had fallen from Meadows' chaps while he was engaged in his brief struggle with the Mexicans.

"What's this?" inquired Starbuck, and as he picked up the new coin all his strength and fury left him. His voice which had belied like a mountain bull's was now suddenly cracked and thin; and as the Mexicans, scrambling up, caught the gleam of the gold they rushed in to search their prisoner. With a grand, triumphant gesture Baca snatched away the coin and held it before his deputies, and then amid shrill yells he went through Meadows' pockets and fetched out four more gleaming eagles. They turned him over hastily and found two more on the ground, and when Starbuck saw these he picked up his rifle and departed without a word.

Justina alone lingered, looking on with startled eyes, but when she saw his face as he rose up fighting she too left Meadows to his fate.

CHAPTER IV.

WILD HORSE BILL.

Like a pack of hounds that have driven a wolf into a steel trap and fall upon him yelling and gnashing, the Mexican deputies swarmed and tumbled about Meadows as he fought for a last chance to escape. Though his hands had been shackled he wrenched one of them free and struck out with the dangling handcuff, and as they closed in upon him he laid open a deputy's head before he was crushed to the ground. There

they bound him hand and foot, now thoroughly convinced that he was no less an outlaw than Butch Brennan. As to why he should be traveling without his gun, that was something to be explained later, though it had doubtless saved several of them their lives; but now that they had him they made off at a gallop, leading his mare by a reata about her neck. Out across the tawny plains they loped, heading east toward Papalote Peak; and riding and resting they pushed on night and day until the next afternoon they sighted Papalote.

With his feet tied together beneath the belly of a spare horse and his hands securely shackled to the horn, Abner Meadows had submitted like a man in a dream to the exultant taunts of his captors; but as they neared the outskirts of the town and the Mexicans made him remount Brennan's mare, he awoke at last to his position. Not only was he enmeshed in a net of circumstantial evidence that would make his conviction sure, but he was deserted by his friend and about to be exhibited as a man who had murdered and robbed. He was to be paraded through the streets as the brutal Butch Brennan, who had terrorized half of New Mexico, and if he escaped from the violence of the mob he could expect no mercy from the courts. The natural antipathy between the two races had been heightened by a thousand lawless acts; and now an American, once he was brought to trial, was practically convicted in advance. He had struck too late and his one hope of freedom lay in some last desperate attempt to escape.

It was evening as they passed through a gap in the hills and came in sight of Papalote, and as their identity was recognized the entire male population came galloping out to meet them. But instead of coming to gape at Meadows, they had news of their own to tell, and when Baca heard it he slapped his fat leg and took a drink with the crowd. Then Meadows was marched through a sea of hateful faces that lined both sides of the street until at last they came to the plaza.

In the lead went the sheriff, bowing and smiling to his admirers, who cheered him to the echo; but as the procession was stopped and men scrutinized the prisoner a violent altercation sprang up. An old, white-haired Mexican came bustling through the crowd and stared Meadows full in the face; then he turned to the crowd, shouting and shak-

ing his head, and Baca whirled upon him with a snarl. They came together in a fury, both talking at once and waving their hands at the prisoner; and Meadows, seeing that the question of his identity had come up, protested again that he was not Butch Brennan. Other men joined in, some supporting the old man and the rest taking the side of the sheriff, until finally in a turmoil they adjourned to the courthouse, carrying Meadows along in their midst.

The Papalote courthouse was a modern brick building, erected from the proceeds of the first county bonds that the Mexican taxpayers had voted; and their admiration of its plaster front, which faced the plaza, was only equaled by their pride in the jail. It stood just behind the ornate courthouse, a two-story square of solid stone, and a great crowd of Mexicans gathered about its ponderous door as Baca and the disputants surged in. They came out, and returned, engaged in mysterious preparations; and then when all was ready Abner Meadows was led over and passed in through the massive outer gate. A second barred door swung back before him, and as he entered the darkened interior he was aware of a mass of men that jostled him as he was thrust into a cell. Then, before he could adjust his eyes to the gloom, a light was flashed on and he stood face to face with a stranger.

He was a cow-puncher by his hat, which was stuck far back on his head, half concealing a shock of red hair; but his principal feature was a tremendous hook nose, bowed in the middle like a cigar-store Indian's. His face was rough and red, his jaws set like a steel trap, but the eyes that stared out from behind the hump-backed nose seemed to twinkle with sardonic humor. Yet he did not speak, and in the silence that followed Meadows sensed the crowd of Mexicans, watching. They had confronted him with this man to establish his identity, but he had no remembrance of ever having met him—and a face like that was not speedily forgotten, so stamped was it with decision and cunning. So they stood there and stared until the cowboy's mouth relaxed and he showed his broken teeth in a grin.

"Hello there, stranger," he said with a hoarse cackling laugh, "what the hell have they got *you* in for?"

"Resisting arrest," answered Meadows, and then he added: "These Mexicans think they've caught Butch Brennan."

"'Butch Brennan!'" repeated the cowboy, and then he laughed a mocking, derisive whoop that destroyed the last hope of Celso Baca. The Mexicans outside the cell suddenly burst into a tumult, scolding and arguing and hooting at the sheriff; until at last in a fury he drove them all out and came striding back to the cell.

"Don't you know thees man?" he demanded of Meadows, shaking a trembling finger at the cowboy, and Meadows shook his head.

"Do you know thees feller?" inquired the sheriff of the cowboy, and the latter squinted his eyes down doubtfully.

"Believe I do," he replied, "but I cain't say for sure. Gimme a drink--mebbe it'll hep refresh my memory."

"Here!" snapped Baca, whipping a flask from his hip pocket, and the cowboy drained it at one pull.

"Hah!" he smacked, blinking his eyes at the bite of it and turning again to Meadows. "By grab, he shore looks familiar. But what's doing, Mr. Baca—what's the trouble?"

"That man is Butch Brennan!" declared Baca in a passion. "I know it! You can't foola me!"

"Well, who's trying to foola you?" demanded the cowboy hectoringly. "Come through—we're all in the dark."

"You tell me who that is and I give you some more wheeskey!" burst out Baca with tremulous eagerness. "I give you a quart bottle—sure!"

"All right!" came back the cowboy. "his name is Ab Meadows and he works for Dave Starbuck, breaking bronks. Am I right? Then gimme the bottle!"

"You lie!" wailed the sheriff and, striking his hands against the bars, he rushed off and left them alone.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Meadows," went on the cowboy solemnly as the cell-room gate clanged and was locked. "I'm a well-known character in yore part of the country. Reckon you've heard of the Wild Horse Bill!"

"'Wild Horse Bill!'" repeated Meadows and looked again, for this little sawed-off runt was Butch Brennan's right-hand man and a famous hunter of mustangs, as well. He was one of the wild bunch, as the cowboys called them, the local boys who had been tempted by Brennan's success to join his bandit gang; and as no broken horse, no

matter how staid, once he has joined the wild herds on the plains, will ever again submit to restraint, so Bill from a horse hunter had been changed into an outlaw who in turn lured other men away.

He was the hero of the cow camps for his deeds of lawless daring and his coolness in the face of danger; but now, it appeared, the Mexicans whom he flaunted had brought his career to a close. For before a Mexican jury, with Mexican witnesses to testify and a Mexican judge to pass sentence on his crimes, the most that he could hope for was to escape with his life by pleading guilty to murder. Under the laws of New Mexico a man so pleading could only be imprisoned for life, whereas if he mistakenly pleaded "Not guilty," he paid the extreme penalty for his crime. All this flashed up in Meadows' mind as he returned the cowboy's stare and then, with a sudden surge of compassion, he advanced and held out his hand.

"Glad to meet you, Bill," he said with a friendly smile, "but I'm sorry to find you here."

"Oh, that's all right," returned Bill with a good-natured grin. "It's my own fault, for going to sleep. Butch told me when he left that they'd pick me up: and shore enough, when I come to I was pinched." He laughed reminiscently and, sitting down on the bed, favored Meadows with a knowing wink. "But, cheer up," he whispered, "are you game to take a chance? Well, I'll have you out of here in jig time!"

"I'm with you," responded Meadows, "and I'll go the limit, too—but how are you going to work it?"

"Jest foller my lead," nodded Wild Horse Bill confidently. "I've broke half the jails in New Mexico. The first thing to do is to raise so much hell that they won't notice if you make a little noise. Then, psst—*I'll saw through the bars*. After that—well, all I need is a couple of candles and we'll stick 'em up with a phony gun. Hey, hombre!" he shouted, beginning to rattle the barred gate. "*Carcelero!* Hey, *da me* some *velas!*"

The jailer, an old man with a patriarchal beard and a huge bunch of keys at his waist, came and looked solemnly through the cell-house door; and finally, as it grew dark, he came jingling back with their supper and a single candle.

"Huh! One candle, eh?" grumbled Bill, as the old man passed it in and shoved their

food through the panel at the bottom. "Well, this shore is a fine, swell jail! I wouldn't stay in a dump like this if they'd give me a hundred dollars." He lit the candle and glanced scornfully about, then fell to eating his beans.

"*Que quiere?*" inquired the jailer gazing in awe at his prisoners, of whose desperation he had been fully warned, and Bill burst into a torrent of Spanish. But evidently his remarks did not go well with the jailer, for he straightened up and thrust out his hand.

"*Quiere velas?*" he sneered, "you want candles? *Muy bien, da me dinero!*" He slapped his empty hand as he demanded the money, and Wild Horse Bill cocked his head like a jaybird. Then he snapped his fingers in the air, reached into his ear and handed the old man a dime. An astonished exclamation burst from the lips of the jailer, he gazed at the coin incredulously; until finally, convinced that the money was good, he rushed off and returned with some candles. But with him there came also three guards from outside who glared at Wild Horse Bill sourly.

"Heh, heh," chuckled Bill, "here's where we git frisked. I reckon they've come back to search my ears." He held out his head and pointed facetiously, but the deputies only watched him suspiciously. "Hey, hombre!" exclaimed Bill pouting out his lips at the jailer, "*da me tabaco*—I want some tobacco!"

"*Da me dinero!*" returned the old man, taking his cue from Bill's wink, and the deputies stood waiting for the miracle. Bill felt dubiously in one ear, then felt in the other and snapped his fingers in the air; but when he held out his hand it was empty.

"*No tengo dinero!*" he shouted hoarsely. "*Da me tabaco!*" and he reached out his hand. But the deputies only laughed uproariously.

"No, señor," they answered, shaking their fingers before their noses, and went out to tell the guard. The native New Mexicans are a simple-minded people, much given to jokes and strange tales, and this trick of Wild Horse Bill's put the deputies in good humor by adding to their stock of weird stories.

"How's that?" inquired Bill, jerking his head at Meadows. "Oh, I savvy these hombres fine. Git 'em to carrying on once and you can do most anything—now watch me git some tobacco. Need the can to make me

a key." He sat back on the bunk and listened to them talking; then, raising his cracked voice, he began shouting a song, half Mexican, half ribald American.

"*No tengo tabaco, no tengo papel*
No tengo dinero, blank blank it to hell.

"I have no tobacco, I have no paper,
 I have no money—"

It was a plaintive ditty, much affected by Mexican cowboys when they were holding the herd at night, and the guard outside began to whoop. They were in a mellow mood on account of the whisky which had been poured out to celebrate the capture of the outlaws, and soon the jailer came shuffling back with half a dozen packages of tobacco. He handed them in, still staring and incredulous, and Bill thanked him and the donors effusively; after which he quieted down.

"Now listen," he said, "and I'll tell you how we'll work it. I can pick that danged lock with a little doo-dad that I'll make, if I can jest saw a hand hole through the bars; but old Santa Claus is suspicious and he'll come back on the run if he hears my hacksaw at work. So what we got to do is to start singing some songs to drown out the noise of the saws, and I'll begin the evening's entertainment with a song of my own entitled, 'A Little Too Small.'"

He cleared his voice with the assurance of a concert singer and began on what was evidently his masterpiece:

"I'm one of these jolly young fellows, you know,
 Who always enjoys a good time.
 I pay up my fares to wherever I go
 And I'm willing to spend my last dime.
 But I've had one misfortune, though I'm not to
 blame
 Because I don't stretch and go tall,
 And I think it a pity, a blank-blanked shame
 When they say: 'You're a little too small.'
 You're a little too small, young ma-a-an!
 You never will answer at all, young man.
 You're young yet, I know; and perhaps you will
 grow
 But at present you're a little too small!"

"How's that?" he inquired and, chuckling hoarsely to himself, he plunged into the second verse:

"One eve while out walking by chance I did
 meet
 A lady, a schoolmate of mine.
 I escorted her home and of course I took tea,
 I asked her to lunch or to dine.
 I asked her if I might be an escort some day,
 Or at her home I might call.
 She says, 'I'll ask ma, but I really believe
 She'll say you're a little too small.'

"You're a little too small, young ma-a-an—"

A peremptory knocking on the solid outer door brought his song to a sudden halt; but after a short pause, in which he cursed under his breath, Wild Horse Bill went blithely on. He was a well-known cowboy singer, an improvisatore who made songs to fit any occasion, and like all true artists he loved a good audience and abhorred the base soul who interrupts.

"Now there was another young girl in that town

I loved her, I did, for my life.
 One night like a fool on my knees I got down,
 I asked her if she'd be my wife.
 To this she consented, in my a-arms she fell;
 We were to be wed in the fall.
 I'm single till yet and the reason I'll tell—
 'Twas because I was a little too small."

The knocking at the door became more peremptory than ever as Bill bawled out the rollicking chorus, but he had just warmed up to his theme and even the voice of the sheriff did not serve to cut him short.

"How's this, now?" he nudged and, throwing back his head, he sang on despite Baca and his guards:

"Not long ago since, my old uncle died
 And of course I came in for my share.
 His words were to me as I stood by his
 'My boy, you're a young millionaire.'
 No ends to congrat-ulations next day
 When the ladies upon me did call.
 But I says: 'Excuse me, girls, for I really be
 lieve

That you are a little too tall.'

"You're a little too tall young gir-ir-irls—"

The clatter of feet as the guards trooped in threatened to drown out the chorus entirely; but a song incomplete is like a life half lived, and Bill finished regardless of consequences:

"You never would answer at all, young girls;
 I'm young yet, I know, and perhaps I may grow
 But at present you're a little too tall!"

The chorus was ended and the song was sung, but when it was over and Bill had cleared his throat Celso Baca was towering above him.

"You shut up!" he roared, glaring suspiciously in. "I know what you're trying to do--you're making that noise so you can break out of jail!"

"What, break out of *this* jail?" demanded Bill, laughing derisively. "Nothing doing—it can't be done. But say, where's that quart of whisky?"

He looked through the steel gate as if ex-

pecting Baca to have it, but the big sheriff was not to be diverted.

"Never mind," he commanded, pointing his finger like a gun. "You understand me, now? *Keep still!*"

"Hey, didn't you promise me," came back Bill defiantly, "that you'd give me a quart bottle of whisky? Well, come through, or I'll sing all night!"

"Oh, you weel, weel you?" snarled Baca. "Well, we'll see about that. And I'm gon search you—right now."

"Well, search and be damned to you!" burst out Bill in a pet, "you must have talked with that sheriff from Las Cruces."

"Yes, and with lots of other sheriffs," answered Baca grimly, "I know every treeck that you play. So I weel search you right now and when I am t'reu maybe you don' have no dime in one ear!"

He burst into a guffaw, accompanied by such deputies as could follow the thread of his remarks; after which they searched him, finding nothing more dangerous than the tin-foil from several sacks of tobacco.

"What's dat for?" demanded Baca after unrolling the ball carefully and turning it over and over. "You t'ink you break jail with dat?"

"Sure thing!" retorted Bill. "With a button hook, or anything. But say, what about that whisky?"

"You can't have it!" returned Baca, shoving him back into the cell and beckoning his guards to go. "You're drunk enough, already."

"I'll sing all night, then!" declared Wild Horse Bill recklessly, and began to hum and croon.

"Don't crowd him too far," whispered Meadows in his ear as he saw Baca looking back through the door; but Bill only shrugged his shoulders and began on a topical song:

"O-oh, whisky, rye whisky! Rye whisky, I cry! If I don't get rye whisky I shurely will die!"

From the cell-house door where Baca stood glowering in there came a menacing snarl, but Bill went stubbornly on:

"O-oh, it's beefsteak when I'm hungry and whisky when I'm dry, A pretty gal when I'm lousy, sweet heaven when I di-i-ie!"

He chanted the chorus defiantly, accompanying the words with drunken hiccups, and then he turned to the door.

"Don't you like that?" he hailed. "Well, see how this suits you:

"O-oh, it's the chink's when I'm hungry and the saloon when I'm dry
To the dance hall when I'm drunk and to hell when I di-i-ie!"

He laughed with maudlin abandon and plunged into another vagrant verse:

"Old whisky, rye whisky, everybody tells me
You have killed all my relations; now, dam' you, try me!
You have broke me, you have ruined me, you have been my downfall,
But you old red devil, I love you for all!"

He was proceeding to further and more daring flights when Baca began to roar for the guard. They came rushing at his call and the sheriff strode in, his face set in a purposeful frown. Behind him came the jailer, bearing handcuffs and leg irons, and at sight of them Bill became suddenly still.

"What's the matter, sheriff?" he said with his cracked, nervous laugh. "You ain't going to put them on *me*?"

"Yes, I put 'em on both of you," answered Baca thickly. "I understand—you goin' try to escape."

"What, from this big, new jail?" protested Wild Horse Bill weakly; and then he put out his hands. "All right, sheriff," he said, "put 'em on, if you want to; but this feller, he ain't done nothing wrong."

"I put 'em on you both!" replied Baca inexorably. "You can't foola me, I'm wise."

He fitted the handcuffs with meticulous care, snapping them close to Bill's slim wrists, while a deputy did the same to Meadows. Then he took the heavy leg irons and shackled their feet together, chaining the whole to the frame of the bed.

"Now," he said, "sing as moch as you like. I guess that will hold you—no?"

He stepped back and smiled as he gloated over his handiwork, and Wild Horse Bill hung his head. Then the Mexicans went out, leaving them alone in their cell to await the coming of dawn.

CHAPTER V.

WITH A BUTTON HOOK OR ANYTHING.

By the dim light of their candle the two prisoners sat together and Bill sighed and rattled his chains, then he raised his voice in the lugubrious ditty commonly known as "A Prisoner for Life."

"Fare ye well, green fields; soit meadows, adieu!
Rocks and mountains, I depart from you;
I am doomed to this cell, I heave a deep sigh
My heart sinks within me, in anguish I die."

But as he droned out the song he was wrestling with his handcuffs, pushing his thumbs down and limbering up his joints, and as Meadows looked on Bill suddenly slipped out one hand with a look of comical surprise.

"Hoc!" he piped and, laying hold of his other hand, he changed to a livelier tune:

"Come boys and listen while you have a little time,
And I'll give to you a little jail rhyme,
And it's hard times, poor boys,
And I say it's hard times.

"Now this Pecos jail is no jail at all
You ought to take a turn in Wichita Falls,
And it's hard times, poor boys,
And I say it's hard times.

"The judge and the jury you all know well,
For a five-dollar bill they will send you to hell,
And it's hard times, poor boys,
And I say it's hard times."

He stopped again with the same pout of surprise and held up his slim hands, free; then he stuck out his tongue and looked over the leg irons, grunting contemptuously as he kicked them about.

"Gimme that tobacco can," he said and, while he worked it to pieces by twisting the joints to and fro, he went on with his cynical song:

"The judge and the sheriff you know by name,
They come to this county with the ball and chain,
And it's hard times, poor boys,
And I say, it's hard times."

He paused to roll up a thin strip of tin and bite it into shape with his teeth, and as he fitted it experimentally into the lock of the leg irons he crooned yet another bold verse:

"Now the judge and the jury they have got it made out
For ten dollars more they will turn you right out,
And it's hard times, poor boys,
And I say, it's hard times."

He winked cheerfully at Meadows, who was beginning to stare, and showed him a crudely formed key. Then he thrust it into the keyhole, working it delicately to and fro, until finally there was a snap and a click. He kicked the irons aside with the smug smirk of a magician who has allowed himself to be handcuffed and chained, and knelt down to set Meadows free. Within half an hour after Celso Baca had manacled them his shackles were dumped on the floor.

"What'd I tell ye?" exulted Bill, picking

up one of the spare candles and warming it over the burning one. "The jail ain't made that will hold *me*."

"What—do you expect to get clear out?" demanded Meadows incredulously, and Wild Horse Bill nodded assuredly.

"Feeling lucky," he said, "everything's coming my way. You wait till I make me a gun." He wrapped the melted candle about the shank of another one, which he bent down like the handle of a pistol; then alternately heating it and pinching it into shape, he molded it to the rude semblance of a six-shooter.

"Put 'em up!" he exclaimed, snapping his neck-handkerchief up over his nose and throwing down on Meadows with the gun, and then he went to work with the point of his key to make every line of it perfect. First he carved out the cylinder, with the bullets in the chambers, and smoked the muzzle hole black; after which he picked up the despised ball of tin foil and wrapped it around the barrel. This was the last magic touch, and as he laid it smoothly on, warming the candle grease to make it hold, the clumsy phony gun was suddenly transformed to a nickel-plated, man's size six-shooter.

"You're a wonder, Bill," cried Meadows; and as he gazed at the gun the fighting fire came back into his eyes. All day—for two days—he had been a mere automaton, patiently submitting to whatever seemed his fate; but now that he saw a real chance to escape his mind leaped forward to meet it. Up to the last few moments he had regarded Wild Horse Bill as a rollicking, rattle-headed cowboy; but a man who could thus scheme to collect candles, tin and tin foil and then turn them to such uses of his own, was not one to be despised. Wild Horse Bill had a head, there was method in his madness, and his object was to break out of jail.

"You just tell me what to do," burst out Meadows eagerly, "and you'll find me right up there trying. Now what next—going to hold up the jailer?"

"Him or somebody," returned Bill laying the "gun" aside and beginning to fumble with the top of his boot, "but I aim to git out of *here* first." He ripped open the seam and, from a pocket down the boot leg, drew out a slender strip of steel. It was the blade of a hack saw, sewed in there long ago in anticipation of some such need, and Bill smiled once more in his innocent way as he tested the edge on a rod. Then he blew out

the guttering candle and, stepping up to the barred door, felt about in the inky darkness.

"Now make a noise," he said over his shoulder, "rattle them leg irons and knock on the floor. That old jailer is inside here, somewhere."

His voice was tense now, and he plied his saw cautiously in time to Meadows' rhythmic blows, but at last, as no one appeared to disturb them, he broke into a lilting song:

"Bill Jones was a preacher, a Sunday-school teacher.

His daddy was a preacher, too.
Bill took a notion to sail o'er the ocean
To visit the people of Tim-booker-oo.
The cannibals took him, they started to cook
him,

But he escaped from the band and he cried:

"This is no place for a minister's son,
A minister's son, a minister's son.
I want to stay, but my feet wants to run,
So I'll have to say good-by.
Father awaits for his wandering one,
For his wandering son, for his wandering one.
Maybe you think I'm out for some fun
But, I'm not—I'm a minister's son!"

One bar was sawn through, Meadows was clanking his chains regularly and stamping out time for the chorus, when suddenly the singing stopped. Bill was standing by the door as if he had been frozen, staring out at the gate beyond, and in the silence that followed there was the grate of a key and the grind of heavy hinges.

"Git into your handcuffs," whispered Wild Horse Bill hoarsely, making a jump and plumping down on the bed; and as they slipped on their leg irons a light flashed out, revealing the white-bearded jailer behind. He peered in through the door, his eyes big with suspicion, his bull's-eye searching every corner of their cell; and they let him look his fill. Undoubtedly he had heard the noise of their sawing, perhaps he had been spying for some time; but now, when he looked in, they were both securely shackled and sitting side by side on the bed.

"*Que cosa!*" he murmured, craning his neck to look closer; and as he saw the old man's gaze revert to his handcuffs Wild Horse Bill suddenly held them out.

"*Mira!*" he exclaimed and with a dexterous flip he shook them off onto the floor. Then he snapped his finger in the air, reached into his shirt, and pulled out the phony pistol.

"You are my prisoner," he cried, leveling

it straight at his breast. "Open the door, before I shoot you."

For a moment the jailer stood swaying on his feet, staring down the black muzzle of the gun; then, muttering a prayer, he searched out the right key and threw the cell door open.

"*Muchas gracias,*" returned Bill, stepping briskly out and relieving the old man of his gun, "and I'll just trouble you for that bunch of keys." He took the keys, and the bull's-eye lantern with which the jailer had stalked them; and then, as the old Mexican began to cross himself and beg, he shoved him roughly into the cell.

"Shut up!" he said, "you ain't going to be hurt." And, slipping the phony gun to Meadows, he tiptoed over to the gate. But as they reached the outer door and stood listening for the guard, the frightened jailer began to call for help.

"*Socorro!*" he shouted. "*Les ladrones!* Stop thief!"

"Let 'im yell," muttered Wild Horse Bill, stepping back from the door, "and as fast as they come in, I'll hold 'em up and you take away their guns."

"All right," returned Meadows, and as they stood expectant startled voices rose up from outside. Then the door was snatched open and a man stumbled in, feeling about in the inner darkness.

"Hey there!" spoke up Bill, suddenly turning on his bull's-eye and flashing it full in his face; and as the guard stood bewildered Meadows snatched away his pistol and made him stand with his face to the wall. A second guard burst in, wild-eyed with alarm, his rifle held ready to fire; but a swift blow from Meadows sent him sprawling to the floor where he was speedily overpowered and disarmed. The stentorian voice of the jailer still clamored from the darkness, imploring mercy and help: from the deck above the common prisoners joined in with a babel of yells; but though Meadows stood waiting with his pistol poised to strike no one answered their vociferous appeals.

"Take a look," suggested Bill, still with his light on the prisoners; and Meadows peered through the crack of the door. The night was dark, and there was no sign of Baca's guards except their blankets and a row of saddled horses.

"Come on," beckoned Meadows, and Bill stepped softly out, shutting and locking the door behind him. Then he threw the keys

up on top of the roof and stood looking, a pistol in each hand. But no one rose to meet them, the guard's camp was deserted—and a whoop from the saloon across the plaza explained the probable whereabouts of the guard.

"Take a carbine," advised Bill, sorting over the guns that the Mexicans had left in their beds; and, after they had helped themselves to the best, they slipped over to where the horses stood tied. Bill picked out a big bay and began shortening up the stirrups, but Meadows hurried on to where a well-remembered head was reared against the sky. It was Brennan's chestnut mare, that beautiful creature which already he had begun to covet; and as he stepped to her side she nickered softly and thrust her nose against his breast. He tightened the cinches and swung into the saddle with a wild, surging sense of victory. Against almost insuperable odds they had escaped from chains and prison and were free as the passing wind—and all on account of Bill. He was a marvel of inventiveness, a miracle of efficiency, a past master in the rough work of night fighting; but now he sat silent, gazing over across the plaza, his hook nose raised high like a hunting dog's.

"What's the matter?" inquired Meadows, riding over to join him. "Come on, let's get out of town."

"No, danged if I do!" exclaimed Bill explosively. "Not till I smoke up them yaller-bellied Mexicans!"

He threw the spurs into his horse and went dashing across the plaza, with Meadows close behind; and as he set up his mount in front of the saloon he let out a piercing yell.

"A-ah, hah, hah, hah!" he whooped. "Come and git me, you dastards!" And drawing his pistol he fired through the doorway, over the heads of the staring Mexicans. There was a crash of glass, the smashing of fixtures and the terrified squeals of fleeing men; and as the boldest began to shoot back Bill turned his horse on one foot and went galloping out of town.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS.

Out across the broad plains and into the velvety night Wild Horse Bill and Meadows galloped on, and when they drew rein they could hear drumming hoofs as the Mexicans came thundering after them. Bill listened

a minute, his chin thrust out, his lips skinned back vindictively, and then he granted to himself.

"Huh!" he jeered, "you're bravo now, ain't ye? You're goin' to chase me clean to Show Low. All right, Mister Mex, I'll jest give you the road and let you run yore fool se'f to death."

He turned off up a narrow swale and looked back with scornful chuckles as the posse rode blindly on; then, putting his horse to a shuffling trot, he ambled away to the north. But when the day dawned and revealed them to their pursuers the fugitives fled on at a gallop. Far ahead, over a roll of the yellow prairie, a windmill top stuck up from some swale; farther on the Gallinas thrust up their rugged peaks, feather-edged with tall spruces and pines; but all about was the undulating grass land, clipped short by cattle and sheep, with the Mexicans like dots to the south. At the first peep of light they had spied the two Americans, now well on their way to the mountains, and from wherever they happened to be they came whirling across the flats, riding furiously to overtake them.

"Let 'em come," grinned Bill, pulling his horse down to a walk. "I shore do love to tease 'em. And after they've rode their horses plumb down we'll give 'em a surprise and leave 'em."

He began to hum a little tune as he trotted on toward the windmill and then he looked up suddenly.

"Did you notice that?" he asked, "how I said that last? Well, I'm that way all the time. Everything I say makes a rhyme.

"I shore do love to tease 'em
And after they've rode their horses down
We'll give 'em a surprise and leave 'em!"

"Say, I could write a good song about breaking that jail."

"I expect you could," conceded Meadows, "but what's this surprise? Those Mexicans are beginning to get close."

"I'll show 'em!" boasted Bill. "Now you jest watch how they act—one white man could lick a million of 'em."

He dropped off of his horse just over the brow of a low hill and snatched out his stolen rifle, then with lightning rapidity he emptied it at the Mexicans, who suddenly wheeled and stopped.

"You see?" he demanded. "They think we've made a stand, and every danged one of 'em is yaller. They're afeard to run up on

me—I've downed too many of 'em—and I'll down some more of 'em yet." He refilled his magazine and, taking a rest over one knee, aimed long and carefully at the crowd. Then he fired, once, and a horse went down, while the Mexicans scattered right and left. "That'll hold 'em," grumbled Bill, "if they don't double round. Now lets round up this man's pasture as quick as cripes will let us and ketch out a couple of fresh horses."

He swung up on his big bay and galloped down toward the windmill, which was inside a barbed-wire inclosure; and when he came to the fence he threw his rope across it, making it fast to the bottom of a post. Then he remounted his horse and rode off on the jump, and at the jerk the post, and three or four others, leaped up and were laid flat on the ground.

"How's that?" inquired Bill. "That's what they call quick work. Now, the idee is to round up every horse in the pasture, so the Mexicans can't change too, and foller."

He dashed out in a circle that covered half the field and as Meadows swung down in the opposite direction the *remuda* fled before them to the fence corner. There they huddled in a confused mass, ducking and cringing before the ropes; and then, working fast but with soothing words to their mounts, Bill and Meadows made a hasty change. Saddles and bridles came off and were slipped on resolute bronks, who flew back and fought the rope; and they were just swinging up to go when there was a yell from behind and their pursuers came pouring over the hill.

"Jerk that fence down!" yelled Bill, snatching his rifle from its sling and dropping down to shoot at the Mexicans; and Meadows checked his plunging mount, dropped a loop over a fence-post, and laid it flat with one jerk. Then as Bill suddenly mounted, they drove the horse herd through the gap and went scampering away across the plain. A stray bunch of Mexicans, which had swung round to the west, made a half-hearted attempt to head them off; but Bill was in his element, whooping and riding like a drunken Indian, and they swept by in a cloud of dust. It was like a stampede or the wild rush of mustangs that have been jumped and flee for the hills, and as the herd galloped on Brennan's chestnut mare took the lead with her head held high. She was a "broom tail" again, leading the *remuda* across the plains while some wild stallion drove the stragglers in her wake; and as the

herd settled down to a steady lope Meadows rode over and fell in with Bili.

"Say," he said, "where did Brennan get that horse? Do you think a man could buy her?"

"Not for a million dollars," returned Wild Horse Bill emphatically, "and if you did, you couldn't keep her. Butch has got a horse thief that will get that mare from anywhere—and if he failed, Butch would steal her himself. She's his *chula* horse, the pet of the bunch—I gave her to Butch myself."

"What? That horse? You gave her away? I'd give every dollar I've got for her!"

"How many you got?" inquired Wild Horse Bill shrewdly. "I might ketch you another one, jest like her. She's a broom tail from over on the plains."

"Yes, I know it," answered Meadows still with his eye on the *chula* horse, "but you'd never get another one like her. She knew me when I caught her, last night."

"Yeah, I've heard about you," observed Bill, laughing indulgently, "they say you can make up to any horse. But I'll tell you right now, don't you steal Butch's mare or he'll foller you to hell and then kill you. No, you let Chula alone and I'll fix you up—I'll ketch you another one, jest like her!"

"Will you sure?" demanded Meadows, and as Bill nodded assent he turned in his saddle and considered. The chase was over and the posse, disheartened, had dropped far behind on the plains; but some would follow on and the old carefree life could never be his again. He could never go back to the old Figure 4 for he was an outlaw now, like Wild Horse Bill; yet somehow he clung to the hope, nothing more, that in some way he might still make his peace. He had committed no crime other than resisting arrest and breaking his way out of jail, and now that he could never ride with her again, he longed for one more glimpse of Justina. He was an outlaw, a fugitive, even suspected of being Butch Brennan with a reward of forty-five thousand on his head; but Dave Starbuck was a power in that Mexican-ruled land, and he never went back on a friend. Perhaps he could square the case, yet.

"Let's go through Show Low!" burst out Meadows impulsively, and Wild Horse Bill squinted down his nose.

"Show Low or any place," he said at last, "as long as they've got some whisky."

"No, let's not stop, then," interposed Meadows hastily, "I just wanted to see Dave Starbuck."

"Oh," grinned Bill, "I thought it was the school-teacher. Well, Chris Woolf is good enough for me."

"Say, how do you know about all these things?" demanded Meadows, turning suddenly red. "I'll swear I've never seen you in Show Low."

"I've been there, all the same," answered Wild Horse Bill, "and we've got a system for picking up the news."

"Oh, sure," nodded Meadows, "I know about that. Brennan tried to hire me to be his agent when I met him back in the hills."

"We've got our agent," returned Bill mysteriously. "You'd be surprised, if you knew who it was. But say, what's your plans—are you going to throw in with us or are you going to skip the country?"

"What do you mean?" inquired Meadows, but in his heart he knew, and he knew also that Bill was right. There was no place in that country for a man in his position except with Butch Brennan's gang. And yet if he joined them, if he threw in with the wild bunch, it was the definite parting of the ways; he could never turn back and retrace his steps to the path of respectability. He would be outlawed for life, pursued, proscribed, his name posted throughout the land; and as the depredations of Brennan's gang drove the express company to retaliation they would put a reward on *his* head. They would organize a plan of ruthless extermination such as had wiped out the Daltons and the Youngers, and every man who belonged to the gang would be hunted like a sheep-killing dog. And in the end, of course, they would get him. But to leave the country, to push on to Arizona where the Mexican was kept in his place, that was simple—except for one thing. He would never see Justina again.

"I don't know," he said to Bill; and as they swung west toward Show Low, he still pondered the pros and cons. Even if Starbuck was still willing to help him, there was nothing that he could do, more than to hide him out in the hills; and if Celso Baca discovered his whereabouts he would spare no pains to take him. The sheriff would be out of his head with chagrin, now that he had lost both his prisoners and the reward, and the mountains behind Show Low would be thoroughly combed before Baca returned to

town. He was behind them now in that cloud of dust which dwindled but followed doggedly on, and his rage would be limitless when he rode into Show Low and found himself balked of his prey—Dave Starbuck could not even approach him.

"I'll tell you," suggested Bill, who was beginning to nod, "we'll change horses at Show Low and ride on until dark and then take a little snooze. No, danged if we will!" he burst out resentfully. "They ketched me that way before. Them Mexicans seem to know that I'll do something like that and they tag along behind me on a gamble. No, gimme a quart of red-eye to keep me awake and I'll whip till I git to Frog Tanks; and them Walking X boys will give me a tip if any Mexicans come squandering down the road."

"All right," agreed Meadows, "I'll go with you that far—but I don't like your friend, Mr. Brennan."

"Who, Butch? Why, what's the matter with him?"

"Oh, nothing much," said Meadows, "only I don't like his style—and he got me into this trouble. I met him up the cañon with his shirt full of money and he made me get off and change horses; and then, when he was going, he grabbed a handful of gold twenties and threw them down in the mud. Well, of course I picked them up and when the posse jumped me they thought they had Brennan, sure."

"Oh, ho, ho!" shouted Wild Horse Bill, quirting his horse and cutting a circle. "That's just like old Butch, the divile. Every man that he meets he gets him into some jack pot, and then he rides off and laughs."

"That's right, he laughed," admitted Meadows, "I suppose he knew all the time that Baca or his posse would get me. But if I'd known what was coming I'd have walked back to the ranch and left his money in the mud."

"Yes, but you didn't," laughed Bill, "that's the hell of it with Butch, he always knows jest what you'll do. He knew you'd ride that mare, because he see you liked her, and who'd ever go off and leave money? And then, when Baca found you, he quit chasing Butch and let him git away with the loot. Did he still have that mail bag on his saddle?"

"A big sack of mail and two saddlebags. I'll bet there was twenty thousand dollars."

"Make it forty," suggested Bill. "I was in on that deal and I had over twenty myself. Then I laid down and went to sleep, and when I woke up I was looking down a big .45. Them Mexicans had been trailing me, to see if I buried anything; and when they come up on me, using that money bale for a piller, you ought to have heard 'em laugh. It made 'em so good-natured they wouldn't think of killing me—and besides, there was all them rewards—but say, you should have seen 'em hide that money in their boots. The express company won't get hardly any of it."

"How do you like that kind of life?" inquired Meadows politely and Wild Horse Bill slapped his leg.

"Fine!" he declared. "The best in the world! There's one thing about Butch, he shore knows how to do it—we get a horse-load of money, every time!"

"He struck me as having a cruel face," observed Meadows half to himself, and Wild Horse nodded soberly.

"Yes, he's cruel," he admitted, "and he's a vindictive cuss, too; he never forgets an injury; but it takes a man like that to hold down the kind of men that you come across in our business. They're shore hard games, and you've got to be a killer or the dastards won't respect you."

"Oh!" said Meadows, and Bill hurried on to picture the wild delights of the game; but when he had finished Meadows drew in his lips and looked ahead at Show Low. It was a question in his mind, whether to go farther with Wild Horse Bill or to leave him and hide in the Datils. But one thing was certain: after what Bill had said, he could not go on to the lava beds. With a man like Brennan--cruel, heartless, overbearing—he would not be at peace for long; and then the hot temper which he strove to keep down would flare up and bring on a quarrel. And a quarrel with Brennan could be settled in but one way, if half of what he heard was true. He was a natural-born killer and his rag-handled pistol had shot down a score of men.

"No, Bill," said Meadows at last, "I'm afraid I've got to quit you—that train robbing don't appeal to me."

"Suit yourself," responded Bill, but he lost his rakish air and seemed to ponder darkly. "Well, all right," he said again, "if that's the way you feel; but dog-gone it, I'll be sorry to lose you. Butch and them

boys are all right, but they're too danged quarrelsome; I git tired of hearing them yammer. But you and me, Ab; say, we could throw in together and have a peach of a time. Ketching wild horses and breaking them, and if you're stuck on Butch's mare I can git you another one, jest like her." He looked up hopefully, but Meadows' face was set—they were riding into Show Low.

"Let's corral these horses," suggested Meadows absently, "the owner will be along to get them."

"Yes," jeered Bill, "he'll be along—with a shotgun. Don't you look for no mercy now."

"I'm not," responded Meadows, but as Bill headed for the saloon his eyes sought the schoolhouse, and Justina. Was it expecting too much, when he had meant no wrong, to look to her still for mercy? Her horse was under its tree and the hour was late—perhaps she would ride by and see him. He changed horses and waited, looking back at the dust cloud and listening to Bill's laugh from the store, and after a few minutes Justina came out and rode down the road at a trot. Her horse was fighting his head to run, but she held him resolutely in, and when she came opposite the corral full of horses she stopped and looked at Meadows. Perhaps it was from curbing her high-headed mount, but to Meadows she seemed a little grim as if along with the grace of Botticelli's Queen there was a dash of the Indian fighter as well.

"How'd you get back here?" she asked at last, and he answered with a deprecating smile.

"Rode back," he said, "couldn't leave the country without stopping to say good-by. I hope you don't still think I'm Brennan?"

"No, I don't," she answered, "but I'd take it as a favor if you'd just tell me who you are. It's all right to be loyal and to stand up for your friends, but for all I knew you're nothing but a horse thief."

"Well, let it go at that," he replied, turning away with a bitter smile, but she spurred over and reined up beside him.

"No," she said, "I know you're not a thief—but why won't you tell me who you are? I'm your friend—or I'd like to be—but it stops right here, unless you're willing to trust me."

"Well, it stops here anyhow," responded Meadows slowly, "because I've got to get out of the country; but before I go I'd like to let you know that I'm not on the dodge for some crime. I'm hiding from my people

on account of a certain matter I've been trying for some time to forget—you understand, it's something purely personal."

"Wouldn't she have you?" inquired Justina, squinting her eyes down shrewdly, and Meadows looked away.

"That is my business," he said, and Justina jabbed her horse, who was champing at his bit to go.

"Very well," she answered quietly. "I've always liked you, Ab; and I'm sorry you couldn't trust me. But this is a free country, and that's your privilege—I'll never ask you again."

Their eyes met then and a long silence followed, interrupted by a shout from the saloon.

"Hey, Ab!" hailed Wild Horse Bill, clanking out with a bottle; and then he saw the school-teacher.

"Who's that?" demanded Justina, as Bill started toward them; and her voice was eloquent with disdain.

"That's Wild Horse Bill," answered Meadows quickly, "Brennan's pardner—he helped me out of jail."

"Oh!" she said with another look at Bill and, swinging her horse in his tracks, she went clattering up the road.

"What the hell?" murmured Bill gazing drunkenly after her. "Have a drink, Ab? It'll do you good."

"No, Bill," returned Meadows, "I'm afraid it wouldn't help much. Come on, let's get out of town."

CHAPTER VII.

THE LAVA BEDS.

It is the little things, after all, that turn us from our purpose and change the course of our lives, and as Meadows rode away with the renegade horse hunter he accepted him in his heart as a pardner. Wild Horse Bill was a drunken and irresponsible creature, but he was the only man left that Meadows could call friend and he took him for better or worse. Certain it was that without his aid Meadows would still be in the Papalote jail; and from there, unless some miracle intervened, he would have passed on to the Territorial Prison. But he had escaped that fate, and now he gave to Bill the friendship which finer folks scorned. And Bill, noting the change, gripped his hand and made much of him and swore to stay with him through fire.

They rode up the cañon past the Figure 4 gate, driving Brennan's *chula* mare before them, and night found them hid in the Saw Tooth Mountains by a water hole that Wild Horse Bill knew. There they ate again of the scanty lunch which Bill had obtained from Chris Woolf, and as he drank up his whisky Bill enlarged on the joys that only a horse hunter knows. He told of chasing herds for three days at a time, changing horses again and again, until at last the fiery stallions abandoned their *remudas* and left the fleet mares to be roped. And then he told of horse traps, cunningly built about the water and left with gates open for months; until at last the wary mustangs ventured back to the spring, only to find themselves shut in at last. But of brutal Butch Brennan and the robbing of trains he made no further mention, and before they slept they had made all their plans for a trip to the horse country together.

They saddled up at dawn and swung back to the trail which led on to the North Plains beyond and as the sun rose up, striking the high cliffs of the Saw Teeths which gleamed white in the crystal-clear air, they passed down through wooded hills to Trinchero Lakes, where the wild cattle watered at night. Then from the summit of a last ridge, crowned with yellow pines and spruces, they looked out on the immensity of the plains; and, standing blue against the horizon, they beheld the volcanic cones that marked the grim land called the malpais. There men were said to enter and never return, even the Indians avoided it with awe; but to outlaws like Butch Brennan it gave a haven of refuge, a safe retreat from the most savage pursuit.

Down a broad, winding valley the trail led on, and as the ridges fell away and gave place to rolling plains the row of craters rose up higher against the sky. Their huge shoulders loomed up treeless, gray with cinders and volcanic ash, but along their flanks where the lava flow began there was a mass of spikelike pines. And, low on the plain, a great forest appeared, black treetops above a sea of yellow grass.

"What's that forest?" asked Meadows as he saw it bar their way, and Wild Horse Bill broke into a laugh.

"It's the malapie," he chuckled, "every sucker that comes over here seems to think it's a park or something."

"Well, what is it?" demanded Meadows.

"You don't mean to tell me that those trees are growing in the lava."

"That's right," answered Bill, "and as far as you can see them you can bet your bottom dollar they're in malapie. Wherever that stops there's nothing but grass, or cedars and piñon trees on the hills. I reckon the lava must ketch the water, and for the rest of it they jest live on air."

"Is there any water in there?" inquired Meadows incredulously, and Bill closed one eye mysteriously.

"Sure," he said, "if you know the way to it. There's two springs in five hundred square miles."

So that was the secret of Butch Brennan's immunity—he had discovered the hidden springs. Strange stories had come in about trails through the lava beds, and of water holes that the Apaches had found; but except for the tales that friendly Indians told the rest was mere myth and fable. What everybody knew was that in the early days the Apaches had made the lava beds their stronghold, and that no troops of soldiers had ever had the hardihood to follow them into the malpais. Trails there might have been, but nobody could find them, and in the thousands of caves and miniature craters the Indians had slipped away like snakes. And since the Apaches remained hid there it was reasonable to suppose that they had found a water hole somewhere.

"Is that where we're going?" asked Meadows at last, and Bill nodded his head impressively.

"I'll take you to a place," he said, "where no white man ever went before—not until me and Butch found the trail. It's a big piece of pasture land right in the middle of that lava—a rincon that the lava flowed around. And, after I've took you in, I bet you a thousand dollars you can't find your way back out."

"Is that so?" observed Meadows, and as they rode on across the plains he turned and looked back toward Show Low. The porphyry cliffs of the distant Saw Toths gleamed white once more in the sun and the Datils loomed bastionlike beyond; and there, on the other side, lay all that he loved, or had loved, for the past three years. He was leaving it now to venture into a land where Dave Starbuck and his punchers never came, a wild No Man's Land, ungoverned by any law since the soldiers had whipped off the Indians. It was a sort of back eddy in the

western rush of civilization, and Celso Baca and his deputies avoided the men who chose to make it their home. But it was Butch Brennan's stamping ground, a principality in itself, where every man owed him fealty—otherwise he would ride in and burn his cabin to the ground and leave him as an object lesson to others. And if Meadows rode in over this trail through the lava, which no man could retrace by himself; what then, if they did not agree?

"Say, I don't like this," he spoke out at last. "I don't want to go on in that trail. That's the same as joining Brennan's gang."

"Aw, that's all right," laughed Bill, "you can stop over at Frog Tanks—there's the house on that hill below. But Butch is a prince, you'll git to like him fine; come on, I want to show you my bronks."

"But suppose you get me in there and I don't get on with Butch—what's the chances of my ever getting out?"

"Danged slim," declared Bill, "to tell you the truth. We don't want no outsiders to know that trail."

"Well, drop me at Frog Tanks then. I'm willing to take a chance, but there's such a thing as being a fool."

"Aw, I'll fix it up," burst out Wild Horse Bill at last. "Come on, and I'll tell you what I'll do. I've got another trail that even Butch don't know about that comes in from way over on yon side, and if you have a falling out I'll take you across myself and tell Butch you got lost and died. How's that, now—are you game to go on?"

"Well—yes," agreed Meadows and, though he had his misgivings, he put them out of his mind. What would it matter, after all, if this man-killer Brennan should file one more notch on his gun? Was he, Meadows, so valuable to society that his death would entail any great loss—in fact, would anybody miss him? If he never came back would they send out a search party, or would he be presently forgotten? Judging the rest of his friends by a young lady he knew, his death would not cause even a ripple; he was just one more black sheep, coming from no one knew where, and going where all black sheep go. He was waybilied to hell, and a little excitement might add a pleasing fillip to the plunge.

The Frog Tanks Ranch rose up before them, a huge, fortlike mud house on top of a round hill that overlooked the cattle-dotted plains. At the foot of the hill were the cor-

rals and branding pens, with a windmill to pump up water for the troughs; and below, where the flood waters from two valleys converged, was the sink hole known as Frog Tanks. It was dry and silent now and glistening with alkali but, shortly after the next flood had melted the dried mud, it would be vocal with thousands of frogs. In the brief heyday of their freedom they floated about in shoals, raising their voices in a deafening choral; and then as the water was dried up by sun and wind they bored down and holed up beneath the crust.

In Indian-fighting days the Frog Tanks Ranch had been famous as a camping place for soldiers, but now that the Apaches had been put on reservations it had fallen away from its early good name. With the soldiers had gone law and order as well, and when the Mexicans took over the county government the last semblance of authority disappeared. No officer of the law had ever crossed the mountains to protect the scattered citizens in their rights and now not only this ranch but every ranch north of the Datils looked to Brennan for peace and protection. If he or any of his men happened to ride that way they were fed and given fresh mounts, and if any posse of Mexicans had had the nerve to follow they would have received a grudging welcome. And for this show of loyalty the hardy citizens of the North Plains claimed immunity from the raids of the gang.

Meadows' reception at Frog Tanks was friendly, perforce, for he was riding with Wild Horse Bill; but the hard-faced Walking X punchers continued to look at him askance until they changed horses and galloped on toward the malpais. Before them, running free and as tirelessly as ever, Brennan's Chula led the way across the plain; and as they neared the Punta de Malpais, the farthest point south of the gigantic flow of lava, Meadows noticed that she turned into a well-beaten trail that led on around the forest to the west. Now that he looked at it closer this great earth blanket of lava seemed more like a forest than ever; and the plain, flowing to meet it, like some ancient ocean that lapped up against its front. Point after point of brown and black rock was thrust out into the sea of yellow grass, and down to its very edge the barren lava was bristling with a heavy growth of pines. Water there might be, caught and stored from passing thunderstorms and the

melting of winter snows; but soil there was none nor any promise of nurture beyond the matted needles of the pines. They seemed to live, as Bill said, on desert air and water sucked up from deep cracks; but they stood out, full-fed and verdant, tall yellow pines and black, with cedars and piñons interspersed.

Jagged islands of rock, thrust up through the plain floor, turned their trail this way and that, and the ground became encumbered with rough chunks of lava, fuzzed over with clinging lichens. The surface of the plain was carpeted everywhere with mossy fragments, snatched and strewn by the wind, and as they approached the lava wall Meadows saw that half its harshness was concealed beneath a mass of green and gray. But the lava itself rang beneath their horses' feet like steel or bell-metal bronze; and the wall, where they mounted it, rose thirty feet above the plain which it had covered for so many square miles. It had made its last thrust and then the high front had crumbled down like a piece of shattered gingerbread; and now, though millions of years had passed since Mother Earth had baked her cake, it still looked but half cooled, but half arrested in its movement, a huge engine of destruction, poised to crush.

The place where Bill turned in was marked by no monument, nor was there the least sign of a trail, and as he headed out through the tree trunks it became evident to Meadows that his guide was following no signs. He rambled on over the molten surface, seeking always the easiest way, around blow holes, down through earth cracks, across natural bridges; twisting and turning from left to right but traveling straight into the sun, which hung low above the tops of the trees. Behind him followed Chula, setting her small feet delicately but with the sureness of a mountain horse, and as she paced along she nipped at the sweet grama grass which rose up in thin wisps from the crevices. No wild horses or deer ever entered that silent forest to crop those waving grain heads; it was quiet, too quiet, and as Meadows followed on he felt the spell of the malpais, a silence almost of death. The wind soothed in the treetops, dainty fly catchers perched on high; but there were no other birds, no chipmunks, no squirrels, no movement except their own.

As he led on across the waste of heat-wrecked lava Wild Horse Bill seemed sud-

denly changed—he was anxious, aloof, intent on some search which kept his head swinging like a hunting dog's—until at last he swung off to the north. Meadows looked all about, but there was no blaze on the tree trunks, no monument of rocks to mark the way; he was traveling by direction alone. For half an hour he spurred on, apparently at haphazard, forcing his horse over crevasses and blow-outs and around the tree-filled sink holes; and then he came out into a clear space among the trees, where the lava was level and solid. He set off at a trot now, and as Meadows fell in behind he saw a white blaze on a tree, then a monument of stones, standing up slim and straight in a space of the forest ahead. Bill had reached his marked trail, but could any other man find his way to where they had cut it? And if he failed, could he ever retrace his steps where all ways looked the same? Meadows gave up all effort to remember their course—he was at the mercy of Brennan and Bill.

The sun swung low and sank from sight, a heavy gloom filled the dark aisles of the forest; and as Bill hurried on he craned his neck anxious—then stopped, and came stumbling back.

"You stay here," he said, and began to walk in careful circles seeking a monument that was not to be found. "Have to go back," he said, and retreated to the last one where he halted and circled again. "Dog-gone that man Butch," he burst out at last, "he's always knocked over my monuments. What the devil!" he cursed, groping about in the half darkness, and then he sat down and considered. "Well, we're lost," he declared, so the first thing to do is to build a big monument, right here. Then we'll make a fire and cut circles from that—old Butch has done knocked down my monuments."

"But what for?" questioned Meadows, and Bill muttered to himself.

"Well, so nobody can follow him in," he said. "He's worth forty-five thousand dollars to somebody."

"They'll never follow him in over *this* trail," said Meadows, and Wild Horse Bill chuckled hoarsely.

"No," he grumbled, "dang right they won't—can't find it myself, half the time. Here, Chula, old girl; take me back to camp and I'll give you a feed of corn."

He reached out impulsively and caught the mare by the tail, dragging his own horse along behind; and after a moment Chula paced off demurely, her head held low to the ground.

"You see?" said Bill, "she smells Butch's tracks, going in; she can follow a trail like a bloodhound."

Then without a hitch, without turning to right or left, the beautiful animal led on, until they encountered Bill's monuments again and broke out at last upon a plain. A half moon in the west revealed a rolling stretch of prairie, fenced in by a circle of lofty pines; and as they mounted and rode on a horse in the distance gave vent to a challenging whinny. The mare responded, swinging forward at a trot; and then in the darkness a square of light burst out, with a man in the doorway, looking.

"That's Butch," laughed Bill as the man ducked aside. "Dad-burn him, I've a good mind to skeer 'im. Better not though, by grab, or he'll pump me full of lead. Oh, Butch, this is Bill—I'm from Bug-scuffle!"

A low cabin emerged from the slope of a hill, taking form about the broad square of light; and as they rode up before it a voice came from the darkness, excited, querulous, eager.

"Who's that with you?" it demanded, and Bill laughed again as he turned to face his chief.

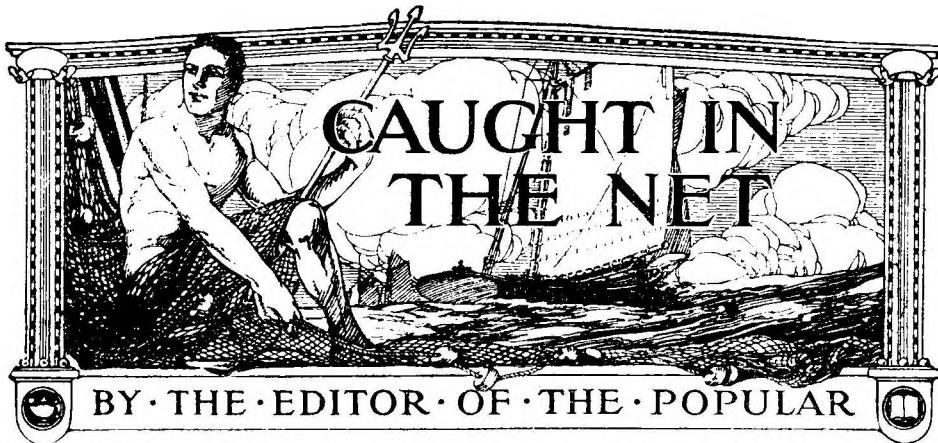
"It's Ab Meadows," he said. "He's from Bug-scuffle, too. We've brought back your Chula horse."

"Good for you!" exclaimed Brennan, stepping out from behind the house, "I was afraid them danged Mexicans would git her."

"They did, too," returned Bill, "but Ab stole her back when we broke out of the Papalote jail."

"Well, git down boys, git down!" burst out Brennan hospitably. "Come on in and I'll shew you the loot. We made a clean-up, Bill—thirty-two thousand in cash, and I ain't looked at half the mail. Glad to see you Mr. Meadows; so you throwed in with Bill, hey? Well, come in, boys; I'm shore glad to see you!"

"What'd I tell you?" muttered Bill as he led Meadows in, "you're as welcome as the flowers in May."



PSYCHOLOGICAL CHEMISTRY

IF you are amazed and disappointed by any of the acts or conclusions of the Paris Congress, do not blame the individual delegates, or the countries from which they came, but lay the sins of the Congress upon an intangible being which will have ceased to exist as soon as the delegates conclude their meetings. Such is the advice of a French philosopher, Gustave le Bon, whose recent book, "The Crowd," sets forth new discoveries in the psychology of crowds.

According to Le Bon, a crowd is not necessarily a mob in the street, or a number of persons congregated together in material form. A crowd may be composed of the most highly educated individuals, acting as a body, even if separated each from the other by material distance. It is their acting together when moved by the same impulse that makes them a crowd. And a crowd is always different from any individual—different even from any of the individuals composing it. The crowd may be better or worse than any of its component parts, and is generally worse, as witness the lynchings and other crimes of violence done by mobs composed of apparently good citizens. Herbert Spencer has argued that the acts of parliaments usually show a comparatively low order of intelligence, and attributes it to an average struck among the elements composing the legislative bodies. But listen to the new philosopher:

There is in no sort a summing up of or an average struck. What really takes place is a combination, followed by the creation of new characteristics, just as in chemistry certain elements, when brought into contact—bases and acids, for instance—combine to form a new body possessing properties quite different from those of the bodies that have served to form it.

He cites many cases of crowd psychology to prove his contention, the most striking of which was the renunciation of all its privileges that the French nobility voted in a moment of enthusiasm during the celebrated night of August 4, 1789, which would certainly never have been consented to by any of its members taken singly. And if he had been a student of American affairs he might have instanced many tariff bills passed by our Congress which were cursed and contemned by the great majority of the very members who consented to their passage. In the same way, by the time the peace congress is ended, President Wilson, Lloyd George, Premier Clemenceau, and the other distinguished delegates may have consented to do many things which, had they been themselves at the time, they would never have done.

THE GREAT REMEDY

GETTING our boys into training camps and shaping them for war, unexpectedly brought to light the percentage of illiteracy among them. Shocked, our authorities got busy at an educational program of sorts. Incidentally, it was also discovered that five or six per cent of our whole population was illiterate, a large number of them being unable to speak the language of the land. Many of us were scandalized at this revelation.

But think of the reverse condition—a country whose millions hold only five per cent of educated people. Such is Russia. Is it to be wondered at, then, that the Russian masses have been the victims of demagogic passion and prejudice, and that they have seemed insane in their decisions and acts? Macaulay, in an eloquent speech on popular education, draws a conclusion that might have been derived from witnessing the proletarian mania. He asks:

"Could such things have taken place in a country where the mind of the laborer was prepared by education; in which he should have been taught to find pleasure in the exercise of intelligence, taught to reverence his Maker, to respect legitimate authority, and at the same time to seek the suppression of genuine injustice by pacific and constitutional means?"

Widespread popular education has been one of the chief saving graces of these United States. It has given a balance of sanity to our people that could have come through nothing else. Sound education strengthens the moral consciousness and tempers the soul for life. It is well that our philosophers and pedagogues feel a new and rejuvenating sense about the importance of popular educational methods, and that there is a distinct impulse toward the humanities among our leaders of thought. We trust that the fresh fire may not only illumine our own country but shed beams of light into many benighted lands—Russia, India, China, and kindred places of darkness.

Every civilized government worth the name should make utmost efforts to bring education to its people. No money should be stinted in this "propaganda" to enlighten mankind. Hundreds of millions of human beings await the spiritual stimuli that shall transform them into physical, moral and mental assets. May we again quote Macaulay in that speech from which we have already drawn?

"I believe, sir," said the illustrious historian and orator, "that it is the right and the duty of the state to provide means of education for the common people. This proposition seems to me to be implied in every definition that has ever yet been given of the functions of a government. About the extent of those functions there has been much difference of opinion among ingenious men. . . . On one point all the disputants are agreed. They unanimously acknowledge that it is the duty of every government to take order for giving security to the persons and property of the members of the community. This being admitted, can it be denied that the education of the common people is the most effectual means of securing our persons and our property?"

FLIGHTS

IT would be hard to exaggerate the possibilities of aerial achievement for even the single year of 1919. The peaceful rivalry for supremacy in the air may far exceed in results the wonders accomplished by the knights of warfare in the skies. While aviators of the United States, England, France, Italy, and Spain are planning the conquest of the etherial seas above the Atlantic, and Americans are working out a way to rediscover the north pole through the air, the Germans are secretly building gigantic Zeppelins with which to establish a regular line of transports between the hemispheres, and other daring navigators are preparing to cross continents and oceans in all parts of the world. A mere catalogue of the things planned for this year is enough to make one realize how aviation is steadily making the earth smaller, and at the same time dwarfing the wonders, both fabled and real, of ancient times. Here are a few of the projects:

1. A flight around the world, via Asiatic routes, the Bering Strait, the Atlantic Ocean, and Iceland, by Jules Vedrines.
2. A transatlantic flight from the United States to England, proposed for next June, by Captain Benjamin B. Lipsner and a group who are also planning aerial transportation lines for this country.
3. A transatlantic flight from the coast of Spain to the United States by Semprini, the Italian aviator who instructed American pilots at Milan during the war. Also a similar flight proposed by Captain Herrera, chief of the Spanish air force, discussed by the Spanish cabinet, and a flight planned by Captain Hugo Sundstedt, of Sweden, from Newfoundland to Ireland.

4. A flight from England to the United States by aviators yet to be chosen, proposed in Parliament by Lord Morris.

5. A regular line of Zeppelins from Berlin to the United States. The craft are now being secretly constructed at a plant near Berlin. Each ship will be eight hundred feet long, and capable of carrying one hundred passengers, forty-five tons of mail and baggage, and thirty tons of petrol, oil, and provisions. Zeppelins have already made a record of fifty hours in the air without landing.

6. A flight to the north pole by Captain Robert A. Bartlett, U. S. A., backed by Rear Admiral Peary and others interested in aeronautics.

7. A London-to-Salonica flight, via Nice, Rome, Brindisi, and Vallona.

8. An Australia-to-London flight, proposed by the business men of Sydney, and calculated to be done in one hundred and fifty hours.

9. A London-to-Brindisi flight, via Paris, Lyons, Marseilles, Turin, Florence, and Rome.

10. A flight across the Sahara Desert from Algiers to Biskra and other towns, by French aviators.

11. A flight from the United States to Havana, Panama, and South America.

Before this article appears in print some of these flights may have been achieved, so rapidly do events move in the world of aviation. The British Aerial Commission says that airships now exist with a range of more than four thousand miles and a speed of seventy-eight miles an hour. By running engines slower, the maximum range could be eight thousand miles, and such a ship, barring accidents, could fly across the Atlantic and return without stopping. Of course there is still tremendous risk, mainly due to the leeway of an airship, to which the medium of air offers almost no resistance compared with water, and which might easily be blown hundreds of miles out of its course and be compelled to descend, in the midst of an unpredictable Atlantic storm, and be left to the mercy of the waves. But with a good machine the ocean could be crossed in less than twenty hours, and anyhow such a consideration will not deter the many intrepid men, each of whom is determined to be the Columbus of the air.

WANTED—A PHILOSOPHY OF GAMES

OME day, somebody will write a book on the philosophy of games, and we herewith give notice to American aspirants for literary honors to consider it, for it would be most fit that an American be the author of such a work. As a people we take the lead in games, especially those of outdoor sport. Perhaps it would be in better taste to say that Anglo-Saxons lead in this vigorous department of life. At any rate, with a ball of some kind, little or big, hard or soft, the Anglo-Saxon can amuse himself apparently to the end of time, and not only enthuse himself over its parabolas and convolutions, but also work up a whole nation to an intense pitch of excitement. It is hardly necessary to point out the Scot with his golf, the Englishman with his cricket, and the American with his baseball.

But what is the effect of these games on character, and their relation to conduct? Also, what bearing have they on political and social institutions? We would like to have the subject threshed out. Long before baseball became the national pastime, the game of checkers played at every crossroads grocery store and village tavern had a decided influence on the minds of American citizens. For one thing, we think it helped to make them the adroit politicians and clever lawyers they were, to say nothing of dominating argument at home. Checkers certainly sharpened the wits.

Outside of Anglo-Saxon people, the outdoor games of sport are rather negligible or vicious. France used to grow breathless over croquet. Italy could—and still can—get a great many thrills from a stone-tossing contest. Russia finds expression in skating and village dancing. Spain, and all of South America, find their greatest sports in racing, cockfighting and bull rings. Germany developed no characteristic out-of-door sport, though student dueling might be said to approximate it. Japan flies kites.

All of which is but a hint of the possibilities that lie in a philosophy of games to be evolved by a student of the subject. The most fecund thought that we get out of its

consideration is the peculiar one which suggests to us that the nations which give most attention to playing with a ball in some fashion appear to dominate human affairs in commerce and government. And ball games also seem to develop the qualities of decision and fair play in their lovers. Their may be no connection whatever between these things, but it opens up a vista of speculation to the coming philosopher of the games men play. Do the ball players dominate in this world because the world itself is a round ball?

THE KAISER'S CRIMES

THE latest crime chargeable to ex-Kaiser Wilhelm is that he has spread baldness throughout the world.

Army officers say German veterans with full heads of hair are rare while the poilu may have a generous crop of whiskers and a bare "dome."

British "Tommies" found their hair thinning at an extraordinary rate and, as for the Doughboy, a lot of them who never saw virtue in such literature before, now read the hair-restorer ads.

The reason? It is the "tin hat," as the steel helmet is termed. It fits so tightly to the head and is so heavy that there can be no circulation of air. Any one who wore a tin hat for months found that his hair began to fall out.

Bad as the tin hat was there was something worse to be feared if you didn't wear it. That was poison gas. Where it reached the head of the soldier it not only destroyed the hair but killed the hair roots. Incidentally, if the soldier was not fortunate, it killed him.



POPULAR TOPICS

PRICES of this, that and the other thing are agitating everybody. Naturally, the downward scale of costs is watched more eagerly than the upward. Sudden cessation of hostilities overthrew all economic calculations. It is a singular situation that the people of the United States should be up against the problem of too much food at too high prices. As the Chicago Board of Trade asks: Why should wheat be quoted here at \$2.26 when in Argentina it is selling at \$1.28½? Why should corn in Chicago be \$1.36½ and 57½ cents in Buenos Aires? Why should oats be 68½ cents and 37 cents abroad? Why should flour remain \$12 a barrel with a wheat crop in prospect of 1,100,000,000 bushels?



BUT in spite of any and all reductions in the cost of food, the coming season's farm product promises to reach the staggering total of \$25,000,000,000 in value. Who does not admire the "embattled farmer?" And with this tremendous output before us, we wonder what would be the result if the sixty-eight per cent of arable land in this country, yet uncultivated, were to be worked.



SALARIES are ever puzzling and troublesome. There is no determining their ratio to a man's real value. Many of them seem purely arbitrary. Think of a moving-picture comedian receiving ten times the salary of the head of the nation. Or a prize fighter getting as much for a night's work as a statesman would receive in ten years. Which brings to mind the fact that our chief officeholders in government are becoming painfully aware of inadequate salaries. Bryan resigned on that account. McAdoo followed suit. Thomas W. Gregory also felt compelled to give up his portfolio for that reason.



NOW, if only their salaries had been increased even at half the rate of some of the railroad workers' wages! Under government control these men surely benefited. We will quote some of the "raises." A crossing flagman was raised from \$60.60 to \$138.92 a month; a baggageman went from \$72.80 to \$140.44 a month; a drawbridge deck hand

was boosted from \$91 to \$188.28 a month; a drawbridge watchman was raised from \$66.12 to \$147.89 a month; a freight-house watchman was benefited by the difference between \$80.16 and \$171.08 a month; porters and janitors were given an increase from \$71.28 to \$138.19 a month; car repairer and blacksmith jumped from \$5.22 a day to \$9.52; plain carmen jumped from \$4.02 a day to \$8.12; and office boys were raised from \$8 to \$13.40 a week.



BUT the war did not raise all labor wages by a long shot. The State Industrial Commission of New York at a recent investigation discovered that forty-two per cent of women in factories and forty-four per cent in shops earned less than twelve dollars a week!



PERHAPS one of the most difficult things in the world is to estimate the worth of a human being's energy in dollars and cents. Not so long ago, Professor Ashley Thornton in *Science* gave additional proof of this fact in recounting the results of psychological tests to which our army was put. The examination produced what are called "median scores," and in some respects these were astonishing, especially in the difference of the records made by hand workers and brain workers. Thus, laborers, miners, teamsters and farmers scored forty-five to forty-nine; tailors, boiler makers, barbers, painters, carpenters, bakers, cooks made fifty to fifty-nine; railway engineers, tool-room experts, ship carpenters, tool and gauge makers and auto assemblers never rose beyond the score of seventy. On the other hand, scores above one hundred and twenty were made by Y. M. C. A. secretaries, medical men, chaplains and engineer officers. Stenographers and typists scored between one hundred and fifteen and one hundred and nineteen, and bookkeepers and clerks in general were high. From this it would appear that the white-collar worker in tests of intelligence is away ahead of his brawny brother.



AND so we hear of a brand-new set of psychological tests for the college aspirant. He is going to be put through a third degree—in Columbia, at least—which will determine his fitness for the higher learning. It is sadly acknowledged that four years of college is a waste in more instances than is generally accepted. So the educators want to save the time and life. Four years in the business world might better serve a young man of certain type than four years of academic training. The course contemplated is a step forward.



GOVERNMENT and business have grown closer than ever before in our history, an amalgamation forged by the late World War. The development has really been of international scope. With the coming of peace there will be new transformations and relationships. The tendency of government is to elevate business, but business must be guarded against paternalism, and government itself must be guarded against corruption. It calls for the nicest balance.



MANY new industries have developed in the United States since 1914, and some of them have an important place in the annual report of the tariff commission. There are about two hundred firms manufacturing coal-tar chemicals, and about a hundred making dyes. Citric and lactic and formic acids are being turned out successfully in quantity. Optical glass is another growing industry. Photographic plates equal to any foreign production are manufactured. Siphon bottles—of which Germany and Austria used to sell us a million a year—are now made here by automatic machines. Potteries are flourishing, their output new and unknown before the war. Surgical instruments are being manufactured with more than hoped-for success, the makers supplying the United States war department alone with \$8,500,000 worth.

Bookie's Little Red Book

By Raymond J. Brown

Author of "The Sight of Blood," Etc.

Bookie was a jock that kept everybody guessing. His coming was mysterious. His conduct was baffling. His quitting the game left the crowd ignorant of his motives. "Reticence" ought to have been his middle name. But oh, boy, how he could ride!

ON'T pay no attention to the guy who tells you he has the true inside dope on his feller man. The citizen who says that is a liar. Worse than that—he's a nut! A feller like me that's been follerin' the ponies from one angle or another for goin' on twenty-five years has had a chance of spyan' on and observin' the more or less human race when the members thereof was makin' frank and shameless exhibition of their real innard feelin's and emotions, and I wouldn't take the short end of a one-to-twenty bet that I know my own brother!

I used to think that the horse was the one livin' thing that defied the best you could do at prognostication, interpretation and dopin' by the form charts. But he ain't. Man can give him weight for age at any distance, and breeze in in a walk!

Now and then you do get the right line on a horse. At any rate you can tell whether a bangtail that's been runnin' consistent is goin' to finish a mile and seventy yards with a hundred and twenty pounds up, or curl up his legs and die at six furlongs. But man! Just when you think your own bud-dy's past performances entitle you to give him a ratin' in your handicap book, the son of a gun pulls one that proves your calculations is all for naught and that you might as well give up the unequal struggle.

For instance, there was "Bookie" Bower. For close on three years Bookie was closer to me than my suspenders, and yet—but I'd better tell you about him from the beginnin'.

It was when I was trainin' for old Josiah King, before I'd sunk enough in the sock to select a blue blouse and a gold cap as my colors, and become a bloated owner of racin' stock myself. I'd noticed the kid hangin' around the barn for a few mornin's, but kids around a racin' stable's like flies around a lunch counter, so I hadn't paid much attention to him.

Then one mornin' I'm sendin' two of old Josiah's string out for a little canter, and I can't find only one exercise boy. The nigger kid who'd been exercisin' Pride o' Boston, a three-year-old colt, wasn't around nowhere, so I sings out to this kid.

"What's on your mind, Pop?" he asks.

"I didn't mind the "Pop" none. Even then—some fifteen years ago it was—I was "Pop" Sweeney to everybody, except my own folks who I hadn't seen in so long they didn't call me nothin', but used to write to me as Jerry.

"Ever ride a horse?" I asks the kid.

"Some," says he.

"Where?" I asks.

"Oh, around," he tells me.

That, as I found out later was Bookie Bower all the time. As full of information as a clam.

"That's the way they ussilly go," I tell him.

"How?" he asks.

"Around," I says. "Especially when they're runnin' on a track."

He grins, and I give him a good lookin' over while I'm talkin'. The first thing that strikes me is that he's older than I thought. Eighteen was right he tells me later. This int'rests me immediately, because you don't find many boys of that age as small as Bookie. About the time that most promisin' lads come seventeen or so, they begin to spread out and take on flesh, so's they've got to sweat out all their vitality to get down to ridin' weight. That was my trouble, and why I had to quit the saddle just about the time I was makin' a name for myself. This kid, though, wasn't that kind at all. He was one of them natural-born shrimps that can keep on makin' ninety-five pounds forever if they live decent, do a little road work and leave the booze alone. Besides, he had a good-lookin', smart little face and a pair

of black eyes that looked right through you. Those eyes of his kept flashin' and shinin' at me that mornin' until I begun to feel uncomfortable. And him just a shabby-dressed little kid, and me as tough an old bird as you'd find anywheres!

"Well," I says to him, pointin' to *Pride o' Boston*, "get your leg up on that colt, give him a slow three-quarters—mind you don't try to pull his head off, though—and then let him down for a couple of furlongs. You can do it, can't you?"

"Sure," he grins, "if you tell me what you mean."

I looks at him kind of hard.

"I thought," I says, "you told me you'd rode some."

"I have," says he, "but not no race horses."

"Oh," I says, "that's different. I guess you won't do."

His black eyes snap, and his face gets flushed.

"Good!" I says to myself. "Lots of spirit, too!"

"Say, mister!" the little feller blazes. "I ain't asked you to let me ride your horses. It was you made the proposition to me. There ain't a horse livin' that I can't handle," he says, not at all boastful, just about like you'd remark it was a fine day.

"All right, sonny," I tell him, "climb aboard this colt. If you can't ride him, he'll be back to let me know. Sam!" I call to one of my nigger helpers. "Give this youngster a lift."

The kid throws off his coat, and scrambles up on *Pride o' Boston*'s back. He was a little bothered by the small racin' saddle and the short stirrups, but there was nothin' scared about him as he steered the colt out into the track.

Pride o' Boston was an easy-goin', good-natured colt, so I wasn't much afraid of the kid bein' spilled off and hurt. That was the trouble with *Pride o' Boston*: as an ordinary thing he was lazy and sluggish, and had to be walloped into insensibility before he'd get up a sweat. Old Josiah wanted me to tie the can to him a dozen times, said he'd never amount to nothin' as a race horse; but I'd seen the colt show a fairly decent turn of speed for a furlong or two a couple of times when he was feelin' good, and I insisted on hangin' on to him.

Well, Bookie—I might as well keep right on callin' the kid by his name—guides the

colt through the track gate, and then stops. That fell right in with *Pride o' Boston*'s wishes. That lazy colt would have stopped in the last sixteenth of a race he was winnin' all by himself. I whistle to Bookie, and when he turns around, I motion to him to go on. The kid, though, doesn't seem to understand my signal, so I forget him and give my attention to the other horse I was about to work out.

This is Ethelbert, a four-year-old colt that I don't mind admittin' was the pride of the barn. He was a race horse, that one! Full of moods and tempers and requirin' more nursin', pettin' and care than a newborn child, but worth all the trouble he was, because, when you put him on a track, he delivered the goods! Jimmy Spring, an apprentice boy, who was learnin' fast and seemed to have the makin's of a good jock, always handled Ethelbert in his work-outs. Jimmy was on him that mornin'. I was figgerin' on a little time trial for Ethelbert, so I tell Jimmy to take the colt out and let him show all he had for a mile.

Jimmy's holdin' Ethelbert in hard as the colt passes through the gate on to the track, and, as they clear the entrance, *Pride o' Boston* trots out beside them. I can see Bookie say somethin' to Jimmy, and Jimmy gives him a laugh. The two of them, though, guide their mounts up to the nearest furlong pole together. Jimmy, accordin' to my instructions, holds Ethelbert there until I can go down to the rail and get the watch out.

When I arrive there the two kids seem to be scrappin'. Jimmy sights me first, and calls to me.

"Oh, Pop," he says, "make this new kid get out of here."

"What's the matter?" I ask.

"He wants to ride around the track with me; says he wants company."

I couldn't help but laugh, first at the thought of a skate like *Pride o' Boston* keepin' pace with Ethelbert, even in an exercise gallop, and then at the sore look on Jimmy's face. Jimmy, you see, had had silks on a few times, and was beginnin' to imagine he was a jockey. He didn't fancy minglin' and mixin' with any little ragamuffin I'd picked up around the barn.

"Let him go with you, Jimmy," I says with a wink. "You'll lose him before you hit the first turn. All right, Jimmy," I says,

drawin' my watch. "Come on!" I shout, just like a starter.

Ethelbert, of course, is off wingin'. Jimmy had been waitin' for my command, and had walloped the colt a couple of times and loosened the reins as I called to him. Pride o' Boston, though, is left flat-footed, and, to my dyin' day, I'll never forget the surprised, hurt look that come over Bookie Bower's face as he saw the other colt dashin' down the track. That look's there only for a second, though. Then I can almost hear Bookie's little jaw snap. His black eyes flash, and he leans over Pride o' Boston's neck, hits the colt a clout with his open palm, digs his heels into Pride o' Boston's flanks, and off he goes.

Pride o' Boston's so surprised at this sudden assault that he don't know what else to do but run. He's away like a scared deer with a bound that I fully expected was goin' to unseat Bookie Bower and heave him over the rail. But the kid sticks. Also, he skins up Pride o' Boston's neck like a steeplejack after a loose halyard, lets out a couple of wraps and just pushes that lazy Pride along at a faster clip than the colt ever traveled.

"Say!" I exclaim to myself. "If that kid never rode before——"

I don't finish, because somethin' I see a couple of furlongs down the track just chokes the speech in my throat. Pride o' Boston has caught Ethelbert! Do you get that? A colt that in two years hasn't done anything to show hell ever be better than the very cheapest kind of a sellin' plater, overcomin' in two furlongs a two-second start on a colt that was class all the way through! I felt like yellin', and I could hear the gang of stable helpers and railbirds that was hangin' over the fence chatterin' about it like magpies.

Jimmy Spring wakes up when he hears the clatter of hoofs beside him. I can imagine that the sight of Pride o' Boston comin' up on the rail and the sharp little face of Bookie Bower at his side must have nearly knocked Jimmy off his seat. But he's a nasty, mean little devil, Jimmy is, a typical jock; and he takes one look at Bookie and then goes to the whip.

Ethelbert springs forward, and has a length on Pride before you can wink; also, Jimmy steers his mount in toward the rail so as to cut the other colt off.

"Well, that finishes it." I says to myself, expectin' to see Bookie pull up as Ethel-

bert crosses his path and let my star colt finish his work-out alone.

But, you see, I didn't know Bookie Bower then as well as I did later. How he done it, I don't know, hand-ridin' a low-spirited, lazy colt like Pride o' Boston, but he shoots another inch or two up Pride's neck, and the first thing you know he's stealin' the rail away from Jimmy Spring and goin' by him as though Ethelbert was standin' still.

That's pretty ticklish work, skinnin' through on the rail as you're roundin' a turn, even for a crack jockey, but Bookie done it, huggin' that fence as though he was fastened to it, stallin' off Jimmy Spring's best efforts to pass him, handlin' Pride o' Boston like another Sloan.

From then on it was the prettiest match race I ever did see. Jimmy Spring did everything to Pride o' Boston and his rider but beat them with the butt end of his whip. He tried to crowd them into the rail, he tried to cut them off, he called Bookie all the bad names he knew in hopes the new boy would lose his nut—did a dozen other things he'd have been disqualified for in a regular race. And Bookie met every trick and every piece of foul ridin', outrouged, outgamed and outrode Jimmy until, in the run through the short stretch that lay between the last turn and the furlong pole where they'd started their brush, he got Pride o' Boston in front and stayed there, passin' me a good three lengths ahead of what I'd regarded as the best colt in old Josiah's barn.

I was so darned excited watchin' those two boys fightin' it out through the last few furlongs of that mile that I forgot all about Ethelbert's time trial, and snapped my watch as Pride o' Boston shot by me. I looked at the watch as Bookie turned his mount to trot back, and nearly dropped dead. Pride o' Boston, left as flat as any horse ever had been, had done that mile in a shade worse than one-forty, two seconds better than the best Ethelbert ever had shown for the distance!

Jimmy Spring pulls Ethelbert up, takes him back to the barn and hops off. He's blazin' mad, and his mean little freckled face is all pinched up in a knot.

A couple of my nigger helpers start kid-din' him.

"Yo' shuah did show dat noo boy up!"

"Yeah!" drawls another. "Dis li'l' boy Jimmeh is some jock! Ah allus did tell yo', Sam, he had class!"

"Yo' did," says Sam, "an' Ah says to yo', Ah says, 'All Jimmeh needs is de mount. He shuah kin ride, dat boy! All yo' has to give him is de hawss!'"

"Ain't dat right?" the other grins. "Did yo' see him, Sam, when dat noo boy tried to take dat rail? Nea'ly knocked him right off his hawss, Jimmeh did! De ideah! A noo boy dat's neveh rode no hawsses nowehs thinkin' he had a chance wit' Jimmeh!"

"Heah comes dat noo boy now," calls Sam, who'd spied Bookie steerin' Pride o' Boston up to the barn. "Hey, yo' noo boy! Come up heah, yo'! Jimmeh's waitin' to give yo' all some ridin' lessons!"

Now, Job himself wouldn't have stood for that, and Jimmy's temper was all frayed 'round the edges long before them dinges started ridin' him. He was at Pride o' Boston's side as Bookie hopped off. Bookie seen him comin' and danced back a step or two as he hit the ground.

"Say, you——" began Jimmy.

I've heard Jimmy talk more than once, and I guess what he was goin' to call Bookie was immense. But the words never left his mouth.

Bookie just lunged out with his right fist, and Jimmy went down in a heap. He got up again, a little shaky 'round the knees, but with lots of fight still left in him. Bookie let him have another one—plump! on the jaw, and this time Jimmy stayed down.

"Guess Jimmeh kin fight 'bout as good as he kin ride," grinned one of the niggers, and that was my cue to take a hand.

I'd always made it a point to keep things reasonably peaceful around the stable, so I sailed into them niggers, chased them into the barn, gave Jimmy a bucketful of water in the face and turned to Bookie.

"Kind of a clean-up kid, ain't you?" I said.

"I'm all right when they let me alone," he told me.

"Where'd you learn to ride?"

"Arizona."

"Cow ponies?"

"Sure. What else?"

"Diff'rent kind of a game, ain't it?"

"Some. But a horse is a horse."

"You never rode on a track?" I asks, suspiciouslike.

"Nope."

"Where'd you get that dope on shinnin' up a horse's neck?"

"I got eyes, ain't I?"

"How do you mean?"

"I seen them doin' it here. It ain't my idea of ridin'—not the way I have rode, I mean; but as long as the horses here is used to it——"

"You're hired!" I told him.

"Hah?" he gasped. "What d'you mean?"

"You're goin' to work for me. I'm goin' to make a rider out of you."

"All right," he said easylike, "but I can ride already."

"Not like I want you to," I told him. "But we'll let that pass," I said quick, as I noticed him flarin' up.

And that's the way me and Bookie Bower got together.

Of all the kids I'd ever tried to learn the ridin' game to, Bookie was the most apt and the queerest. Bookie, of course, wasn't his right name. He was Thomas, he told me, and he was Tom around the track until we all noticed a habit he had of makin' a lot of marks in a little red book. Ev'ry now and then he'd take out that little book, scribble in it with a pencil, shake his head and grin and stick the book back in his pocket. Nobody but him ever got a look at that book. He carried it with him all the time, even puttin' it inside his silks when he was ridin'. It was the most noticeable peculiarity about a kid who was full of peculiarities, and one day somebody called him "Bookie" and the name stuck.

But, queer though he might have been, what he couldn't do to a horse nobody else could neither! He had a wonderful pair of hands, big and strong as a blacksmith's, but sensitive and pliable as a pianner player's. His seat, after I'd proved to him that settlin' into a horn saddle and just stickin' there was not the proper way to ride *all* horses, was the prettiest I ever did see. He was part of the horse, that's all, not excess baggage put there to please the official handicapper—like the kids you see ridin' nowadays. He could coax and bully the sluggish horses, quiet the nervous, spirited ones; get out of any nag in the world more than the horse himself ever knew was there. He had the nerve of a tight-rope walker, too, and wouldn't think no more of goin' through a two-foot openin' on the rail than he would of eatin' his dinner. He was some battler, and I've seen some of the rowdiest riders on the turf quit cold to him in many a pinch. Then, to top it all, he had somethin' you don't find in one rider in a thousand—brains!

Bookie certainly knew that his nut was not put on his shoulders only to carry the scarlet cap of old Josiah's stable. He realized there was works inside of his skull, and he never give them much of a chance to get rusty. I don't mean that he'd outguess some flat-headed young roughneck in a run through the stretch, and pull the worst horse in a winner by a nose. No, just before a race, Bookie could tell you to a dot what his ridin' plan was, and he'd follow it out—makin' due allowance for the breaks, of course—to the letter. I never give him any ridin' instructions. He knew what to do better than I could tell him, and he'd do it; because he was honest as the sun, and he rode to win—always.

If you want any more proof that Bookie had brains, let me tell you that he never monkeyed with thebettin' end of the game. The Bookie we called him had no connection with the bookmakers. I'd always take a chance myself—on a reasonably sure thing—but you couldn't get Bookie to invest one nickel in a horse that he knew *had* to win.

I gave up tryin' to guess what he done with his money. He certainly didn't spend it for clothes, for the stableboys all dressed better than he did, and he affected no ornamentation like horseshoe tie pins, two-carat diamond rings and gold stop watches—as the other jockeys did.

I think I mentioned before that Bookie wasn't any encyclopedia so far as handin' out information is concerned. Well, let me repeat it. He was tighter with his conversation than he was with his money. Outside of that first day when he mentioned ridin' cow ponies in Arizona, I don't think he uttered a syllable that could be construed as a tip-off as to his antecedents, past history and previous condition of servility. I never even could find out where he lived. All I know is that he was around the track when he was wanted, disappeared when the day's racin' was over, was always down to weight and in condition to ride, minded his own business and won races.

I ain't a particularly nosey guy myself, but, bein' as close to Bookie as I was and likin' him the way I did, I naturally was bothered a little bit by his stand-off-don't-touch-me attitude. But he give the same treatment to everybody.

He had no friends among the other jocks, which, I might remark, was further proof that he was a pretty smart little feller. They

were a bad lot on the whole—a lot of kids makin' too much money and blowin' it in gamblin', boozin' and hittin' the high spots along Broadway. A couple of them got fresh to Bookie because he wore plain clothes and was evidently storin' up his earnin's against the time when he couldn't ride no more. Bookie didn't argue with them; he give them the same treatment he give little Jimmy Spring the first day I met him—a wallop in the jaw, and, if that wasn't enough, another. The second poke from Bookie's big fist usu'lly entitled him to be scored with a clean win.

I thought the kid didn't realize he was overlookin' opportunities by actin' this way, so I give him a hold about it one day.

"Bookie, my boy," I said, "you're losin' a big chance to become one awful popular gent!"

"Yeh?" said he.

"Huh-huh," said I. "You could be one of the best-liked riders on the turf if you acted different."

"Yeh?" he said again.

"You bet!" said I. "I never seen a feller like you. You win a race and they cheer you and raise the dickens about you—and you look at it all as though it bored you to death!"

"It does," said Bookie.

"Shucks!" said I, gettin' impatient. "Why don't you wake up? You don't have to go around actin' like a dummy—just because you want to save your money."

I give him this little dig just to get a rise out of him. He rose—like an anchor.

"No?" he said.

"Hell!" I exclaimed. He was gettin' my goat. "Come to life, will you? There's boys who ain't half the rider you are, and the public's crazy about them. As for you, nobody knows you're alive—except just after you've won a race."

"That's the only time it counts," said Bookie.

"Who knows anything about you?" I demanded. "You might be a Chinee for all you tell! The reporters never give you a write-up, except to call you 'Bower, Jerry Sweeney's dependable jockey.' Dependable jockey! What kind of a way is that for them to talk about you? Cripe, Bookie, if you can't do nothin' else, let some reporter write an article about how you always drop your winnin' fees into the lap of your gray-

haired widow mother. That always reads good," I told him.

"And what," Bookie asked me, "would all that get me?"

"Popularity," I told him. "The guy that hides his light under a bushel never gets nowhere! You could get more dough——"

"Say, listen, Pop!" Bookie broke in. "I know a couple of things about popular jockeys myself! There's a couple of them hangin' around the track now. You know them—Joe Finn and Wally Wagner. Broke, both of them! Lookin' around for suckers to trim! They were popular in their day—sure they were! And look at them now! And say—the same people they was popular with are still comin' to the track, and they've got money, and Wagner and Finn ain't. And it's them' and birds like them that want to chum with me now. Not for Bookie!"

"You can be friendly," I told him, "and still save your money. And speakin' about money, Bookie, there's another bet you're overlookin', too."

"How so?" he asks me quick.

"Well," I said, "you know you ain't tied hand and foot to the Josiah King Stable. Neither me nor old Josiah's goin' to raise any kick if you want to take other mounts when you ain't ridin' for us. You could pick up many a dollar, and"—I kind of hesitated when I said this, because I'll admit I did hate to run the chance of losin' the boy—"and you might get a chance to ride some better horses. Maybe even get a mount from Haggins, or Belmont, or Keene—ride a Suburban winner perhaps. Oh, don't think you couldn't!" I tell him when he looks up at me kind of startled. "You're the makin's of the best boy that ever sat a horse! You are!" I insisted. "I've known it a long time, and I might as well not keep it from you any longer. I don't want to ruin your chances by givin' your services to a second-class stable exclusive. I know you think you owe me and old Josiah a lot for givin' you a start, but you can't live on that, and, as long as we won't have no hard feelin's——"

"You're wrong, Pop," Bookie interrupted.

"I ain't!" I insisted. "Already you've outrode boys that the big stables is payin' real money to, and I ain't goin' to cheat you of——"

"Pop!" he busts in with more feelin' than I ever remember seein' him show. "You ain't cheatin' me. I don't think that, and I know I can ride. But I'm satisfied. You

see," he says slowlike, "I ain't in this game just for the money."

"Oh, you ain't!" I says, interested. "What then?"

"You'll know some day," he says. "Maybe," he adds, after a second.

Well, what can you make of a kid like that? Throwin' away a fortune—that's what he was doin'! A real fortune, too, enough to last him all his life. For those was the days when jockeys cleaned up big, and, with the skill Bookie was developin', his natural small build, which made makin' the weight no trouble to him at all, and his level head, which was keepin' him away from the things that put most successful jockeys on the slide, he had chances that—well, I wish I'd had them at his age!

But there was no use talkin' to him. He just shut me off every time I tried to put some ambition into him, and he was downright surly to other people who come to him, touchin' the hat and bendar' the back, beggin' him to let them pour money into his lap. For they came, just like I thought they would. A boy like Bookie can't keep himself hid long. Especially when there's sharp eyes lookin' over the statistics the racin' papers publish, learnin' that a little jock named Bower, just out of the apprentice class, is the leadin' rider on the American turf in percentage of winnin' mounts, and that old Josiah King's handful of thoroughbreds, due entirely to the ridin' of this kid, has been cleanin' up in their respective classes.

At first they went at Bookie in a round-about way, soft-soapin' him, tellin' him how a boy who was bound to develop into a rider oughtn't be wastin' his time pilotin' a lot of hay hounds for an "obscure" stable like old Josiah's when there was money, glory and all the rest of it to be had by switchin' his services to other fields.

Bookie just told these people he was satisfied where he was. When they pressed him further, he handed them a lot of bunk about ownin' ev'rything to old Josiah and me, addin' that he'd be an ungrateful whelp, or words to that effect, to leave us in the lurch after learnin' him all he knew, and so forth. He ought to have known that a gang of race-track hardshells never could savvy a guy passin' up real dough to pay a debt of gratitude. It all went over their heads, so they got down to brass tacks and talked money to him. Then Bookie got mad.

Small as he was, Bookie was the kind that

a six-footer would look twice at before gettin' into a muss with, and when these fellers began to pester him with their offers of huge gobs of currency, the little man's temper got the best of him. Several dignified and distinguished trainers for prominent turfmen, who'd come personally to get Bookie to affix his flourishin' signatoor to a contract, left him with their feathers much ruffled as well as in a sorely disappointed and puzzled condition.

Bookie passed up money. Therefore, he was crazy. That's the way they sized him up.

I myself told Bookie he was a little fool when he turned Sam Hillsfield, trainer for one of the biggest stables then runnin', down flat with a three-word expression that could mean only one thing. Sam, who was a chesty old bird and darn near a millionaire, threatened to have Bookie arrested, barred from the tracks, boiled in oil, set down by the stewards, torn limb from limb and a dozen other things.

"Why, that old cow!" snapped Bookie tellin' me about it. "I wouldn't ride for him if I was starvin' to death!"

"He's a powerful big man in this game," I remarked.

"Yeh," said Bookie, "but he comes sneakin' around here like I was a crook. He palavers and jabbers about what a fine boy I am, and how he's taken such a fancy to me, and he knocks you and old Josiah, and tells me you ain't treatin' me right, and bah!—why couldn't he come right out and say, 'Boy, I want you; what'll you take to ride for me?'"

"That wouldn't be diplomatic," I tell him.

"Why, the cursed old hypocrite!" stormed Bookie. "I just told him to go to blazes!"

"That's no way to talk to your elders," I said half in fun, for I couldn't help but grin at the thought of old Sam, a czar if ever there was one, takin' the razz from a little shrimp of a jockey like Bookie.

"That's the way to talk to *him!*" barked Bookie. "He's an old crook. I know it!"

"Know it! How?"

"Why, because——" for a minute I thought Bookie was goin' to tell me somethin'. "Because he is," he finished.

I gave it up. If I hadn't knew Bookie was such an all-around sensible little feller, I'm afraid I'd have joined the rest of the people around the tracks in believin' he was a little cracked.

Bookie, though, kept right on not carin' what they thought about him. He just 'tended to his knittin', rode his races, made marks in his little book and kept his feller jocks from gettin' flossy with him—usu'llly with his fists.

There was one thing I wanted, however, be Bookie's own ideas what they might, and that was to see the kid on the back of a real horse. He deserved it, I thought, for keepin' him ridin' platters of the kind old Josiah had was like makin' Padawooski or one of them guys play on a seconddhand pianner. And as long as the kid felt the way he did about hookin' up with some good stable, I decided to do somethin' myself. I went to old Josiah.

"Boss," I said, showin' him a sheet I'd got up—with some facts and figgers about the earnin's of his stable in the last year, "boss, it looks like it's kind of up to us to go into the racin' game on a larger scale."

"How so?" asks Josiah. He was a bit of a hard-boiled egg himself, was old Josiah, and believed that a dollar in the hand was worth a million in the book.

"Well," said I, rapidly indicatin' some of the outstandin' facts relative to our prosperity, "we can, for instance, afford to pick up a couple of regular horses."

"Those we got is doin' pretty good for us," said Josiah.

"Sure," I admited, "but nothin' ventured gathers no moss. Why not invest some of our profits in a couple of stake horses?"

"And give Mr. Belmont and Mr. Whitney a run for their money," breaks in Josiah kind of sarcastic.

"We can do it!" I tell him. "We can!" I insist when he looks at me like he thinks I've gone nuts. "We've got the best rider in the world—ridin' for us exclusive," I add, tellin' him quick how Bookie has turned down offers from some of the biggest men in racin'. "I ain't takin' off my hat to nobody as a conditioner of horses," I continue, "so all we need is the steeds. It looks like our chance to branch out. This thing of bein' satisfied with the crumbs from the rich man's table like we have been ain't never goin' to get us nowheres."

"It's got me pretty comfortable well off," Josiah reminds me.

"All right, but we got a chance of cleanin' up!" And I talk to him, I guess, for two hours before I can convince him I'm on the right track, that his conservative way of

racin' horses ain't good for nothin' but pickin' up feed money and that, takin' it all in all, our play is to bust right out and become millionaire turfmen.

He gives in at last, and a couple of days later I choke a check for fifteen thousand dollars out of him, which I turn over to John McFadden for a black colt, which Mac didn't fancy much, but which I'd had my eye on for some time. Felix Luck was the colt's name. You remember Felix, don't you? Sure you do—winner of the Cosmopolitan, the—oh, what's the use of cataloguing Felix's wins? You'll find 'em all in the books, along with a list of track records he broke all over the East. Some horse, Felix!

And if him and Bookie wasn't the grandest team that ever pulled victory out of defeat in the home stretch—say, son, you don't see no horse-racin' like it these days!

We spring the colt on 'em first at Jamaica in an ordinary handicap race. Felix just romped in. And through all that season's meetin's, right through to Saratoga, the racegoers were in danger of gettin' writer's cramp ringin' up wins for Felix.

Same next season, and Bookie had to show some mighty fast footwork keepin' out of the way of reporters who wanted to interview him, photographers who wanted to take his picture, and admirers and grafters of one kind or another who waylaid him ev'ry time he appeared in public.

"Mix in more, Bookie," I tried to tell him. "It's part of the game. You can't be ridin' a horse like Felix Luck and not have people botherin' you."

But success didn't change Bookie—except to make him more of a crab than usual. He kept right on fillin' up his little red book, disappearin' ev'ry time he could, insultin' people who were tryin' their best to be nice to him—as though he wanted to make himself as unpopular as he could. And, if that was his game, I'll assert he was a howlin' success!

Which brings us up to the time of the Saratoga Stakes, that year's richest race. Old Josiah was keen on winnin' this event, as much for the honor as for the purse, for, strange to say, as Felix Luck began to pile up stake victories, Josiah had become more and more int'rested in racin' as a sport rather than as a way of pickin' up an excitin' livin'. And him seventy years old, and a racin' man for nearly fifty years! For myself, I was

almost ready to barter my two eyes to see Felix Luck pound down that stretch in front. It was to be the colt's last race of the year, and a win would be a fittin' climax to a highly successful season. Even Bookie, who usu'lly got about as enthusiastic over a big stake race as he did about ridin' Ethelbert in an overnight handicap, was showin' a little concern. It looked like Felix had a good chance. That was all, for the best horses from Kentucky, Canada and the Eastern tracks was all entered.

It was a blisterin' hot August day. The trees that inclose the Saratoga track were droopin', as though ashamed of the poor effort they were makin' to ward off the terrific rays of the sun, but, hot as it was, there was a typical Saratoga crowd out, which every one knows is about the last word in racin' crowds—class all the way through, with millionaires and society people outnumberin' the regulars and the rough element.

The Stakes is the fourth race of the day. As Felix Luck was led into the paddock, you could hear that queer rumblin' of excitement in the bettin' ring and the nervous buzz of the crowds in the stand. I've never heard those exact sounds anywhere but at a track just before a big race; and I feel myself catchin' some of the crowd's animation as I walk over to saddle our colt.

"What's his price?" I ask the young feller who usu'lly put my bets in.

"Opened at six; was played down to five," he told me. "I got two hundred down for you at six."

"Good work," I tell him. "I wonder when the books are goin' to wake up to the fact that we've got a *horse* here?"

I was referrin' of course to the long price on Felix. He wasn't any five or six-to-one shot. Three would have been good, generous odds on him.

"Go out and get two hundred more of that five to one," I tell the young feller. "If it's still there, that is. Oh, bet two hundred anyhow!" I finally say.

Four hundred's an awful big bet for me, but—well, it was Felix! I'd almost have bet my shirt on that colt if I didn't think he had a chance!

"By the way," the young feller calls to me as he moves off. "I took eighty-five dollars' worth of that six to one for Bookie. He said he wanted to win an even five hundred, but that was as close as I could come."

"Bookie!" I exclaim, but the young feller's gone before I can question him.

Bookiebettin' on a horse race! I wouldn't have been more surprised if somebody had told me old Josiah wanted to become a jockey. I kind of grin to myself as I think it over. I couldn't explain it except by thinkin' that the game had finally got to the boy; that he'd made up his mind to be like the rest of jocks—a wild little gamblin' fool.

He heaves into view himself soon, walks over to Felix Luck and looks the colt over like he feared maybe Felix was goin' to fall apart on him. He's beatin' his boots with his whip, idgetin' around, lookin' at me and the colt, nervous as an apprentice boy that's gettin' his first mount. I pretend not to notice him. Suddenly he taps me on the arm.

"Felix ought to win," he says—asks it rather, like he wasn't quite sure how good the colt was himself.

"Why not?" I asks back. I was goin' to tease him along till he told me about bettin' the century.

"I dunno," he says in a foolish kind of way. "I just thought I'd speak to you about it."

"Well," I says, "Felix *could* be better but—"

"Hah!" he exclaims. "Wha—what's the matter? Anything—"

"—but if he was," I finish, "this wouldn't be no horse race. It would be a game of tag."

Bookie sighs like he's greatly relieved, at which I bust out laughin' in his face.

"Bookie," I says, "eighty-five bucks is pretty big—for your first bet!"

I thought he'd drop dead.

"How did you know?" he blurts out. "Who told you?"

"A little bird," I says. Then I get serious. "Son," I tell him, "there's a whole lot more at stake in this race than your eighty-five. Remember it's up to you—"

I was goin' to tell him not to let his first bet upset him so much that he'd forget how to ride. But I didn't get a chance to finish, because just then the bell rings and I've got to h'ist him up in the saddle.

"Go to it, boy!" I whisper as he steers Felix Luck into his place in line.

I'll admit my heart was in my mouth a dozen times as I watched Bookie maneuverin' Felix Luck around at the barrier. The

kid was nervous as a girl at her first ball. Three or four times the starter had to call him, which is somethin' I don't remember ever happenin' before.

"The gol-darned little tightwad!" I murmur to myself. "If eighty-five bucks makes all that difference to him—"

Then all at once they're lined up, the starter springs the web, yells at them—and they're off!

It was as clean a break as I ever did see. Twelve horses away as one with not an inch advantage to any of them from the start.

Felix is in number-four position, and Bookie goes right away to the whip, desirin' to hustle the colt along so's he can save ground by takin' the rail. Felix responds all right, but there's eleven other boys with almost the same plan in their heads, and Felix don't get the rail.

Roundin' the first turn, the field's just beginnin' to string out. Felix and three other horses whose names don't matter are in front, runnin' arm in arm. The rest of them are trailin', but still close up. I'm satisfied. It's a mile and a sixteenth race, with a long way to go.

In the back stretch two horses spring out of the leadin' four in a pretty but entirely foolish duel for the lead. I'm glad to see that Bookie don't chase them. He just rates Felix along watchin' the bird who's runnin' beside him, and his guess is right because, before they've reached the turn, the two leadin' horses is run dead, and they fold up their props and let the whole field run over them.

Halfway around the turn a couple of boys who'd been layin' back start to move up. It's then the crowd, which had been just keepin' up a runnin' buzz of talk, wakes up and begins to yell. One of the horses which is workin' up is Eagle Star, the fav'rite; the other is a mare from Kentucky, an outsider named Cinderella.

In a few bounds this pair is up even with Felix Luck and Pharaoh, who's the horse that's been runnin' even with Felix all the way. They've had to take the overland route to get up, so, of course, they're on the outside, with Pharaoh on the rail and Felix holdin' second position. Like four horses hitched to a chariot they round the turn and swing into the stretch. The grand stand is rattlin' and shakin' with the yells and foot poundin' of the crowds. I don't blame them. Ordinarily a horse race can't get much of a

thrill out of me—I've seen too many of them—but this day I'll admit I was quiverin' all over, and I grabbed off my Panama and begun to wave it—just like a two-dollar better.

Cinderella is the first one to make a bid. Her jockey starts weltin' her, and she shoots out and gets half a length on the other three. But Bookie and the other boys is after her immediately, and from then on it's just a rush, with four wild little devils of jockeys coaxin', beatin', abusin' their mounts—tryin' to get out of them the extra couple of inches of stride, the extra bit of speed that will mean the race.

Eagle Star, the fav'rite, broke first. His heart wasn't stout enough to stand the strain of that drivin' finish, and he quit cold.

I never seen Bookie Bower ride like he did that day. Perched up on Felix Luck's neck he was workin' up and down like a piston, swingin' his whip, diggin' his heels into the colt's sides, fightin' and shoutin' like a wild man. And Felix, grand little horse that he was! was standin' that gruelin' stretch run as though he liked it.

Twenty feet from the wire it was anybody's race, and as those three horses passed the judges' stand it was still anybody's race—so far as I or anybody else in that park could tell. The roar of the crowd stopped as though they'd been all struck dumb as the horses shot under the wire. Nobody knew what was what, and nobody dared breathe until they found out.

My heart was poundin' like a trip hammer, and my teeth was chatterin' with excitement. It wasn't that the race made a difference of two thousand odd dollars to me personally, it wasn't just that I wanted to win for old Josiah, it wasn't Bookie altogether, and it wasn't Felix. It was just, I guess, because I'm a racin' man and that was a *horse race!* You get me, don't you?

It couldn't have took over five seconds to post the numbers that showed how the judges caught the horses, but, honest, it seemed like hours. Then suddenly the crowd begins to screech and yell again. I look across the track, and I'm not ashamed to say that tears come to my eyes.

A big "7" was hangin' from the post. Felix's number. We'd won!

I ease back to the paddock where it is that Bookie nails me. He's thrown a sweater over his silks, for the sweat is pourin' off him, and I can see from the lines in his face and the big hollers under his eyes what a

strain that race had been on him. But he's grinnin', grinnin' like a piker that's just cashed on a hundred-to-one shot.

"Well, Pop—er—*Mister Sweeney*," he says—he'd never called me "mister" before in his life—"I want to say good-by!"

He shoved out his mitt, and, before I realized it, I took it. If I hadn't got a good grip on it, I think Bookie would have beat it off then and there.

"Hey, wait!" I says, haulin' him to me. "What's the idea? What's your rush?"

"Got to catch a train," says Bookie, tryin' to pull away.

"A train! To where?"

"Arizona," says Bookie. "Home," he explains.

That one put me right up against the ropes. I just stand there glarin' at him like a fool.

"Home!" I finally manage to gasp. "Now? You're crazy! Why, the racin' season ain't half—"

"But I'm through," says Bookie, as though that explained everything.

"Through what?"

"Through ridin'," says Bookie, and it wasn't till then that I tumbled to what he was really doin'.

Bookie Bower, at the very top of his form, with years of ridin' ahead of him, wanted to quit the turf! Worse than that, he wanted to run right out on me without hardly so much as a by your leave or a good-by! And all of it not five minutes after winnin' the greatest racin' classic of the year!

Do you wonder I was dizzy for a minute? Then I pull myself together.

"Why?" I demand of him.

He looks at me a few seconds like he was goin' to tell me it's none of my business. Then he smiles.

"I got what I was after," he says—"what I was ridin' for."

"What you was ridin' for? What's that?"

"Twenty thousand dollars," he says.

"Twenty thousand dollars!" I exclaim. "Why, you could have had five times that a year ago. I can show you how to make twice that next season—"

"Don't want it," he snaps. "She's even now."

"She!" I just about yell. He had me goin'. The more he talked the worse the puzzle got.

"My mother," says Bookie.

I was in no mood then to show respect even to the lady.

"Say, listen, you crack-brained little runt!" I storm. "If you think I'm goin' to stand for you beatin' it like this without explainin'—"

"Oh," says Bookie, like the idea was new to him entirely, "you want to know all about it?"

He's got a wonderin' look on his face like he was tryin' to dope out how anybody could have the slightest int'rest in his business.

"You win!" I says. "I do."

"Oh," says Bookie again. "Oh." He stops. "Well," he says, "the track owed my mother twenty thousand dollars, and I got it back. That's all."

"All! How could the track owe your mother—"

Bookie frowns.

"Oh, I'll tell you," he sighs like he was bored to death. "Did you ever know Billy McGoldrick?"

"Billy McGoldrick—the old-time jock? The one that win—"

"He was my father," said Bookie. "My name's Billy McGoldrick, too. My grandfather was a Billy McGoldrick. He win the Derby three times. I guess that's why I can ride."

He stopped.

I'm gazin' at him like I might at a guy who had just proved to me he was George Washington.

"B-but what's that got to do with it?" I stammer.

"Why," says Bookie simply, "the old man blew the bank roll he picked up ridin'—blew it bettin'," he explains. "Then he wrassled twenty thousand out of my mother, and that went the same way. It was his weddin' gift to her. She was savin' it for us kids. I got it back for her," he says in about the same tone you'd use to tell somebody you just bought a new hat.

He fished inside his blouse, and brought out his little red book.

"I was just keepin' account in this of the money I was makin'," he remarked. Then he looked into the book. "Say!" he said, his face all lighted, "that bet I win on Felix put me ten dollars over the twenty thou! I can only take fifteen from you as my winnin' fee!"

"But Bookie!" I interrupt, "why twenty thousand? You could have got your mother about—"

"I know," he says, "but I'm a McGoldrick. They've all been gamblers—like my old man. He committed suicide. That's why I couldn't let the game get me. Besides," he adds, "my mother don't like race-track money. She tried to bring me up that way, too."

That was all. I let him go. Didn't even bother to wish him luck in whatever he was goin' to do out in Arizona. I guess he had it anyhow. I never heard—but he deserved it.

But it's funny at that, ain't it, the wrong impression you can get of a guy before you find out what's goin' on in his bean?



DISCOVERED: A STRANGE RESEMBLANCE

JOHN SHARP WILLIAMS, United States senator from Mississippi, has a political enemy whom he seldom forgets, and, since John has trained his tongue to live up to his middle name, his foe has a lot of hard things said about him. Williams refers to his antagonist humorously, or cynically, or mercilessly at every opportunity, designating him as "George."

"I sec," remarked Senator Lewis of Illinois one day, "that the Botanic Garden has on exhibition now a plant which blooms every fifty years."

"Is that so?" asked Williams, evidently interested.

"Yes. And the flower lasts only a few days although it has required half a century of care to blossom at all."

"I think I'll recommend that to George for his buttonhole.

"Why?"

"Because," explained the gentleman from Mississippi, "his brain works with exactly that velocity and durability and after that many years of struggle and effort."

Free Lunch Upon the Waters

By Roy W. Hinds

Author of "A Dead Man Tells a Tale," Etc.

All of us have had an experience similar to that recorded of the rich man here. Remembering some past act of kindness, we long to requite it, but few of us actually try the experiment. Gratitude is a delicate and difficult business

THREE'S a disagreeable angle to this story which we will get out of the way as quickly as possible. It begins in a saloon. But wait, you haven't heard the worst yet. It's a Bowery saloon. Now then, if there are any hearers left, we'll proceed. You'll not be kept in the saloon long. As a matter of fact, you won't see a man take a drink. The saloon is very wide and the free-lunch counter is on one side and the bar on the other. This story has to do simply with the free-lunch counter and the bartender in his capacity as custodian of the pickled herrings and disks of bologna which adorned that popular slab. So you don't have to go near the bar at all. Just step in for a few minutes and then—well, then you'll be taken down into Wall Street.

The Irish eyes of Marty McQuinn were habitually hard and steely, but they belied the heart within him. He was putting up a front. As bartender in the Slick Nickel, which is just across the way from where the three sooty lines of Chinatown—Mott, Pell and Doyer—spill into the Bowery, he had to be harsh and forbidding. The warmth of Marty's soul was incased within a stone fortress and his eyes had come to be mere loopholes through which threatening canons glared upon his custom.

Marty, like all Bowery bartenders, was constantly exposed to that dread disease known as the "touch." The slightest accessibility on his part at once brought down an avalanche of panhandlers which, if yielded to, would have eaten and drunk the Slick Nickel out of the very sawdust on the floor. A year of stony stares had hardened Marty's eyes, but the hardness was more apparent than real.

Marty McQuinn wished to hold his job. 'Twas much easier than any job he'd ever had. That is, 'twas much easier on the

muscles, but Marty confessed to himself that at times it irritated him.

The bartender had been born on the East Side. He had played and battled in its streets and alleys, and he loved it. Coming to be a man, he had worked as a teamster on a coal wagon, as a longshoreman, as a freight smasher in a warehouse, and at other things which taxed his body. He was not a brawny man; he was rather slight. And that was another reason why he had to depend upon a steely eye to repel the advances of the moochers and the trouble seekers.

Marty was not a drinking man. It never had appealed to him—what little he had done. But he went at times into the saloons and his heartiness made a way for him. He had gotten to know the owner of the Slick Nickel, and this farseeing individual was much impressed by the fact that Marty drank but little, scarcely any, in fact. What a joy he would be as a bartender! And it soon became a reality.

One of Marty's tasks, of course, was protecting his employer's goods, which included the tripe trays on the free-lunch counter. This institution was in constant danger—it was menaced from morning to night by an ingenious rabble that could whisk away a dill pickle, a pocketful of bread, a hatful of pretzels and a yard of liver sausage while the bartender turned for a moment to make change. Marty had become watchful.

"It's no more than you'll be pickin' off'n that lunch counter," he would say, " 'til you exercise yo'er hands at pickin' up t'ings from th' bar. Try yo'er stren'th, me friend, on a glass o' beer. It costs but a nickel and is well wort' th' price of admission."

The interloper at the lunch counter there-upon would turn around. He would meet the hard-eyed glint on the face of Bartender Marty McQuinn, and then he would slink

away. The eye of Marty McQuinn was hard indeed when he so willed.

But the heart of Marty McQuinn was a different proposition. It was touched often—that was what made the job rather annoying—but he opened it seldom. His job depended upon his hardness. The man who owned the Slick Nickel had a heart, but it was a mere pumping station. It never felt a quiver for the misery and misfortune about him. Woe to the bartender who slackened a bit in the rigorous rules and by-laws the owner had enacted for the protection of his lunch counter and as a discouragement to strong drink unless it was paid for. No mastication without intoxication was the slogan of the Slick Nickel.

That is why the sad eyes of John Pringle Moffat, twenty years of age and a stranger, met nothing but cold disdain when he looked over the bar of the Slick Nickel.

It was a fine day. A pleasant freshness of spring air poured under and above the half doors of the saloon and vied with the aroma of steaming soup behind the bar. Hot soup was a trade getter in the Slick Nickel. A wealth of spring sunlight burst into the room by way of a window on the side and cascaded to the floor in a glittering splash, dancing about upon the fresh layer of golden sawdust that had not yet been defiled by slufing feet. The clean sunlight and fresh air, together with the tune that Marty McQuinn hummed lightly and airily, seemed to purge the place of its chronic sordidness. Marty's eyes were now as tender as his emotions.

Marty McQuinn hummed a tune, for only the night before Katie Moran had said the word to Marty McQuinn—and Katie Moran was something to behold. He had won out after a race of several months with a brawny policeman. The weather of the day and the promise of last night were too much for the veneer of harshness that the bartender had daubed upon himself, so he hummed a tune. It was a trilling, gayly pitched air of the day, and Marty McQuinn hummed it as though the very heart of him would burst with gladness.

And then in came John Pringle Moffat and his sad eye. The bartender took one look—that was all he needed. The tune broke off on a quavering note, the smile vanished from the bartender's face and the gladness died in his heart. He saw a shabby youth with advertisements for bread crying

from every feature and movement. Marty McQuinn was disgusted.

"Just when I'm feelin' at peace with th' woorld," he said to himself, "in comes this hungry bum t' disturb me happiness. It's a fine posishion, this, with bums askin' for bread that don't belong t' me. I wonder why they don't ask a street-car conductor to give 'em a couple o' cars?"

The bartender gazed stonily at the youth, John Pringle Moffat made none of the movements characteristic of a man in the throes of spending a nickel. Instead he stared appealingly and, as has been said, he met only cold disdain.

"I was wondering, sir, if you'd—if you'd let me eat a sandwich at the lunch counter," John Pringle Moffat said, with decided trepidation.

"As a wond'r'in' man, you're a complete fizzle," was the hard response of Bartender Marty McQuinn. "If you're t'inkin' o' makin' yoor livin' at wond'r'in', I'd advise you t' try somethin' else. Since I've known you, you've had one guess—and missed 'em all."

"I'm terribly hungry," said the youth, by way of argument.

"That's what they all say," said the bartender, by way of rebuttal. He was warily sizing up the youth.

"I've been turned out of every saloon and restaurant on the Bowery," Moffat pressed.

"Why don't you give Broadway a whirl?"

"It's all right, I suppose, to joke about it, but if you hadn't eaten for forty-eight hours, maybe you wouldn't think it a joke." There was a ring of determination—devil-may-care desperation—in his voice. "It's no joke, but I suppose I'll be put out of here, too. Every one else has turned me out."

"Tally one more for th' outs," countered the bartender, who now felt the icebergs of duty melting under a freshet of sympathy. "I can do nothin' for you," he said desperately, knowing himself to be slipping, "as I'm just workin' here and have no more right t' give away me boss' bread than I have t' give away his fixtures."

The youth turned away with a pitiful gesture of departed hope and Marty McQuinn capitulated.

"Go to it, kid," he said. "I was only foolin'."

The "kid" faced him in amazement and rising hope. "Do you mean it?" he asked incredulously.

"You'd better be hurryin' t' that grub frolic," Marty cautioned him, "or I might come t' me senses and change me mind."

John Pringle Moffat was soon "hurryin'." He laid in food in enormous quantities. Marty spirited him a bowl of soup from the kettle behind the bar. The youth declined an offer of liquor, much to Marty's surprise and delight.

"This kid ain't no drunken bum, anyway," he assured himself. "Maybe I'm doin' th' right thing in feedin' him." He thus eased his conscience for giving away food that didn't belong to him.

The bartender, once started downhill on his mad career of generosity, swept everything before him. He plied John Pringle Moffat with bread and meat until that worthy turned, gorged, from the lunch counter. Luckily, the owner of the place was not there, nor were there any customers about who would carry tales.

"If you don't have any better luck to-day," Marty whispered to him, "sneak back in th' mornin'—and I'll stake you t' another helpin'."

"My friend," said John Pringle Moffat. His eyes were bright from the feeding and his voice trembled with grateful emotion. "My friend, you have saved my life. I was about to call it quits and jump in the river—I was so weak and helpless, and nearly crazed, with hunger. I have asked hundreds of people for work and help in this city—you are the first who has responded. Some day—some day——"

"Yeh, I know all about that," Marty McQuain cut in. He was having a revulsion of feeling. John Pringle Moffat talked as did the others—this guff about returning favors. As though these bams ever came back except to get more. "I know all about that!" Marty assured him. "That's what they all say. *Some* day—that's it! It's always *some* day with you guys. Why don't you ever try havin' a dime or so *to-day*?"

"Some day," John Pringle Moffat persisted, "you'll see."

Then he went out, stepping briskly and confidently, his head erect, his overwhelming hunger sated, his mind and body alert for another day's tussle with the city.

It's not so very far from the swinging doors of the Slick Nickel to the mahogany doors of the brokerage firm of John Pringle Moffat & Co. A matter of two miles, maybe.

You cross Chatham Square and wind through Park Row, past the Brooklyn Bridge, the newspaper offices, the city hall, the post office—and you are in Broadway. Then it's but a short way to Trinity Church. Turn to the left and you are in Wall Street. In one of the imposing buildings which look down upon that unimposing street are the offices of John Pringle Moffat & Co. A matter of two miles, we'll say, from the swinging doors of the Slick Nickel, and yet it took John Pringle Moffat twenty years to make the journey.

But he had gone by a roundabout and devious way. It isn't necessary to go into the intricate details of that journey—his name and his story are well enough known to make that needless. Rising to a high place in the financial world, his story was sought—and when told it was a tale which, in this land of opportunity, had been paralleled many times and overshadowed by some.

We know of the youth who came to the city with scant funds at a period when times were hard. We know something of his search for work, just as we know of other poor boys who searched for work and later became successful. From the time he got a job as a freight handler in a railroad warehouse his history is better known.

It is from the written chronicle of his life that we learn he soon became foreman of the warehouse; in a few years he got into the operating department of the railroad; in a few more years he was in the administrative department. His income was now substantial. His habits were simple and he was intensely ambitious. He displayed rare executive ability, which was soon recognized. He dabbled in stocks, wisely, and made money. He became a shareholder in the railroad for which he worked. Soon he had an executive position. Eighteen years from the day he walked out of the Slick Nickel he was president of the railroad.

It is not a startling tale. It is merely the story of a high ability coming into its own by dint of hard work. Two years later he founded the brokerage firm of John Pringle Moffat & Co. The name meant something to all the country now and a great deal more to financial circles.

At the age of forty years John Pringle Moffat was a tall, slender man with a physique kept supple by simple living and studious care of health. He was quiet and unassuming, dressed plainly, and had a certain

brusque kindness that gave him popularity among employees and associates. He had a sharp, gray eye that kindled dangerously in the financial struggles of which he had become a part, and softened humorously when cares were not so pressing. His hair was now turned gray and he had a slow movement of body and a deep, kindly voice which suggested a benevolent feeling toward all mankind.

He had not much time for social life. His club, outside his home, was his favorite retreat in the city. He had married happily, his wisdom in choosing a wife had been verified. She was a sensible and intelligent woman who gave some attention to the society in which their standing placed them, but who gave more attention to her home and the three children who had come to swell the happiness of John Pringle Moffat.

On the particular afternoon at which we pick up the thread of the story, John Pringle Moffat was somewhat worn and fatigued in body and in mind. It was the listless relapse that follows a week of unusual effort—a week in which he had directed a winning financial enterprise and the nights of which had not been entirely free of the tangled skein he had so successfully unraveled. He was in need of sleep. His eyes looked tired and his hand trembled slightly as he assembled a packet of papers from the desk top and placed them safely in a drawer at his hand.

Mrs. Moffat and the children were out of the city. He was conscious of a feeling of loneliness as his mind, concentrated for a week upon the intricacies of finance, came back to more personal affairs. He thought of the big house on the avenue and suffered a twinge of dread to find himself facing a night there without the comforting presence of family. Like all men who have superb control of their minds, he had thrust away business cares for the time. His enterprise had been consummated successfully. It was necessary now to seek rest and repose. It is doubtful if he reflected on the fact that the week had made him richer by a million dollars.

His story had been in the papers that day—on the first page—that is, the story of the financial enterprise. It was before the war, a time when financial news of big import gained more attention. His name had become bigger that day—it was known to more people. To some he was the new fig-

ure in finance who had engineered a striking deal. These people knew more of him. To others he was John Pringle Moffat, whose name was in the papers for some reason or other. Some had but a hazy knowledge of him. They instinctively thought of Wall Street when they saw his name. It is likely that all through the city most anybody, if you had asked, could have answered that John Pringle Moffat was a financier.

Thus had the poor boy carved his name. He was not by far the best-known man—or even the best-known financier—but the name had now achieved a universal familiarity.

He sat some little time alone. He had asked not to be disturbed for an hour or so. There had been a flurry in the office all day—men had been rushing in and out—and he wanted no more of it. So effective was his organization that subordinates could tie up the straggling ends of his enterprise. He decided he would go to his club for dinner. He called his secretary and instructed him to notify the servants at home of that fact. Then he went to his motor car and was driven to the club.

In the lounge at the club John Pringle Moffat ran across an old friend, Herbert Sterling. He was glad. He knew Sterling wouldn't burden him, as some others had done, with congratulations, fulsome and extended, on the story of the day. Sterling was a man of big things himself and knew just why John Pringle Moffat was wandering around the club rather listlessly and shy of companionship.

"Before you utter a word," Moffat warned, "I want it understood that you are my guest at dinner."

"You have a faculty," Sterling laughed, "of beating other people to it—you proved that in the Street to-day and you've just proved it again. I await your pleasure."

And so they went to dinner. Sterling, as became a friend, said but a few words of congratulation on the financial topic and then got as far away from business as possible. They talked and laughed—both had young children, and—enough said. Cigars found them discussing the death that day of a mutual acquaintance, who had dropped out of the financial world a year or so back and never had retrieved his fortunes.

"You know," Sterling said, "he was a victim of ingratitude. The very people who tipped him over owed their opportunity to him. I know something of his affairs. It

was very cold and calculating, without a remnant of consideration. He stood in their way and they didn't hesitate. There was another way out of it, but it was a roundabout way, and they took the short cut. And still, not so many years ago, he went out of his way to give them a look-in. It didn't cost him any actual money, but he showed a warm consideration for men trying to get up. It seems as though they would have thought of that when they had him in a corner, but they didn't. There are many ignoble traits in humanity and one of the worst is ingratitude."

John Pringle Moffat was very quiet. The words of Sterling had pricked him some way or other. He didn't know why, but they made him uneasy. They occurred and recurred to him as he sat in his motor car, homeward bound. He felt a pity for the man who had died that day. He had known him only slightly, but he knew more of his story.

"Indeed," he assured himself, "ingratitude is an ignoble trait."

His home was very desolate without the family. Two letters awaited him in the library, one from his wife, and the other from his youngest daughter who could write very laboriously but very prettily, to him. He sat, slipped, in the library and read the letters. They accentuated his loneliness—the letters and the great room in which he sat. A hush, known only to halls in which children have lately romped, hung about. He visioned his daughter grasping the pencil tightly in her pink little fist and rounding out the faltering words while her tongue kept accompaniment to the movements of her hand.

"And don't not forget Daddy dear that I love you, I love you, I love you; and please don't not ever forget your little Ellen," the letter finished above a row of cross marks, the eternal sentiment of which is deep in the hearts of lovers old and young.

"As though I could ever forget her," he smiled. "As though I could ever forget her!" The letter hung idly in his hand and somehow the words of Sterling came back to him. "I wonder," he asked himself, "if I have ever been ungrateful? I wonder—I wonder if there is some one to whom I owe gratitude and whom I have forgotten—"

And then his thoughts sped back over two decades and through the swinging doors of the Slick Nickel!

A bartender—and he didn't even know his name—had once saved him from suicide! This bartender had given him probably thirty cents' worth of food, but would he now be sitting amid the luxuries of millions if it had not been for that bartender of twenty years ago? There was an element of doubt there—he couldn't say what would have become of him had he walked, hungry instead of well fed, from that Bowery saloon. But that wasn't the question. The fact remained that the bartender *had* fed him and that he had lived to undreamed success. And the bartender, in doing so, had placed his own job in peril. Without thought of profit, and with only the compassion that a warm heart feels for distress, that bartender had fed him. And, until this night, that Bowery bartender had been forgotten!

"I am ungrateful," so ran his thoughts. "The bartender gave to me when I was desperately in need, and the amount of the gift does not enter into the proposition. It was exactly what I needed at the time. Had I not gotten it, I can't say what I would have done. Maybe I would have gotten food somewhere else. But that is no matter. That doesn't alter my obligation to the man who helped me. I was too weak and hungry to go much farther. To-day I am worth millions—I wonder where he is?"

The cares of business slunk completely away amid these reflections. John Pringle Moffat was conscious of a wholesome sentiment that ran outside his family. His business had not left much room for sentiment. His family got the full of whatever emotions he spent. He was swept back to his youth—the youth that was now a hazy romance, though it had been stern reality of privation and misery in the living of it. The sordidness of the saloon faded and he saw only the heavy hand that carried him meat and bread. He was conscious of a refreshing balm as he permitted his soul to fill with gratitude for that favor of twenty years ago. The more he reflected, the greater the gift seemed. Possibly the bartender was responsible for all his happiness. It was a great deal to attribute to one meal, but it might have been the point from where he turned to success instead of failure. At any rate, that bartender, if he could find him, was entitled to some expression of gratitude, even if it were but a word.

John Pringle Moffat was now seized with the adventure of the thing. He went to his

room and dressed in a suit of clothes which needed pressing. The suit was not worn to amount to anything. The knees of the trousers were a little baggy and there was a wrinkle here and there, but there was nothing about the suit that couldn't be found in the clothing of thousands of ordinary people.

That was what he sought. He wanted to go to the Bowery as an ordinary man, without jewelry or ornament. He wouldn't even carry his watch and would take but little money. He put on a plain felt hat and evaded the servants. Soon he was speeding downtown in the subway. A feeling of adventure—of renewed youth—possessed him fully. It was a welcome relaxation. He enjoyed this mingling again with plain folks. A life crowded with business perplexities was a nice thing to be thrown off once in a while.

The financier left the subway at the Brooklyn Bridge. It was only a little after eight o'clock and the weather was warm with early June. Park Row was thronged with its drab humanity. Cheap restaurants and secondhand stores crowded together under the elevated-railway structure. The financier attracted no attention. That is, no particular attention. Once a man asked him for a nickel and he gave him a quarter. The man stared at the coin and then at the departing benefactor. He soon plunged into a saloon.

John Pringle Moffat came to Chatham Square, and here the crowd was more plentifully sprayed with Chinese. A sudden fear gripped his heart. He suddenly realized that he had but one chance in a million of finding the man he sought. Not many Bowery bartenders hold the same job twenty years, and Heaven only would know where Marty McQuinn had gone. Moffat didn't even know the bartender's name. He must depend on the man who owned the place—he hoped it would be the same man. Possibly he would recall his bartender of twenty years ago. That would give Moffat the man's name, and he would hire a detective next day to institute a search.

John Pringle Moffat stepped into the sawdust of the Slick Nickel and lo, and behold, there stood Marty McQuinn!

The slenderness of youth had given way to a ruddy stoutness and the wavy brown hair of twenty years ago was thin and streaked with gray, but there was no doubt of the man.

A wave of caution came over the financier. He must talk privately with Marty McQuinn. No telling what might happen him in this district. He might be kidnaped for ransom or knocked on the head on the general theory that a financier always has a couple of millions in his pocket. No one but the bartender must know his identity. So he went to the far end of the bar, quite a distance from any of the groups of drinkers.

"What'll you have, sir?" asked Marty McQuinn, and the voice struck another familiar chord in the memory cells of the financier's brain. It was the same voice which had said, twenty years ago: "Go to it, kid; I was only foolin'."

John Pringle Moffat looked around at the greasy lunch counter, from which he had gone forth to fame and untold wealth. He gazed reverently upon the slices of bologna, and the pickled herring, and frankfurters, and rye bread, lying upon their platters. Things had not changed much at the Slick Nickel. It was a better saloon now, with new fixtures, but it still was definitely of the Bowery. The financier sniffed the soup bubbling behind the bar. Then he faced the bartender. He had determined to order a safe drink.

"I'll have a glass of beer—just a small one," the financier said.

Marty drew the beer and set it in front of the customer.

"Will you join me?" the latter invited.

"I never drink, sir," said the bartender. "Will you have a bowl of soup?"

"My friend," Moffat said, "I thank you." He set his glass down after having sipped the beer. "Twenty years ago you gave me soup when I had no money. You saved my life. Do you remember it?"

"I don't believe I do, sir."

"Well, you did. I don't believe I care for any soup to-night—I've just had dinner. I came to see you particularly—to thank you." He was happy at having found the man and at the joyous surprise he would give him. "I came in here starving, twenty years ago, and you gave me food. To-day I am worth millions. I'll tell you my name, but we must talk quietly. I don't want the other people in here to know me. You understand that, of course?"

"Sure, I understand."

"I am John Pringle Moffat," the financier said, in a whisper. He spoke as modestly as he could—indeed, he was modest—but he

couldn't deny a certain pleasure in the weight of his name.

Marty McQuinn gazed upon him in intense surprise, then with a smile of recognition.

"I'll be blamed if you ain't!" he exclaimed in an awed whisper. He gazed down at the other customers. "John Pringle Moffat," he repeated in a softer whisper. "Don't let this gang know it, sir. Who'd ever thought it? John Pringle Moffat! Seems like I remember feedin' you now. I cert'nly fed a live one that day, didn't I? I was readin' yo'er name in th' paper to-day, sir. And here I am servin' short beers t' John Pringle Moffat!"

Marty broke away for a minute to wait on customers up the bar, but he hastened back. He had gotten flat-footed with years behind the bar and plumped along rather heavily. He found that the financier had a surprise in store for him.

"I want to do something to prove my gratitude," Moffat went on. "I want to apologize, too, for not thinking of you before. I've got many ways to help you—if you would let me, I would deem it a favor. Chief among them is money, but I have only a little with me to-night. In fact, I haven't even got a check book——"

"No, no!" Marty protested. "You mustn't do that, sir. I couldn't listen t' it. I can't take money I ain't earnt—my wife wouldn't let me keep it anyway. Everyt'ing's all right, Mister Moffat, just as it is. I got a nice bank account, sir, and we're gettin' along fine. Just leave t'ings as they be."

"But, my friend," John Pringle Moffat persisted. "At least you will permit me to do something. I might make a suggestion now that you mention having a bank account. You know that I have made millions in the market. I'll give you the name of a stock that is going to shoot way up within the next few days. You won't accept money, and I confess I rather admire you for it. But this certainly will not offend you. If you would bring your money to me, I will invest it for you. In ten days you'll be worth ten times as much as you are to-day—maybe twenty times as much. It is an unparalleled opportunity, my friend. The only thing I ask is that you keep the name of the stock secret. It is purely a matter of friendship." The financier then thought of a possibility of a leak. He was surprised

that he had spoken so rashly—not that he distrusted Marty—but he didn't believe that he could have all the wisdom in the world. "In fact," he went on, "you don't even have to know the name of the stock. Just bring your money to me, and in ten days I'll turn back a fortune to you."

Marty McQuinn was shining a glass with the flap of his apron. He deliberated a few moments very profoundly. Then he went up-bar at the call of a customer and soon returned.

"Mister Moffat," said he, "I'm a thousand times obliged t' you, sir; but I'm pretty well satisfied with t'ings as they be. I been here better'n twenty years now—and I'm gettin' along fine. The boss t'inks a whole lot o' me, and I'm gettin' more money than any bartender on th' Bow'ry. I don't believe I want t' branch out. It's too much t' have on my mind—I've been too long on th' Bow'ry to care about any other bus'ness. I've got a fine little home—with th' pretties: wife on th' East Side and four o' th' smartest youngsters, sir, in th' world. I'm doin' pretty well in politics. I ain't got enough t' worry me, and I'm afraid that with any more money I'd have more than I could 'tend to. It's th' simple life I'm cravin', with enough t' live well and still not enough t' worry me. You know, sir, I'm one man that's satisfied with what he's got. I'll just leave t'ings th' way they be, sir; thankin' you just th' same. I thank you just as much as if you'd brought me in a million, sir. I know your heart's in th' right place, and that's worth more than th' money."

The financier couldn't believe his ears. He contrasted the attitude of this Bowery bartender with all the other men who had dogged him for tips on the market. Here was a man who was satisfied. He couldn't commend Marty's ambition very strongly, but he couldn't help but appreciate the heart of the man. They talked for some little time, and the bartender impressed upon him his devotion for the East Side and even to the sordid saloon where he wielded a power that tickled him. Moffat raised the glass of beer, and sipped it—a fresh glass that Marty had played host with. Marty noted that his hand trembled and that his eyes were red. The strain of the last week was showing itself again.

"My friend," Moffat said, "I'm very sorry, but I have a very deep admiration for you."

"And me for you, Mister Moffat," said the

bartender. "And now, sir, you'd better go home and get a little sleep. You must've been workin' pretty hard these last few days, and I can see you're a bit nervous. Go home, now, like a good fellow."

They shook hands—a silent clasp of two men who admired each other. Then John Pringle Moffat went to the street. He took the subway to his home. In bed for a much-needed rest, he dropped asleep thinking of the peculiar exhibition of human nature he had seen that night on the Bowery.

Marty McQuinn shined leisurely at a glass for a few moments after the financier left. He sauntered back and forth and then stopped before a friend who was dallying with his beer on the other side of the bar, Marty gazed over the top of the saloon half door and into the wriggling maw of Pell Street. Chinatown's shifting throngs were out in force on this fine night in June.

"They ought t' make 'em quit sellin' that

stuff," Marty said to his friend. "This polish that we peddle on th' Bow'ry's bad enough, but that hop stuff! Them pipe smokers wander in here and I humor 'em—I talk to 'em and kid 'em along. It don't do no good t' make fun of 'em. Now, there was a man"—Marty was still serenely polishing a glass and his head was cocked up a little wisely—"that guy I was just talkin' to. He looks like a good scout and prob'ly could have a swell job, as I could see by his talk that he was pretty smart, even if he was full o' that hop. Didn't you see how he looked around wildlike, at th' lunch counter and at th' gang in here—and how his hand shook and his eyes was all red? I can spot 'em every time! The King of Egypt was in here yesterday and th' day before I had t' throw th' Emp'ror of Alaska out—he got too noisy. D'you know who that guy t'inks he is—no kiddin'? Why, he t'inks he's John Pringle Moffat!"



Way of the Wind

I HAVE wooed the far horizons;
I have wandered with the wind.
Ah, oceans I have sailed upon!
Ah, roads that lie behind!
I know the way from Mexico
Adown the Spanish Main.
And Aves, and Flores.
My feet have trod the twain.

The Boulevard du Montparnasse
Is no strange street to me;
And lightly down Las Ramblas
I've loitered to the sea.
Like Tommy Atkins, I have said
Good-by to Leicester Square.
And Broadway, and Kingsway
Have both to me been fair.

Oh, I have loved the gypsy quest;
I have cast dice with Fate
From Mandeville to Montreal,
And westward to the Gate.
And on the trail or roaring street,
These did I always find:
A blue sky, or gray sky,
And a companion wind.

WALTER ADOLPHE ROBERTS.

The Man That Married a Ship

By Walter S. Foley

She was counted as a vicious boat among sailor men and shipyard workers. There was quite a list of deaths chalked against her. While being refitted she rose to the climax of her career, with Donovan, the master shipfitter, abetting her

SOMEWHERE in the files of the navy records, no doubt, there is an official document that states why the U. S. S. *Sea Nymph* no longer exists, giving good, logical reasons why plates and frames and beams were disassembled, and even the name itself allowed to become a mere memory. But I doubt whether one reading that account would sense the story as we in the yard know it, or get a hint of the demoniac personality that seemed to rule that ship and those whom circumstance or choice brought near her. It impressed me the first time I ever laid eyes on her, for in those days I was a sensitive, rather high-strung chap; and each vessel that came in from the sea was a messenger from the romance that dwelt out beyond the capes. She came lumbering brutishly through the gray afternoon, this gray-painted freighter, ungainly as a packing box, but fighting with vicious obstinacy the puffing, straining tugs that tried to dock her.

If most of us had not seen her before, we at least knew her by her unfavorable reputation; and there was not one of the leading men in the shipyard but would willingly have avoided having anything to do with refitting her. One or two of them rose from their accounts to give her a glance when she came in sight around the bend of the river, but the rest pretended to have no interest in her coming beyond grumbling at her assignment to the yard.

"Why couldn't they finish that job at the Southern yards?" one growled. "They started her, and they have everything down there that we have up here, but no, they wished her on us the way they do with all their dirty jobs."

"And now she'll lie here with all her damned hoodoo on our luck," another contributed, starting a flow of jerky half sentences from the group that pieced together into the unenviable history of the *Sea Nymph*.

Staring out of the unwashed window with his back to the crowd, Donovan, the master shipfitter, watched the obstinate vessel until she was warped into her berth, apparently as oblivious to the gloomy trend of the conversation as he was to the dingy surroundings, the low blackened ceiling, the floor with its ground-in dirt, and the table, a veritable mess of blue prints, pipes, and overfilled ash trays. Standing close to the other men, he was strangely apart from them; his blue flannel shirt, rough trousers, and the shapeless cap whose visor came low over his forehead would have been nondescript enough upon an ordinary man, but upon him they became part of his saturnine self. He was, somehow, more in harmony with the wind-swept river, the lowering sky, and the forbidding bulk of the *Sea Nymph*, whose rust-streaked bows and hawse holes were suggestive of unclean lips. If Donovan was more impressive than these, it was because he was a man whom nature had set apart from the weakness and the softness of ordinary men. Men said he was hard; perhaps he was unfortunate.

"You talk as if you were all afraid of her," he said unexpectedly, as he turned from the window, "afraid of a thing that men just like yourselves have made—what nonsense!"

"Nobody has spoken for her yet, so here's a chance to get an inside job that'll last almost till spring—that's worth while considering in the weather we have down here. Who wants it? Down in the Southern yard they ripped out everything, so it's new decks and platforms and bulkheads from the inner bottom up. Who'll take the old girl?" he asked banteringly, regarding them from under sardonically cocked eyebrows until the silence became oppressive.

"Well, you're not a promising lot to pick a bridegroom from, but it doesn't matter, for I'm going to take her myself."

In chorus they disclaimed any unwilling-

ness to tackle the job, but he smiled and shook his head at their belated requests for the ship.

"It's all right, boys, any one of us could manage the job, but I've been watching her out there and I just happen to fancy that particular bit for myself."

And so he had his way, but as the weeks went, it became clear that it was indeed a man's task that lay in the hands of the indomitable figure who came to almost live in the huge steel hulk. In the language of naval architects, the *Sea Nymph* was not a ship of fine lines; for the sake of getting great cargo capacity her designer had departed from the well-established models, and so she was too high, ill-balanced, hard to maneuver, and in damages had proved a loss to her owners. Before the government had taken her over, there was a respectable-sized list of deaths of sailors chalked against her, and that trip upon which she did not ram a pierhead, or maliciously sideswipe another vessel was considered by those who knew her as a lapse from form. So much for her past; even while she lay at her pier in the yard her reputation grew. After one blustering night the workmen found her swinging from a single hawser, and the dock littered with wreckage from a mooring head that she tore loose and lunged through a tool house.

The clangor and confusion, great enough in any steel ship that is refitting, was intensified in her. Down in the holds where the fitters worked amid the din of riveting and chipping, the men gave up all attempts to shout orders and fell back upon a rude sign language. Familiarly, they dubbed her "the madhouse," and they emphasized their regard for her with prefixes appropriately profane. Donovan alone was unwearied. In the bitter cold of that winter, in the storms of snow and sleet which coated the vessel with slippery armor and made the steel cruel to the touch—no matter in what weather—his stubbornness of purpose held always. His example kept the men on the job when, half frozen, they were well-nigh out of heart, because what made it doubly hard for *them* was the seemingly intelligent aim of the ship to behave like a vixen. In spite of all precautions she pulled loose from the pier on every possible occasion.

We felt that while accidentally any of those who worked there might be injured, Donovan's life was in certain peril every

second that he remained aboard her. Yet with each hour, each minute, he became more passionately enthralled by the mounting difficulties, more eagerly desirous of dominating the creation that had defied his kind, and still laid a growing tribute of apprehension upon those who labored within her. The steel leviathan was to him like some fascinating, perverse woman against whom he was playing his very life; and my admiration for his unbreakable will, his unending resource, led me to conquer my distaste for the *Sea Nymph* in order to watch the outcome of the conflict.

The men about the yard, and about shipyards generally, are a sturdy lot, powerful beyond appearances physically, and set terribly in the traditions of their craft. They would bitterly resent the statement that they are superstitious, but for them a ship is either lucky or unlucky. Reluctantly, I admit that events often appear to confirm their belief. In the case of the *Sea Nymph* the nickname that had applied to her almost from the first, "the madhouse," gradually waned in favor of another much more curious. I heard it one day when I stepped into the tool house on the pier to get warm. It was a bleak day, the first ice of the winter was bumping about among the piles beneath us, and the *Sea Nymph* rode alongside on the high tide, the bulk of her side rising past the window like the wall of a tall house. There was something quite unshiplike in the beak shape of her bow, and I leaned forward following her lines up to where the low clouds seemed to brush along her fo'c'sle bulwark.

"Some wife!" the young fellow in charge of the tools said reflectively, as his gaze followed mine, and when I turned and looked at him questioningly he perceived my ignorance. "'Donovan's Wife,'" he explained. "Haven't you heard that? Black Pete Donovan never married, you know. Looks as if he and this old she-devil must have been waiting for each other."

I liked Donovan, and this speech rather nettled me.

"What's Pete ever done to you?" I asked shortly, and hesitating a moment in perplexity, he lamely excused himself.

"Aw, nothin'—I guess Pete is all right. But say, just the look of him gives me the blues, I watch him out of the corner of my eye every time I have to go past him—them

mood eyes of him—— Sure, he's all right. But if he ever broke loose——”

I understood. Donovan standing at ease in a group would dominate it as the Sphinx overawes all about it—and Donovan could change in the twinkling of light from impassivity to the fury of a typhoon. The men feared him—unfortunately for both sides—feared his kindness, feared his rage, for it was given to few of them to have such peaks or depths in their own natures. Perhaps I, too, would have feared him if I had not seen times when his reticent spirit came forth, times when his devotion to the work kept him far into the night at the long table in the yard office. I can see him yet, sitting in the focused glare of the droplight, his short pipe gripped in his teeth, his thin, strong face, rugged, craglike, and the tumbled black hair like a wind-swept forest above it. The storm that dashed down the river would batter the low building; he would need an item from some of the shops or perhaps from the pier, but he would look across to me and shake his head as I moved to rise and fetch it.

“Too bad a night for you, my boy. Curl up on that bench and see if you can snatch a wink.” Then, with feigned sternness: “And now the next time you see I'm going to be held here after hours, understand, I want you to sneak out with the rest, d'ye hear?”

“Yes, sir,” I would reply, but I never did.

That was why I resented the slurring speech of the tool-house keeper, but “Donovan's Wife” became the common name for the ship when he was out of hearing, and most of the men believed that the ship knew him, and would “get” him.

“You never can understand a woman,” they would say when pressed for reasons, “and a ship and a woman are pretty much alike.” Their conviction was more clearly shown in the way that they avoided his immediate vicinity when below decks, and the continued, wary glances they threw at booms and rigging when they must be near him on deck.

One morning that I remember, there was a great deal of iron to be lowered, but the operation, a matter-of-course process, was proceeding so uneventfully that I had been up and down the long ladder several times with the rope from the winch sliding past me within arm's reach. Then Donovan came down there, and soon after, I fetched him a list of specifications and stood beside

him at the bottom of the hatch as he went over them. Suddenly the faintest of flickers dimmed the light from above, and Donovan, grabbing me, jumped out of the way just as a short piece of angle crashed down upon the inner bottom. His demeanor changed not a particle when the rigger who had been lowering the material scrambled down the ladder in a panic, and staring about until he saw that the boss was uninjured stammered that it was a puzzle to him, since an hour before he had seen that clip bolted fast to the larger piece. Donovan nodded and resumed study of his list with the briefest of comment:

“That hatchway was in use, and a man who stands under an open hatchway is a plain fool.”

Still, I questioned that sang-froid, for before I left him he took me by the arm and led me to the foot of the ladder.

“You were standing just here, weren't you, Dave? And I was standing so, eh?”

It was true, and on the exact spot where he had stood the missile had struck with such force as to dent the heavy plate. No one had deliberately unscrewed that clip, it was an accident, but the kind of accident that would not be conducive to the peace of mind of a man at all nervous. Donovan gave the incident a wry smile.

“Well, Dave, it wouldn't have hit you.”

The only direct sign he ever gave of anxiety was on an evening when as we waited on the orlop deck, just above the hold, I noticed a slim, sinister metal cylinder glide past and down into the darkness. Iron and timbers swung aboard clumsily and noisily, but this thing, a dirty green in color, slid down with the ease and grace of a snake, attended only by a silent man whose black goggles pushed back on his forehead looked like the protuberant eyes of a strange insect.

“Acetylene gas,” Donovan said half to himself. “I don't care much about having that stuff aboard, but I want to have a bulk-head burned down to-morrow.”

Neither did I like to see the explosive gas in a vessel, but the “burner” climbed safely up a few minutes later and the three of us walked up to the shop with the moment of anxiety forgotten.

There is a wearying sameness about the appearance of a vessel that is undergoing extensive repairs. Day after day it lies alongside the pier, its outside always the same, a drab hulk, its stacks bare of any sign of

vitality within, its vicinity encumbered by the same miscellany of bent angles and channels. To see an object that is recognizable as part of the vessel comes to be something of an event, a mild sensation, indeed, like the sight of a huge casting that lay on the flat car under the shadow of the *Sea Nymph* when I came in the next morning. I remembered noticing it some days before as it rotated on a great vertical lathe in the machine shop, and hearing one of the men there say that it was the low-pressure cylinder which was badly scored. It reminded me now of a tarnished napkin ring, but though several men could have stood concealed in it, it was only one of the group that made up the driving mechanism of the monster.

"They'll hoist it aboard to-day," I thought, and with that I glanced at the vessel and saw that a big locomotive crane was stopped alongside, and that all the cargo booms of the ship seemed waiting to do their part. Some of these, I supposed, would be used in manipulating the counterweights, iron ingots weighing up into the thousands of pounds. It would be a sight worth seeing, and I resolved to be on hand when the cylinder was swung on board and set in position.

Chance, however, kept me away from the vicinity of the *Sea Nymph* until late in the afternoon, and when I finally hurried through the yard and around the corner of the new electrical building I saw that I had missed the most striking part of the operation. The casting was already aboard, suspended over the engine hatch so that twenty feet or more of lowering and the bolting of it in place would complete the job. The high-pressure cylinders would be put aboard later, but these were smaller; it would be a less remarkable sight, and so I disgustedly climbed up the steeply slanting gangplank concerned only with my errand to Donovan. He was standing, with the boss rigger, near the casting, and gave the blue print which I brought him a hasty inspection. The pump foundation that it showed was a comparatively simple matter to be placed away below decks, and he was about to hand the print back to me for filing when he paused and studied it intently.

"We've shifted this here girder on the order of another drawing," he said with some asperity. "Why can't they keep track of what they're doing up in that planning department? Who gave you this?"

"Benson," I answered. "I told him that

I thought it was wrong, but he says that the position of that girder was verified two days ago."

Donovan turned as if to investigate, glanced at the hanging casting, hesitated.

"Sure you can get her down there?" he inquired of the rigger, and at the other's nod of acquiescence he beckoned to me to follow and walked rapidly toward the forward end of the boat, swung himself through the guard rope about the hatch, and descended the long ladder into hold number two. This was one of the busiest places on the ship, both because of the fact that several different gangs were working there simultaneously: riveters, calkers, drillers, and shipfitters; and also because several compartments opened from a central well or vestibule. To be out of the way I found a station at the farther side of one of these and looked about me while I waited for him to satisfy himself.

Across from me in the intense glare of a nitrogen lamp a steel bulkhead reared and spread itself away toward the shadows, an uncompromising sheet of bluish-black on which crawled white hieroglyphics, half effaced, or splashes of calking paint glared in staring patches like freshly spilled blood. The scaffolding everywhere threw most of the place into shadow, though many rays of light shone through the rivet holes from the next compartment, tracing their course for a little way in the smoke that permeated every part, and striking unexpectedly upon the faces of workmen whose bodies merged with the general darkness. In the central well there was more light, as there the daylight filtered down through a confusion of ladders and lines of air hose, and there, too, a man would occasionally try to talk to his fellow by placing mouth to ear and shouting with all his strength. Where I stood this would have been unavailing. I could only think of the heart of a thunderstorm, where the crash of sound is like a physical blow, and then of that state existing from moment to moment until the wearied ear ceases to record the din, and one hears the heavier crashes through the vibration of the steel walls and floor.

Through a hole in the deck above, a white-hot rivet came. In its glow the arm and face of a boy whom I had not seen before, appeared; and when the rivet dropped into a pail he tonged it out and threw it comet-like halfway across the compartment. There,

a dim bulk that I knew was the riveter's helper, caught it, set it into the underside of the deck, and in an instant I distinguished the clatter of the riveting gun that drove it up. After that I watched for the glow of the rivets, and my eyes became so accustomed to the gloom that I could finally distinguish the motions of the slave who tugged them into position and smashed their points through with a cannonlike holding machine.

One of the rivets, dropping by accident to the inner bottom at my feet, set fire to the thick coating of pitch paint. I was startled until I realized that the steel deck would soon be reached and the fire checked, but the eddy of dun-colored smoke that spiraled up from it irritated my unaccustomed nostrils, and I understood that peculiarity of the air and why it so quickly gave me a headache. None of the hurrying men gave the fire more than a passing glance. It had almost burned itself out when a grimy boy swung down from the staging above, and nonchalantly picking it up with his tongs, threw it into the water that lay in the bilge of the ship.

Donovan, returning, handed me the blue print and turned to answer a calker who touched his arm. I smiled as I looked at the man's overalls, for he was shining with paint and red as the devil in a play; then involuntarily I shivered, for a crash, deeper than any noise, rang through the vessel. The noise of all the workmen seemed to stop as at a signal; but this only added to my fear, especially since a dull, grinding quiver came from all the ironwork about me. One's attention focuses queerly in a moment of fright—I noticed the tiny cascade of dust that began to pour off the staging planks between me and the daylight of the central well, long before I perceived that the planks themselves were sliding to starboard, or that the deck underfoot was falling away in a slow arc.

"The engine's broke loose; we're going over!" a voice yelled with startling distinctness. Then the uproar began again, but this time it was the bang of falling timbers and the confused shouting of men whose bodies jammed at the narrow gate to freedom. Mechanically I caught at a beam, and holding on desperately, viewed the completion of the disaster with the impersonality of utter fright. Over the heads of the men I looked and saw a sheet of water come. Slow and deliberate, it seemed though it must have been a rushing comber, green and white. I wondered how the dirty dock water could be

so clean. It pushed back the men, battering them with wreckage, and spread into our compartment until it filled more than half the height and reached up to my ankles as I lay bent over the beam. It lashed from wall to wall, then gradually quieted, into a sullen mirror as foul and repulsive as I had seen it at the dock above.

One of the last things that I noted in the confusion before the water was in upon us, was something that rolled about with uncanny ease—unless its flexible hose became entangled in some timber—that acetylene cylinder would drop the full height of the hold. I thought, and we should have a quicker death than drowning. I waited for the crash, but it did not come, and then I saw that, rolling into one of the manholes that led into the inner bottom, it must have lodged between the plating and the shell of the ship.

Some of the men had sense enough to climb up on the beams that ran across the hold, and among them was Donovan who coolly swung himself up beside me.

"Locate yourself before the lights go," he said calmly, for oddly enough, the nitrogen lamp still blazed out over the mess. A moment after he spoke, however, it went out without a preliminary flicker. "The cable from ashore has parted; we must be drifting out into the stream."

The vessel rocked from side to side at intervals so that I had to cling to the beam to avoid slipping into the water. I knew that we were on the beams of what was intended to be a flat deck at half the height of the hold; above us was what had been the lowest cargo space, and above that was the very bottom of the ship. We judged from what we could hear that all the mechanics had climbed or been pulled to temporary safety. Now that we were all forced to be quiet in our places, I could hear them talking and they, too, believed that the vessel had been thrown out of balance and literally ducked out from the cables holding her to the pier. Probably enough air was imprisoned in her to keep her afloat, unless a bulkhead gave way and she went down at either end; but it would be hours before those on shore could locate the men who were caught in her and free them—and in the meantime the oxygen would be used up and we should die of suffocation.

To me the logic of that reasoning was indisputable. I saw death, and feared it.

Donovan stirred slightly as he sat beside me, and I recalled all that I had heard the men say about him, the peculiar ideas they had—fancies then, but realities now—of the warfare between the man and the ship. Like a faithless mistress she had lured him at last into her power, and now she would destroy him: *we* didn't matter. I should have hated him if the abuse from the others there in the darkness had not roused my loyalty. Not knowing that he was so near to them, they gave way without restraint, reviling him in the foulest fashion until their emotion exhausted them and the weakest of them wept. In the midst of it I turned involuntarily and put my hand on his arm. In the darkness I felt his hand close over it, firm and cool, and remain there while one might count ten.

"*Donovan's Wife*," I heard him murmur a little later. In their fear and anger they had shamelessly bandied every ridiculing thing that previously they concealed. "*Donovan's Wife*," he repeated with an inflection that made me guess that he knew as none other ever would, the bitterness that was his because of his loveless existence. I was angry, quite forgetting my own predicament for the moment, that no woman had penetrated that mask of cold aloofness and found the warm humanity that lay beneath.

"There was some acetylene here," he remarked quietly in a little while, "I wonder that we did not hear from it in the general spill."

"The tank rolled into the manhole," I volunteered. "I saw it as we went over. There's no danger of it falling now for it's up against the shell."

He did not reply for so long that I wondered if he had heard. It was dreary; there was no sound except the occasional bumping of floating wreckage without, and the periodical outburst of a man across from us who for most of the time prayed monotonously in a throaty whisper.

"We simply *can't* sit here until we drop off into the water," I said to myself, then I began to wish that instead of buying the gold-filled watch I was so proud of, I had bought a cheaper one with a luminous dial. Donovan must have been speaking for some time before I paid attention to him.

"You don't take any stock in these fool notions of the men, do you, Dave?"

"I don't know," I answered miserably, hoping that he would not bother me further.

"Well, I don't," he said slowly. "I don't.

I want you to remember that about me. No one can prove that a ship is more than man's idea worked out in wood and steel—and man is more than what he creates." His voice was terribly earnest, as if he were arguing with a stubborn opponent. "You'll remember that, you'll remember it. eh?"

I nodded, forgetting that he could not see me, but his face was so close to mine that perhaps he sensed my agreement. At any rate he was silent again, so silent that at length I reached out my hand to touch him and found that the place where he sat was empty. Puzzled, I began to edge along the beam, and it was while I was doing so that I distinguished a new noise—clink, clink—not loud, but very clear, and almost overhead. An irritating odor began to be perceptible, too, and then I guessed what it was and had my guess confirmed in the same instant. With a stunning roar the vessel heaved. The iron burst apart like steaming porridge—then we were in the water, but the daylight was streaming down through the hole from the explosion.

We had scrambled out upon the upturned belly of the monster and I had seen how that long gash gave access to the occupied holds before it dawned upon me that Donovan had deliberately conceived and executed that desperate expedient. I wondered how he had managed to explode the flask and still provide for his own safety; the barrier of deck plating, I understood, was what saved us. But the men were still popping out of the tent, all delirious in the joy of sudden deliverance, and a flock of small boats was milling about to take us ashore, so I did not see the man to whom we owed our lives. They began to pull away too soon, I thought, and I knelt in the stern of a dinghy, watching that dangerous hulk in the dusk of the afternoon, hoping that I had missed him and that he was safe in some boat, but ready to shout and demand our return when he should stagger out of that dark gash.

Suddenly I saw something uncanny enough taking place there. That monstrous thing, so inert during all these months, began to move as if from an inner impulse, rocking from side to side, slowly, ponderously, and yet in ghastly semblance to a woman who cradles the head of her beloved.

And in that moment I turned away, for I knew that I need watch no longer, that Donovan would not be found in any of the scattered boats.

The Thunder Bird

By B. M. Bower

Author of "The Sky Rider," "Chip of the Flying U," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

Failing of acceptance as an aviator by the army, Johnny Jewel declines the opportunity of joining some other branch of the service. He still owns an air plane, which he discovered in a desert while working as a cow-puncher on the Rolling R Ranch in Arizona. But he owes the ranchman, Sudden Selmer, his prospective father-in-law, three thousand dollars, the value of horses stolen while Johnny was aviating, and he takes the advice of Bland Halliday, the unscrupulous aviator who taught him to fly, and decides to go in for exhibition flying. He and Halliday become lost while on the way back from Tucson to the Rolling R. They have to land among Indians, who take them for gods. All the ranch hands, headed by Selmer, go out to find them, when they arrive at the ranch. Selmer later sends for Johnny to discuss the state of things between them. The aviator gives Selmer his note for three thousand dollars, and promises to pay the principal in one year. Not long afterward he flies away to Tucson with Mary V. and tries to get a marriage license, but his prospective father-in-law stops this plan by telephone, and Johnny spends a week in jail for assaulting the sheriff who interfered with his matrimonial plans. Halliday makes some hundreds of dollars by exhibition flying while his chief is in jail, and when the period of incarceration is up, they both fly from Tucson to Los Angeles, where Johnny is offered a thousand dollars a week to fly back and forth across the Mexican border. News gathering for an international syndicate is supposed to be the purpose of this work. Cliff Lowell, who engages the aviator, has plenty of money, but says little about himself.

(A Four-Part Story—Part Three)

CHAPTER XV.

THE COMPACT IS SEALED.

THE grinding clamor of passing street cars jarring over the Spring Street crossing woke Johnny to what he thought was moonlight until it occurred to him that the pale glow must come from street lamps. The air was muggy, filled with the odor of damp soot. He sniffed, turned over with the bed-covering rolled close around him, snuggled his cheek into a pillow, yawned, rooted deeper, opened his eyes again and turned on the reading light by his bed. It was five-thirty—red dawn in Arizona where his dreaming had borne him swiftly to his old camp at Sinkhole. Five-thirty would be getting-up time on the range, but in Los Angeles the hour seemed an ungodly one to crawl out of bed. He reached for his "makin's" and rolled a cigarette which he smoked with no more than one arm and his head exposed to the clamminess of the atmosphere.

He ought to return to the Thunder Bird by daylight, he mused, but he did not know how to get there. He needed Bland for pilot,

but he did not know where to find Bland. Now that he came to consider finding people and places, it occurred to him that neither did he know where to find Cliff Lowell. Thinking of him made Johnny wonder what kind of news gathering it was that could make it worth a thousand dollars a week to a man to have a swift, secret means of locomotion at his command. It had sounded plausible enough last night, but now he was not so sure of it. It might be some graft—it might even be a scheme to rob him of his plane. It would be a good idea to look into matters a little before he went any farther, he decided. When Bland showed up, he'd go out and take a look at the Thunder Bird, and get her in shape to fly. Then they'd get to work. But a thousand dollars a week sure did sound good, and if the proposition was on the square—

He snuggled down and began to build an air castle. Suppose it was straight, and he went into the deal with Lowell; and suppose he worked for two months, say. That would be eight—well, say nine thousand, the way weeks lap over on the calendar. Suppose by Christmas he had eight thousand dollars

clear money—five hundred a month ought to run the plane, with any kind of luck. Well, what if he took the Thunder Bird and his eight thousand, and flew back to the Rolling R and lit down in the yard just about when they were sitting down to their Christmas dinner. He'd walk in and lay three thousand dollars down on the table by old Sudden, and tell him kinda careless: "I happened to have a little extra cash on hand, so I thought I'd take up that note while I thought of it. No use letting it go on drawing interest."

Say, maybe Sudden's eyes wouldn't stick out! And Mary V. would kind of catch her breath and open her eyes wide at him, and say: "Why, Johnny—" And say—no, jump up and put her arms around his neck and—slide her lips along his cheek and whisper—

An hour and a half later he awoke, saw with dismay that it was seven o'clock, and piled out of bed as guiltily as though an irate round-up boss stood over him. The Thunder Bird to repair, a big business deal to be accepted or rejected—whichever his judgment advised and the Fates favored—and he in bed at seven o'clock! He dressed hurriedly, expecting to hear an impatient rapping on the door before he was ready to face a critical business world. If he had time that day, he ought to get himself some clothes. He would not want to eat again in that place where Cliff Lowell took him, dressed as he was now.

He waited an impatient five minutes, went down to the lobby—after some trouble finding the elevator—and found himself alone with the onyx pillars and a few porters with brushes and things. A different clerk glanced at him uninterestedly and assured him that no one had called to see Mr. Jewel that morning. He left word that he would be back in half an hour, and went out to find breakfast. Luck took him through the side entrance to Spring Street where eating places were fairly numerous. He discovered what he wanted, ate as fast as he could swallow without choking on his ham and eggs or scalding his throat with the coffee, and returned to the hotel.

No, there had been no call for Mr. Jewel. Johnny bought a morning paper, but could find no mention of his arrival in Los Angeles. Cliff Lowell, he decided, must be playing the secrecy to the limit. It did not please him overmuch, in spite of his revilings

of the press that had made a joke of his troubles. Couldn't they do anything but go to extremes, for gosh sake? Here he had made a record flight—he had distinctly told that clerk the time he had made it in—and Cliff Lowell knew, too. Yet the paper was absolutely dumb. They ignored everything he did that was worth notice, and yawned his private affairs all over their front pages. That man Lowell was taking too much on himself. Johnny hadn't agreed to take the job yet; he very much doubted whether he would take it at all. He would rather be his own boss, and fly when he pleased and where he pleased. This flying over into Mexico and back looked pretty fishy, come to think of it. If it was against the law, how did Lowell expect to get away with it? If it wasn't, why be so darned secret about it?

For three quarters of an hour, perhaps longer, Johnny dismissed the thousand-dollar-a-week job from his mind and waited with rising indignation for Bland. What had become of the darned little runt? Here it was nine o'clock, and no sign of him. The lobby was beginning to wear an atmosphere of sedate bustling to and fro. Johnny watched travelers arrive with their luggage, watched other travelers depart. Business men strayed in, seeking acquaintances. The droning chant of pages in tight jackets and little caps perched jauntily askew interested him. Would Bland when he came have sense enough to send one around calling out "Mr. Jew-wel—Mr. John-ny Jew-wel?" Johnny knew exactly how it would sound. Cliff Lowell might, but he did not want to see Cliff. The more he thought about him the more he distrusted that proposition. A thousand dollars a week did not sound convincing in the broad light of day. It was altogether too good to be true. Why, good golly! Nobody but a millionaire could afford to pay that much just for riding around; and if they could, they'd buy themselves an air plane. They wouldn't rent one, that was certain.

At ten o'clock Johnny mentally blew up. He had not come to Los Angeles to sit around in any dog-gone hotel like an old woman waiting for a train, and if Bland or anybody else thought he'd hang around there all day— He went to the desk, left word that he had gone out to Inglewood, watched the clerk scribble the information on a slip of paper and put it in his key box, and went out wondering how he was going to find his

way to the Thunder Bird. But his natural initiative came to his aid. He saw an automobile with a "For Hire" sign on it, held brief conversation with the driver, and was presently leaning back on the cushions watching luckless pedestrians dodge out of the way. The sight restored his good humor to the point of forgetting his dignity and crawling over into the front seat where he proceeded to scrape acquaintance with the driver.

Los Angeles was a great place, all right—when you can see it from the front seat of an automobile. Johnny began to talk automobiles to the man, and managed to extract a good deal of information that may or may not have been authentic, concerning the various "makes" and their prices and speed. Not that he intended to buy one; but still, with good luck, there was no reason why he should not, when he had that note paid. A car certainly did give class to a man—and according to this fellow it would be a real economy to own one. This man said he looked upon a car as a necessity; and Johnny very quickly adopted his point of view and began to think how extravagant he was not to own one. Why, take this trip, for instance. If he owned the car himself, all it would cost him to go to Inglewood would be the gas he would burn. As it was, it would probably mean ten or fifteen dollars before he was through. An automobile of your own sure did mean a big saving all around—time and money. Take a job like this man Lowell had offered, why, he could very soon own a car. A thousand dollars a week, for a few weeks—it was his to take, if he wanted to do it—

There he went again, playing with the thought until they slid through Inglewood and out the boulevard that curved flirtatiously close to a railroad track, where he had tramped with Bland—good golly! Was that only last night? Tired and hungry and blue, with a broken plane to think of and Mary V. and the Rolling R to forget—last night. And here he was, debating with himself the wisdom of accepting an offer of a thousand dollars a week, thinking seriously of buying himself an automobile! Was it two miles to where they had turned out of the bean field on to the highway? It certainly didn't seem that far to-day. Except for the curves which he remembered he would have thought the driver had made a mistake when he slowed and swung short

into a rough trail that crossed the railroad. But there was the Thunder Bird sitting disconsolately with a broken nose and Lord knew what other disabilities, in the bean field where he had left her. He felt as though he had been away for a month.

With a pencil and paper he was carefully setting down what slight repairs he would need to make, when a big, dark-red roadster swung off the boulevard and came chuckling toward them down the rough trail. Cliff Lowell was driving, and he greeted Johnny with a careless assurance of their unity of interest that would make it difficult for Johnny to hold off, if holding off proved to be his ultimate intention.

Cliff climbed out and came up to the Thunder Bird, standing with his feet slightly apart, pulling off his driving gloves that he might light a cigarette.

"They told me at the hotel you were out here, so I came on. Better send that car back to town," he suggested frugally. "I'll take you in. No use wasting money on car hire when you don't have to. I want to talk to you, anyway."

Johnny hesitated, then paid his driver and let him go.

"I've got to go around to a supply house and get me a new propeller," he said after a moment. "And a control wire snapped. We made a bum landing last night—or my mechanic did. He claimed he knew this field, so I let him go ahead."

"Where is he? Did you let him out?"

"I didn't, but I will if he don't show up pronto." Johnny's tone was the tone of accustomed authority. "He failed to report this morning."

Cliff reached into an inner pocket and drew out a flat package, which he proceeded to open, using a wing for a table. "I've been busy this morning," he announced, laying his cigarette down on the wing. Johnny promptly swept the cigarette to the ground and crushed it under his heel. Wing coverings are rather inflammable, and he was not taking any chances.

"Pardon the carelessness. I don't know much about air planes, old man. Well, I went to the boss and had a talk with him, after I left you last night. I put the proposition up to him, and he is rather keen on it. He sees the value of getting news by air plane. The saving of time, and the avoidance of publicity will double its value—to say nothing of the chance that we may be

able to pick up something of immense importance to the government. Mexican situation, you know—all that sort of thing.

"So he put me in touch with parties that could furnish this." *This* was a large photographic bird's-eye map of a country which looked very much like Arizona, or the wild places anywhere next the Mexican border line. "Where I got it I am not at liberty to say. It's a practice map—done for the training in aerial photography that is essential nowadays in warfare. The government is going in rather strong on that sort of thing. This is authentic. Take a good look at it through this glass and tell me what you think of it. Can you see any place that would make a possible secret landing for an air plane, for instance?"

"Golly!" Johnny whispered, as Cliff's meaning flashed clean cut through the last sentence. He studied the photograph with pursed lips, his left eye squinted that his right eye might peer through a small reading glass. "It would depend on the ground," he answered after a minute. "I'd want to fly over it before I could tell exactly. If it was soft sand, for instance—" Bland would have snickered at that, knowing what reason Johnny had for realizing the disadvantages of soft sand as a landing place. "But the topography looks very practicable for the purpose." Nothing like talking up to your audience. Johnny was proud of that sentence.

"All right. We'll lay that aside for further investigation. I'm glad you have the plane out here away from every one. We'll take a run over to that locality in my car—it's open season for ducks, and there's that lake you see on the map. A couple of shot-guns and our hunting licenses will be all the alibi we'll need. You must know how to get about in the open country, living in Arizona as you have, and I'm counting a good deal on that. That's one reason why I made you the offer, instead of these flyers around here—and by the way, that's one point that made you look like a safe bet to the old man.

"I was talking to him about salary, and he's willing to go stronger than I said, if you make good. He said it would be worth about two hundred a day, which is considerably better than the thousand a week that I named."

Cliff knew when to stop and let the bait dangle. He fussed with a fresh cigarette,

paying no apparent attention to Johnny, which gave that young man an idea that he was wholly unobserved while he dizzily made a mental calculation. Fourteen hundred a week—go-od golly! In a month—or would it last for a month?

"How long a job is this?" he demanded so suddenly that the words were out before he knew he was going to ask the question.

"How long? Well—that's hard to say. Until you fail to put me across the line safely, I suppose. There's always something doing or going to be done in Mexico, old man—and it's always worth reporting to the Syndicate. How long will people go on reading their morning paper at breakfast?" He smiled the tolerant, bored smile that Johnny associated with his first sight of Cliff. "I should say the job will last as long as you make good."

"Well, that puts it up to me, then. I'd want an agreement that I'd be paid a week in advance all the time. That's to cover the risk of costly breakage, and things like that. At the end of every week I'd be free to quit or go on, and you'd be free to let me out if I didn't suit. With that understanding I'll try her out—for a week, starting tomorrow morning." He added, by way of clinching the matter: "And that goes."

Cliff Lowell blew a thin wreath of smoke, and smiled again. "It goes, far as I am concerned. I think the old man will agree to it, providing you take oath you'll keep the whole thing secret. I haven't preached that to you, but the whole scheme blows up the minute it is made public. You understand that, of course, and I'm not afraid of you; but the old man may want some assurance. If he does, you can give it, and if he does not, it will be because he is taking my word that you are all right.

"Now let's get down to business. How long will it take you to get the machine in shape? And can't you make arrangements with the owner of this field to leave it here for the present—and perhaps get him to keep an eye on it? Wait. You leave him to me. I think he's a Jap, and I know Japs pretty well. I'll go hunt him up and talk to him. If we can run it under cover for a couple of days, all the better."

He climbed into his car and went off down the road to where the roofs of several buildings showed just above a ridge. His talk must have been well lubricated with something substantial in the way of legal

tender, for presently he returned, and behind him a team came down the road hauling a flat hay rack on which four Japs sat and dangled their legs to the jolting of the wagon.

"He's a good scout, and he will keep the plane under cover for us," Cliff announced in a satisfied tone. "They're going to load it on the wagon and haul it home, where there's a shed I think will hold it. If it won't, we'll buy it and knock out an end or something."

The four Japs, chinning unintelligibly and smiling a good deal, loaded the Thunder Bird to Johnny's satisfaction, hauled it to the buildings over the ridge and after they had knocked all the boards off one side to admit the wings, ran it under a shed. Afterward they nailed all the boards on again while Johnny stood around and watched them uneasily, secretly depressed because his Thunder Bird was being penned in by gibbering brown men who might be unwilling to return it to him on demand.

For good or ill, he was committed now to Cliff Lowell's project. Even though he was committed for only a week, qualms of doubt assailed him at intervals during their roaring progress to the city. Cliff drove with an effortless skill which filled Johnny with envy. Some day—well, a car like this wouldn't be so bad. And if the job held out long enough—Why, good golly, think of it! And Mary V. thought he couldn't make any money with his air plane.

Thinking of it, he tried to silence the qualms. Tried to reassure himself with Cliff's very evident sincerity, his easy assurance that all would be well. Johnny had been canny enough to make the agreement by the week—surely nothing much could go wrong in that little while, and if he didn't like the look of things after a week's try-out, he could quit, and that would be all there would be of it. It was too good a chance to let slip by without a trial, anyway. A man would be a fool to do that; and Johnny, whatever he thought of himself, did not consider himself a fool.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN AUTO RIDE.

Under Cliff's direction that afternoon Johnny did what a woman would call shopping. He bought among other things a suit of khaki such as city dwellers wear when they go into the wilds. Cliff had told him

that he must not appear among people in the clothes of a flyer, but must be a duck hunter and none other when they left Los Angeles. When that would be, Johnny did not know; nor did he know where they were going. But a duck hunter he faithfully tried to resemble when he let Cliff into his room at five o'clock in the evening, which meant after the lights were on in the quiet hallways of the Alexandria, and the streets were all aglow. Cliff looked, if not like a hunter, at least picturesque in high, laced boots and olive drab trousers and coat that had a military cut.

"Fine! We'll get under way, and eat somewhere along the road if you don't mind. What about that mechanic? Has he shown up yet?" Cliff's boredom was gone, along with his swagger stick.

"Naw. I guess the little runt went on a spree. I thought he'd be here when I got back, but he wasn't, and the clerk said nobody had called for me except you."

"All the better. You won't have to bother explaining to him without telling him anything. If you ever do run across him, give him a temperance talk—and the boot. That will be convincing, without your needing to furnish any other reason for letting him out. By the way"—reaching casually into a pocket—"here is your first week's salary. The boss made it fifteen hundred a week, straight. And he said to tell you he would add a hundred every week that you deliver the goods. That is certainly giving you a square deal, in my opinion. But it's the boss' way, to make it worth a man's while to do his level best."

Round-eyed, Johnny took the roll of bank notes and slipped the ends with eager fingers. Golly! One with five hundred on it—he had never seen a five-hundred-dollar bill in his life, until this one. And fifties—six or seven of them, and four one hundreds, and the rest in twenties and three or four tens for easy spending. He had a keen desire to show that roll to Mary V., and ask her whether he could make money flying, or whether she would still advise him to go to work for her dad! Why, right there in his hand was more money than Sudden thought he was worth in a year, and this was just one week's salary! Why, good gosh! In another week he could pay that note, and start right in getting rich. Why, in a month he could own a car like Cliff's. Why—

Cliff, watching him with sophisticated un-

derstanding of the dazzling effect of so much money upon a youth who had probably never before seen fifteen hundred dollars in one lump, smiled to himself. Whatever small voice of doubt Johnny had hearkened to, the voice would now be hushed under the soft whisper of the money fluttering in Johnny's fingers.

"Well, I'll call a porter to get these things down so you can settle for the room. You had better just check out without leaving any word of where you're going." Cliff turned to the phone.

"That'll be easy, seeing I don't know," Johnny retorted, crowding the money into his old wallet that bulged like the cheeks of a pocket gopher busy enlarging his house.

"Fine," Cliff flung sardonically over his shoulder. He called for a porter to remove the luggage from Room 678, and then laid his fingers around the doorknob. "I'll be down at the S. P. depot waiting for you, Jewel. You check out—there's a train in half an hour going north, so it will be plausible enough for you to take a taxi to the depot. Go inside, just as though you were leaving, see. And when the passengers come off the train, you join the crowd with your gun case and grip, and come on out to where I'll be waiting. Can you do that?"

"I guess I can, unless somebody runs over me on the way."

"Then I'll be going. The point is, we must not leave here together—even on a duck hunt!" He smiled and departed, at least three minutes before the porter tapped for admission.

There was no hitch, although there was a margin of safety narrow enough to set Johnny's blood tingling. He had "checked out" and had called his taxi and watched the porter load in gun case and grip, had tipped him lavishly and had slipped a dollar into the willing palm of the doorman when he leaned in to get the address to give the driver. And then, just as the taxi was moving on, over the doorman's shoulder, Johnny distinctly saw Bland turn in between the rubber plants that guarded the doorway. A pasty-faced, dull-eyed Bland, cheaply resplendent in new tan shoes, a new suit of that pronounced blue loved by Mexican dandies, a new red-and-blue striped tie, and a new soft hat of bottle-green velour.

For ten seconds Johnny was scared, which was a new sensation. For longer than that he had a guilty consciousness of having

"double-crossed" a partner. He had a wild impulse to stop the taxi and sprint back to the hotel after Bland, and give him fifty dollars or so, as a salve to his conscience even though he could not take him into this new enterprise or even tell him what it was. Uncomfortably his memory visioned that other day—was it only yesterday morning? It seemed impossible!—when he had wandered forlornly out to the hangar in Tucson and had found Bland true to his trust when he might so easily have been false; when everything would seem to encourage him to be false. How much, after all, did Johnny owe to Bland Halliday? Just then he seemed to owe Bland everything.

It was all well enough for him to argue that his debt to Bland had been paid when he brought him to Los Angeles, and that Bland could have no just complaint if Johnny declined to continue the partnership longer. Bland, he told himself, would have quit him cold, any time some other chance looked better. It was Johnny's plane, and Johnny had a right to do as he pleased with it.

For all that, Johnny rode to the S. P. depot feeling like a criminal trying to escape. He took his luggage and sneaked into the waiting room, sought an inconspicuous place and waited, his whole head and shoulders hidden behind a newspaper which he was not reading. Cliff Lowell could have found nothing to criticize in Johnny's manner of screening his presence there; though he would probably have been surprised at Johnny's reason for doing so. Johnny himself was surprised, bewildered even. That he, who had lorded over Bland with such patronizing contempt, should actually be afraid of meeting the little runt!

A stream of hurrying people distinguished from others by their seeking glances and haste and luggage, warned him presently that he would be expected outside. He picked up his belongings and joined the procession, but he came very near missing Cliff altogether. He was looking for the dark-red roadster that had eaten up distance so greedily between Inglewood and the city, and he did not see it. He was standing dismayed, a slim, perturbed young fellow in khaki, with a grip in one hand and a canvas gun case in the other, when some one touched him on the arm. He needed the second glance to tell him it was Cliff, and even then it was the smooth, bored voice that

convinced him. Cliff wore a motor coat that covered him from chin to heels, a leather cap pulled down over his ears, and driving goggles as concealing as a mask. He led the way to a touring car that looked like any other touring car—except to a man who could know the meaning of that high, long ventilated hood and the heavy axles and wheels, and the general air of power and endurance that marked it a thoroughbred among cars. The tonneau, Johnny saw as he climbed in, was packed tight with what looked like a camp outfit. His own baggage was crowded in somehow, and the side curtains, buttoned down tight, hid the load from passers-by. Cliff pulled his coat close around his legs, climbed in, set his heel on the starter.

A pulsing beat, smooth, hushed and powerful, answered. Cliff pulled the gear lever, eased in the clutch and they slid quietly away down the street for two blocks, swung to the left and began to pick up speed through the thinning business district that dwindled presently to suburban small dwellings.

"Put on that coat and the goggles, old man," Cliff directed, his eyes on the look-back mirror, searching the highway behind them. "We've got an all-night drive, and it will be cold later on, so the coat will serve two purposes. It's hard to identify a man in a passing automobile if he's wearing a motor coat and goggles. You couldn't swear to your twin brother going by."

"This is a bear of a car," Johnny glowed, all atingle now with the adventure and its flavor of mystery. "I didn't know you had two. I was looking for the red one."

"I forgot to tell you." Which Johnny feit was a lie, because Cliff Lowell did not strike him as the kind of man who forgot things. "Yes, I keep two. This is good for long trips when I want to take luggage—and so on." His tone did not invite further conversation. He seemed absorbed now in his driving; and his driving, Johnny decided, was enough to absorb any man. Yard by yard he was sending the big-nosed car faster ahead, until the pointer on the speedometer seemed to want to rest on thirty-five. Still, they did not seem to be going so very fast, except that they overhauled and passed everything else on the road, and not once did a car overhaul and pass them. Cliff glanced often into the mirror, watching the road behind them for the single speeding

light of a motor cop—because Los Angeles County, as you are probably aware, does not favor thirty-five miles an hour for automobiles, but has fixed upon twenty-five as a safe and sane speed at which the general public may travel.

But Cliff was wary, chance favored them with fairly clear roads, and the miles slid swiftly behind. They ate at San Juan Capistrano not much past the hour which Johnny had all his life thought of as supper time. Cliff filled the gas tank, gave the motor a pint of oil and the radiator about a quart of water, turned up a few grease cups and applied the nose of the oil can here and there to certain bearings. He did it all with the fastidious air of a prince democratically inclined to look after things himself, the air which permeated his whole personality and made Johnny continue calling him Mr. Lowell, in spite of a lifelong habit of applying nicknames even to chance acquaintances.

Cliff climbed in and settled himself. "We want to make it in time to get some hunting at daylight," he observed in a tone which included the fellow at the service station who was just pocketing his money for the gas and oil. "I think we can, with luck."

Luck seemed to mean speed and more speed. The headlights bored a white pathway through the dark, and down that pathway the car hummed at a fifty-mile clip where the road was straight. Johnny got thrills of which his hardy nerves had never dreamed themselves capable. Riding the sky in the Thunder Bird was tame to the point of boredom, compared with riding up and over and down and around a squirmy black line with the pound of the Pacific in his ears and the steady beat of the motor blending somehow with it, and the tingle of uncertainty as to whether they would make the next sharp curve on two wheels as successfully as they had made the last. Mercifully, they met no one on the hills. There were straight level stretches just beyond reach of the tide, and sometimes two eyes would glare at them, growing bigger and bigger. There would be a *swoosh* as a dark object shot by with mere inches to spare, and the eyes would glare no longer. By golly, Johnny would have a car or know the reason why! He'd bet he could drive one as well as Cliff Lowell, too.

"Too fast for you?" Cliff asked once, and Johnny felt the little tolerant smile he could not see.

"Too fast? Say, I'm used to *flying!*!" Johnny shouted back, ready to die rather than own the tingling of his scalp for fear. He expected Cliff to let her out still more, after that tacit dare, but Cliff did not for two reasons; he was already going as fast as he could and keep the road, and he was convinced that Johnny Jewel had hardened every nerve in his system with sky riding.

Oceanside was but a sprinkle of lights and a blur of houses when they slipped through at slackened speed lest their passing be noted curiously and remembered too well. On again, over the upland and down once more to the very sand where the waves rocked and boomed under the stars. Up and around and over and down--Johnny wondered how much farther they would hurl themselves through the night. Straight out along a narrow streak of asphalt toward lights twinkling on a blur of hillside. Up and around with a skidding turn to the right, and Del Mar was behind them. Down and around and along another straight line next the sands, and up a steep grade whose windings slowed even this brute of a car to a saner pace.

"This is Torrey Pine grade," Cliff informed him. "It isn't much farther to the next stop. I've been making time, because from San Diego on we have rougher going. This is not the most direct route we could have taken, but it's the best, seeing I have to stop in San Diego and complete certain arrangements. And then, too, it is not always wise to take a direct route to one's destination. Not--always." He slowed for a rickety bridge and added negligently: "We've made pretty fair time."

"I'd say we have. You've been doing fifty part of the time."

"And part of the time I haven't. From here on it's rough."

From there on it was that, and more. There had been a rainstorm which the asphalt had long forgotten but the dirt road recorded with ruts and chuck holes half filled with mud. The big car weathered it without breaking a spring, and before the tiredest laborer of San Diego had yawned and declared it was bedtime they chuckled sedately into San Diego and stopped on a side street where a dingy garage stood open to the greasy sidewalk.

Cliff turned in there and whistled. A lean figure in grease-blackened coveralls came out of the shadows, and Cliff climbed down.

"I want to use your phone a minute. Go over the car, will you, until I come back? Where can I spot her--out of the way?"

The man waved a hand toward a space at the far end, and Cliff returned to his seat and dexterously placed the car, nose to the wall.

"You may as well stay right here. I'll not be gone long. You might curl down and take a nap."

It was not an order, but Johnny felt that he was expected to keep himself out of sight, and the suggestion to nap appealed to him. He found a robe and covered himself, and went to sleep with the readiness of a cat curled behind a warm stove. He did not know how long it was before Cliff woke him by pulling upon the car door. He did not remember that the garage man had fussed much with the car, though he might have done it so quietly that Johnny would not hear him. The man was standing just outside the door, and presently he signaled to Cliff, and Cliff backed out into the empty street. He nodded to the man and drove on to the corner, turned and went a block and turned again. The streets seemed very quiet, so Johnny supposed that it was late, though the clock set in the instrument board was not running.

They went on, out of the town and into a road that wound up long hills and down to the foot of others which it straightway climbed. Cliff did not drive so fast now, though their speed was steady. Twice he stopped to walk over to some house near the road and have speech with the owner. He was inquiring the way, he explained to Johnny, who did not believe him; Cliff drove with too much certainty, seemed too familiar with certain unexpected twists in the road, to be a stranger upon it, Johnny thought. But he did not say anything—it was none of his business. Cliff was running this part of the show, and Johnny was merely a passenger. His job was flying, when the time came to fly.

After a while he slid farther down into the seat and slept.

CHAPTER XVII.

SHOT AT.

The stopping of the motor wakened him finally and he sat up, stretching his arms and yawning prodigiously. His legs were cramped, his neck was stiff, he was conscious of a great emptiness. By the stars he knew

that it was well toward morning. Hills bulked in the distance, with dark blobs here and there which daylight later identified as live oaks. Cliff was climbing out, and at the sound of Johnny's yawn he turned.

"We'll camp here, I think. There's no road from here on, and I rather want daylight. Perhaps then we will decide not to go on. How would a cup of coffee suit you? I can get out enough plunder for a meal."

"I can sure do the rest," Johnny cheerfully declared. "Cook it and eat it too. Where's there any water?"

"There's a creek over here a few yards. I'll get a bucket." With his trouble light suspended from the top of the car, Cliff moved a roll of blankets and a bag that had jolted out of place. In a moment he had all the necessary implements of an emergency camp, and was pulling out cans and boxes of supplies that opened Johnny's eyes. Evidently Cliff had come prepared to camp for some time.

Over coffee and bacon and bread Johnny learned some things he had wanted to know. They were in the heart of the country which Cliff had showed him on the relief map, miles from the beaten trail of tourists, but within fifteen miles of the border.

"There's a cabin somewhere near here that we can use for headquarters," Cliff further explained. "And to-day a Mexican will come and take charge of camp and look after our interests while we are over the line. I have ordered a quantity of gas that will be brought here and stored in a safe place, and there is a shelter for the plane. I merely want you to look over the ground, make sure of the landing possibilities and fix certain landmarks in your mind so that you can drop down here without making any mistake as to the spot. When that is done we will return and bring your air plane over. It is only about a hundred and forty miles from Los Angeles, air line. You can make that easily enough, I suppose?"

"I don't see why not. A hundred and forty miles ain't far, when you're lined out and flying straight for where you're going."

"No. Well, one step at a time. We'll just repack this, so that we can move on to the cabin as soon as it's light enough. I don't think it can be far."

Daylight came and showed them that the cabin was no more than a long pistol shot away. Johnny looked at Cliff queerly. City man he might be—city man he certainly

looked and acted and talked, but he did not appear to rely altogether upon signposts and street-corner labels to show him his way about. Just who and what was the fellow, anyway? Something more than a high-class newspaper man, Johnny suspected.

That cabin, for instance, might have been built and the surroundings ordered to suit their purpose. It was a commonplace cabin, set against a hill rock-hewn and rugged, with a queer, double-pointed top like twin steeples tumbled by an earthquake; or like two "sheep-herders' monuments" built painstakingly by giants. The lower slope of the hill was grassy, with scattered live oaks and here and there a huge boulder. It was one of these live oaks, the biggest of them all, with wide-spreading branches drooping almost to the ground, that Cliff pointed out as an excellent concealment for an air plane.

"Run it under there, and who would ever suspect? Mateo is there already with his woman and the kiddies. Has it ever occurred to you, old man, how thoroughly disarming a woman and kiddies are in any enterprise that requires secrecy?"

"Can't say it has. It has occurred to me that kids are the limit for blabbing things. And women—"

"Not these," Cliff smiled serenely. "These are trained kiddies. They do their blabbing at home, you'll find. They're better than dogs, to give warning of strangers prowling about."

He must have meant, during the day they were better than dogs. They drove up to the cabin, swung around the end and turned under a live oak whose branches scraped the car's top, while four dogs circled the machine, barking and growling. Still no kiddies appeared, but their father came out of a back door and drove the dogs back. He was low-browed, swart and silent, with a heavy black mustache and a mop of hair to match. Cliff left the car and walked away with him, speaking in an undertone what Johnny knew to be Spanish. The low-browed one interpolated an occasional "*Si, si, señor!*" and gesticulated much.

"All right, Johnny, this is Mateo, who will look after us at this end—providing there's nothing to hinder our using this as headquarters. How about that flat, out in front? Is it big enough for a flying field do you think? You might walk over it and take a look."

Stiffly, Johnny climbed down and walked obediently out across the open flat. It was

fairly smooth, though Mateo's kids might well be set gathering rocks. The hills encircled it, green where the rocks were not piled too ruggedly. He inspected the great oak which Cliff had pointed out as a hiding place for the plane. Truly it was a wonder of an oak tree. Its trunk was gnarled and big as a hogshead, and it leaned away from the steep slope behind it so that its southern branches almost touched the ground. These stretched farther than Johnny had dreamed a tree could stretch its branches, and screened completely the wide space beneath. It was like a great tent, with the back wall lifted; since here the branches inclined upward, scraping the hillside with their tips. The Thunder Bird could be wheeled around behind and under easily enough, and never seen from the front and sides. It was so obviously perfect that Johnny wondered why Cliff should bother to consult him about it. He wondered, too, how Cliff had found the place, how he had completed so quickly his plans to use it for the purpose. It looked almost as though Cliff had expected him and had made ready for him; though that could not be so, since not even Johnny himself had known that he was coming to the coast so soon. But to have the place all ready, with a man to take charge and all in a few hours, was an amazing accomplishment that filled Johnny with awe. Cliff Lowell must be a wizard at news gathering if his talents were to be measured by this particular achievement.

"Well, do you think it will serve?" Cat-like, Cliff had come up behind him.

"Sure, it will serve. If you can think up some way to hide the track of the plane when it lands, it wouldn't be found here in a thousand years. But of course the marks will show—--"

"Just what kind of marks?"

"Well, the wheels themselves don't leave much of a track, and the wind fills them quick, anyway. But the drag digs in. If you've ever been around a flying field you've noticed what looks like wheelbarrow tracks all over, haven't you? That's something you can't get away from, wherever you land. Though of course some soil holds the mark worse than others."

"That will be attended to. Now I'll show you just where this spot is on the map." He produced the folded map and opened it, kneeling on the ground to spread it flat. "You see those twin peaks, up there? They

are just here. This is the valley, and right here is the cabin. You might take this map and study it well. You will have to fly high, to avoid observation, and land with as little maneuvering as possible. For ten or fifteen miles around here there is nothing but wilderness, fortunately. The land is held in an immense tract—and I happen to know the owners, so that it will be only chance observers we need to fear. You will need to choose your landing so that you can come down right here, close to the oak, and be able to get the machine under cover at once. I'll mark the spot—just here, you see."

"Now, I shall have Mateo bring the blankets here under the tree. I feel the need of a little sleep, myself. How about you? We start back at dark, by the way."

"How about that duck hunting?"

"Ducks? Oh, Mateo will hunt the ducks!" Cliff permitted himself a superior smile. "We shall have sufficient outlet for any surplus energy without going duck hunting. You had better turn in when I do."

"No, I slept enough to do me, at a pinch. If Mateo can rustle a horse, I want to ride up on this pinnacle and take a look-see around over the country. I can get the lay of things a whole lot better than goggling a month at your dog-gone maps."

Cliff took a minute to think it over, and gave a qualified consent. "Don't go far, and don't talk to any one you may meet—though there is no great chance of meeting any one, I suppose," he added grudgingly, "it will be a good idea for you to get the lay of the country in your mind. Though the map can give you all you need know, I should think."

On a scrawny little sorrel that Mateo brought up from some hidden pasture where the feed was apparently short, Johnny departed, aware of Mateo's curious, half-suspicious stare. He had a full canteen from the car and a few ragged slices of bread wrapped in paper with a little boiled ham. In spite of the fact that he had lately forsworn so tame a thing as riding, he was glad to be on a horse once more; though he wished it was a better animal.

He climbed the hill, zigzagging back and forth to make easier work for the pony, until he was high above the live-oak belt and coming into shale rock and rubble that made hard going for the horse. He dismounted, led the pony to a shelving rock-made shade, and tied him there. Then, with canteen and

food slung over his shoulder, Johnny climbed to the peak and sat down puffing on the shady side of one of the twin columns.

Seen close, they were huge, steeplelike outcroppings of rock with soil-filled crevices that gave foothold for bushes. In all the country round Johnny could see no other hilltop that in the least resembled this, so it did not seem to him likely that he would ever miss his way when he traveled the air lanes.

For a while he sat gazing out over the country, which seemed a succession of green valleys, hidden from one another by high hills or wooded ridges. Mexico lay before him, across the valley and a hill or two—fifteen miles, Cliff Lowell had told him. It would be extremely simple to fly straight toward this particular hill, circle and land down there in front of the oak. Cliff had spoken of risk, but Johnny could not see much risk here. It must be across the line, he thought. Still, Cliff had said he had friends there, which did not sound like danger. They had considered it worth fifteen hundred a week, though, to fly across these fifteen miles into Mexico and back again. Johnny shook his head, gave up the puzzle and took out his wallet to count the money again.

Half an hour he spent, fingering those bank notes, gloating over them, wondering what Mary V. would say if she knew he had it. Wishing he had another fifteen hundred, so he could pay old Sudden and be done with it. An unpleasant thought came to him and nagged at him though he tried to push it from him; the thought that it would be Sudden's security that he would be risking—that the Thunder Bird was not really his until he had paid that note.

The thought troubled him. He got up, moved restlessly along the base of the towering rock, when something whined past his ear and spatted against a boulder beyond. Johnny did not think—he acted instinctively, dropping as though he had been shot and lying there until he had time to plan his next move. He had not been raised in gun smoke, but nevertheless he knew a bullet when he heard it, and he did not think himself concealed when he believed this particular bullet had been presented to him. Why?

On his stomach he inched down out of range unless the shooter moved his position, and then, impelled by a keen desire to know for sure, he adopted the old, old trick of

sending his hat scouting for him. A dead bush near by furnished the necessary stick, and the steep slope gave him shelter while he tested the real purpose of the man who had shot. It might be just a hunter, of course—only this was a poor place for hunting anything but one inoffensive young flyer who meant harm to no one. He put his hat on the stick, pushed the stick slowly up past a rock and tried to make the hat act as though its owner was crawling laboriously to some fancied shelter.

For a minute or two the hat crawled unmolested. Then, *pang-g* came another bullet and bored a neat, brown-rimmed hole through the uphill side of the hat, and tore a ragged hole on its way out through the downhill side. Johnny let the hat slide down to him, looked at the holes with widening eyes, said "Good gosh!" just under his breath, and hitched himself farther down the slope.

His curiosity was satisfied; he had seen all of the country he needed to see and there was nothing to stay for, anyway. He did not stay. When he reached the patient sorrel pony a minute or two later—it had taken him half an hour or more to climb from the pony to the peak, but climbing, of course, is much slower than coming down, even without the acceleration of singing rifle bullets—he was perspiring rather freely, and puffing a little.

For a time he waited there under the shelf of rock. But he heard no sound from above, and in a little he led the pony down the other way, which brought him to the valley near a small pasture which was evidently the pony's home, judging from the way he kept pulling in that direction. Johnny turned the horse in and closed the gate, setting the old saddle astride it with the bridle hanging over the horn. He did not care for further exploration, thank you.

What Johnny would like to know was, what had he done that he should be shot at? He was down there by Cliff Lowell's invitation. Straightway he set off angrily, taking long steps to the cabin and the great oak tree beside it. The two dogs and five half-naked Mexican children spied him and scattered, the dogs coming at him full tilt, the children scuttling to the cabin. Johnny swore at the dogs and they did not bite. He followed the children and they did not stop. So he came presently to the oak and roused Cliff, who came promptly to an elbow with

a wicked-looking automatic pointed straight at Johnny's middle.

"Say, for gosh sake! I been shot at twice already this morning. What's the idea? I never was gunned so much in my life, and I live in Arizona, that's supposed to be bad. What's the matter with this darned place?"

Cliff tucked the gun out of sight under his blanket, yawned and lay down again. "You caught me asleep, old man. I beg your pardon—but I have learned in Mexico that it's best to get the gun first and see who it is after that. Did you say something about being shot at?"

"I did, but I could say more. Here I am down here without any gun but that cussed shotgun, and I didn't have that, even, when I coulda used it handy. And look what I got, up here on the hill!" He removed his hat and poked two fingers through the two holes in the crown. "Some movie stuff! What's the idea?"

Cliff nearly looked startled. He called, "Oh, Mateo!" And Mateo came in haste, bent down and the two murmured together in Mexican. Afterward Cliff turned to Johnny with his little smile.

"It's all right, old man—glad you weren't hurt. It was a mistake, though. You were a stranger, and it was thought, I suppose, that you were spying on this place. While it was a close call for you, it proves that we are being well cared for. Better forget it and turn in."

He yawned again and turned over so that his back was toward Johnny, and that youth took the hint and departed to find blankets to spread for himself. He was tired enough to lie down, and sleepy enough to sleep, but he could not blandly forget about those bullets as Cliff advised. There were several things he wanted to know before he would feel perfectly satisfied.

Since the Thunder Bird was not here, why should strangers be shot at? Their only trouble would be with the guards along the boundary, when they tried to cross back from Mexico. But they had not tried it yet. The guards were still happily unaware of how they were going to worry later on, so why the shooting?

"Oh, well, thunder! They didn't hit me—so I should care. If Cliff wants to set guards around this camp before there's anything to guard, that's his business. Like paying me before I fly, I guess. He's got the guards up there practicing, maybe."

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE JOB.

Bright-eyed, eager for the adventure trail, Johnny swung the propeller of the Thunder Bird over three times, and turned to Cliff. "Here's where you learn one of the joys of flying. Hold her there while I climb in. When I holler contact, you kick her over—if you're man enough."

Cliff smiled, dropped his cigarette and ground it under his heel, then reached up and grasped the propeller blade. "I never actually did this, but I've watched others do it. I suppose I must learn. Oh, before we go up, I ought to tell you that I'd like to go on over the line this morning if possible. If you can fly very high, and when you near the line just glide as quietly as possible, I think it can be managed without our being seen. And since it is only just daylight now, it should not be late when we arrive."

"It should not," Johnny agreed. "Arriving late ain't what worries a flyer—it's arriving too dog-gone unexpected. Where do we light, in Mexico? Just any old place?"

"Straight toward Mateo's camp, first—flying very high. From there on I'll direct you. Shall we start?"

"You're the doctor," grunted Johnny, not much pleased with Cliff's habit of giving information a bit at a time as it was needed. It seemed to betray a lack of confidence in him, a fear that he might tell too much; though how Johnny could manage to divulge secrets while he was flying a mile above the earth, Cliff had probably not attempted to explain.

Because he was offended Johnny gave Cliff what thrills he could during that flight. He went as high as he dared, which was very high indeed, and hoped that Cliff's ears roared and that he was thinking pleasant thoughts such as the effect upon himself of dropping suddenly to that sliding relief map away down below. He hoped that Cliff was afraid of being lost, and of landing on some high mountain that stuck up like a little hill above the general assembly of dimpled valleys and spiny ridges and hills. But if Cliff were afraid he did not say so, and when the double-pointed hill that Johnny had reason to remember slid toward them, Cliff pointed ahead to another, turned his head and shouted:

"See that deep notch in the ridge away off there? Fly toward that notch."

Johnny flew. The double-pointed hill drifted behind them, other hills slid up until the two could gaze down upon their highest peaks. Beyond, as Cliff's maps had told him, lay Mexico. At eight thousand feet he shut off the motor and glided for the notched ridge. The patrol who sighted the Thunder Bird at that height, with no motor hum to call his attention upward, must have sharp eyes and a habit of sky-gazing. Cliff, peering down over the edge of the cockpit, must have thought so, for he laughed aloud triumphantly.

"Fine! I think we are putting one over on my friends, the guards," he cried, with more animation than Johnny had yet observed in him. Indeed, it occurred to Johnny quite suddenly that he had never heard Cliff Lowell laugh out loud before. "How far can you keep this up—without the motor?"

"Till we hit the ground," drawled Johnny, who was enjoying his position of captain of this cruise. He had been taking orders from Cliff for about forty-eight hours now without respite save when he slept, and even his sleep had been ordered by Cliff. "I could make that twelve miles or so from here, though. Why?"

"In the twelve miles you would not be using gas—could you glide to the ridge, circle and fly high again, and back to Mateo's camp without stopping for gas?"

Johnny gave a grunt of surprise. "I guess I could," he said. "Why?"

"Then do it. Just that. On this side of the notch you will see—when you are close enough—a few adobe buildings. I want to pass over those buildings at a height of, say, five hundred feet; or a little lower will be better, if you can make it. Then circle and come back again. And try and make the return trip as high as you did coming down, until you are well past those mountains we passed over, just inside the line. Then come down at camp as inconspicuously as possible. I may add that as we pass over the buildings I mentioned, please start your motor. I am not expected at just this time and I wish to attract attention."

"Hunh!" grunted Johnny. "You'd sure attract attention if I didn't—because how the deuce would you expect me to climb back from five hundred feet to eight thousand or so, without starting the motor?"

Cliff did not answer. He was busy with something which he had brought with him; a square package to which Johnny had paid

very little attention, thinking it some article which Cliff wanted to have in camp.

Evidently this was not to be a news-gathering trip, though Johnny could not see why not, now they were over here. Why just sail over a few houses and fly home? He could see the houses now, huddled against the ridge. A ranch, he guessed it, since half the huddle appeared to be sheds and corrals. A queer place to gather news of international importance, thought Johnny, as he volplaned down toward the spot. He threw in the motor and was buzzing over the buildings when Cliff unstrapped himself, half rose in his seat and lifted something in his arms.

"Steady," he cried. "I want to drop this over." Whereupon he heaved it backward so that it would fall clear of the wing, and peered after it through his goggles for a minute. "You can go home now," he shouted to Johnny, and settled down in his seat with the air of a man who has done his duty and has nothing more on his mind.

Mystified, Johnny spiraled upward until he had his altitude, and started back for the United States. Clouds favored him when he crossed the boundary, hiding him altogether from the earth. Indeed, they caused him to lose himself for a minute, so that when he dropped down below the strata of vapor he was already nearly over the double-pointed hill that was his landmark. But Cliff did not notice, and a little judicious maneuvering brought him into the little valley and headed straight for the oak, easily identified because Mateo was standing directly in front of it waving a large white cloth.

They landed smoothly and stopped exactly where Johnny had planned to stop. He climbed out. Cliff following more awkwardly, and the three of them wheeled the Thunder Bird under the oak where it was completely hidden.

It was not until he had come out again into the warm sunshine of mid-morning that Johnny observed how the kiddies were playing their part. They had a curious little homemade wheelbarrow rigged, and were trundling it solemnly up and down and over and around the single mark made by the tail drag. A boy of ten or twelve rode the barrow solidly and with dignity, while a thin-legged girl pushed the vehicle. Behind them trotted two smaller ones gravely bestriding stick horses. Casually, it resembled play. It would have been play had not Mateo gone

out where they were and inspected the result of stick-dragging and barrow-wheeling, and afterward, with a wave of his hand and a few swift Mexican words, directed them to play farther out, from the oak, where the Thunder Bird had first come to earth. Solemn-eyed they extended the route of their procession, and Johnny, watching them with a queer grin on his face, knew that when those children stopped "playing" there would be no mark of the Thunder Bird's landing left upon that soil.

"I've sure got to hand it to the kids," he told Cliff, who merely smiled and pulled out his cigarette case for a smoke.

CHAPTER XIX.

JOHNNY GROWS SUSPICIOUS.

Cliff smiled faintly one morning and handed Johnny a long manila envelope over their breakfast table in Mateo's cabin. "Your third week's salary," he idly explained. "Do you want it?"

"Well, I ain't refusing it," Johnny grinned back. "I guess maybe I'll stick for another week, anyway." He emptied his coffee cup and held it up for Mateo's woman to refill, trying to match Cliff Lowell's careless air of indifference to the presence of seventeen hundred dollars on that table. "That is, if you think I'm making good," he added boyishly, looking for praise.

"Your third week's salary answers that, doesn't it? From now on it may not be quite so easy to make good. Perhaps, since I want to go across this evening as late as you can make a safe landing over there, I ought to tell you that a border patrol saw us yesterday, coming back, and wondered a little at a government plane getting over the line. He did not report it, so far as I know. But he will make a report the next time he sees the same thing happen."

"I wish I didn't have that name painted clear across her belly," Johnny fretted. "But if I went and painted it out it would all be black, and that would be just as bad. And if I took off the letters with something, I'm afraid I'd eat off the sizing too, or weaken the fabric or something. I ought to recover the wings, but that takes time——"

Cliff gave him that tolerant smile which Johnny found so intolerable. "It is not at all necessary. I thought of all possible contingencies when I first saw the Thunder Bird. Across the line the name absolutely identifies

it, which is rather important. On this side it is known as a Bird fond of doing the unusual. Your reputation, old man, may help you out of a tight place yet. Now, we are duck hunters, remember. Hereafter we shall be hunting ducks with an air plane—something new, but not at all improbable, especially when it is the Thunder Bird doing the hunting. We must carry our shotguns along with us, and a few ducks as circumstantial evidence. If we stray across the line accidentally, that will be because you do not always look where you are flying.

"This, of course, in case we are actually caught. Though I do not see why that should happen. They have no anti-aircraft guns to bring us down. It may be a good idea to carry an auxiliary tank of gasoline in case of an emergency."

"I don't see why—not if I fill up over there every time I land. I can stay up three hours—longer, if I can glide a lot. Of course that high altitude takes more, in climbing up, and flying while you're up there, but the distance is short. I'll chance running outa gas. I don't want the extra weight, flying high as we have to. The motor's doing all she wants to do, just carrying us."

Cliff did not argue the point, but went out to his car, fussed with it for a few minutes and then drove off on one of the mysterious trips that took him away from Mateo's cabin and sometimes kept him away for two days at a time. Johnny did not know where Cliff went; to see the boss, perhaps, and turn in what news he had gleaned—if indeed he had succeeded in gleaming any. Sometimes the long waits were tiresome to a youth who loved action. But Johnny had been schooled to the monotony of a range line camp, and if he could have ridden over the country while he waited he would not have minded being left idle most of the time.

But he did not dare leave camp for more than half an hour or so at a time, because he never knew what minute Cliff might return and want him; and when one is being paid something like ten dollars an hour, waking or sleeping, for his time, one feels constrained to keep that precious time absolutely available to his employer. At least, Johnny felt constrained to do so. He could not even go duck hunting. Mateo hunted the ducks, using Johnny's gun or Cliff's, and seldom failing to bring back game. It would be ducks shot by Mateo which would furnish

the circumstantial evidence which Cliff mentioned that morning.

Johnny went out to the Thunder Bird, shooed three kids from under the wings and began to fuss with the motor. One advantage of being held idle most of the time was the easy life the Thunder Bird was leading. The motor was not being worn out on this job, at any rate.

So far he had not spent a hundred dollars of his salary on the upkeep of his machine. He was glad of that, because he already had enough to pay old Sudden and have the price of a car left over. With the Thunder Bird clear, and a couple of thousand dollars to the good—why, he would not change places with the owner of the Rolling R himself! He could go back any time now and vindicate himself to the whole outfit. He could pick Mary V. up and carry her off now, without feeling that he was taking any risk with her future. Poor little girl, she would be wondering what had become of him—he'd write, or send a wire, if Cliff would ever open his heart enough to take a fellow with him to where there was a post office or something.

He was beginning to feel a deep need of some word from Mary V., was Johnny. He was beginning to worry, to grow restive down here in the wilderness, seeing nothing, doing nothing save kill time between those short, surreptitious flights across to the notched ridge and back again. Two weeks of that was beginning to pall.

But money he was receiving did not pall. It held him in leash, silenced the doubts that troubled him now and then, kept him temporizing with that uneasy thing we call conscience.

He climbed now into the cockpit, testing the controls absent-mindedly while he pondered certain small incidents that caused him a certain vague discomfort whenever he thought of them. For one thing, why must a gatherer of news carry mysterious packages into Mexico and leave them there, sometimes throwing them overboard with a tiny parachute arrangement, as Cliff had done on the first trip, and flying back without stopping? Why must a newspaper man bring back certain mysterious packages, and straightway disappear with them in the car? That he should confer long and secretly with men of florid complexions and an accent which hardens its "g's" and sharpens its "s's," might very plausibly be a part of his gathering of legitimate news of international

import. Though Johnny rather doubted its legitimacy, he had no doubt whatever of its world-wide importance. Certain nations were at war—and he was no fool, once he stopped dreaming long enough to think logically.

Those packages bothered him more than the florid gentleman, however. At first he suspected smuggling, or something like that. But gun running, that staple form of border lawbreaking, did not fit into any part of Cliff's activities; though opium might. But when he had made an excuse for handling one or two of the packages, they routed the opium theory. They were flat and loosely solid, like packages of paper would be. Not state documents such as melodramas use to keep the villains sweating—they did not come in reams, so far as Johnny knew. He could think of no other papers that would need smuggling into or out of a country as free as ours where freedom of the press has become a watchword; yet the idea persisted stubbornly that those were packages of paper which he had managed to take in his hands.

As a pleasing relief from useless cogitation on the subject, Johnny took his bank roll from a pocket he had sewed inside his shirt. Like a miser he fingered the magic paper, counting and recounting, spending it over and over in anticipatory daydreams. Thirty-two hundred dollars he counted in bills of large denomination—impressively clean, crisp bills, some of them—and mentally placed that amount to one side. That would pay old Sudden, interest and all. What was left he could do with as he pleased. He counted it again. There was four hundred dollars left from what Bland had earned—Bland—What had become of Bland, anyway? Little runt might be broke again; in fact, it was practically certain that he would be broke again, though he must have had close to a hundred dollars when they landed in Los Angeles. Oh, well—forget Bland!

So there was the four hundred—gee, golly, but it had cost, that short stay in the burg of Bland's dreams. A hundred dollars gone like the puff of a cigarette! Well, there was the four hundred left—he'd have been broke, pronto, if he had stayed there much longer. Another hundred he had spent on the Thunder Bird—propellers do cost a lot! And that shotgun he never had had a chance to shoot—Cliff sure was a queer guy, making

him buy all that scenery, and then caching him away so no one ever got a chance to size him up and see whether he looked like a duck hunter or not. Well, anyway, let's see. There was a thousand in big juicy hundreds; and five hundred more in fifties and twenties—

Out beyond the oak's leafy screen the dogs were barking and growling and the children were calling shrilly. Johnny hastily put away his wealth and eased himself up so that he could peer out through the branches. He had not consciously feared the coming of strangers, yet now he felt his heart thumping noisily because of the clamor out in the yard. While he looked, two horsemen rode past and stopped at the cabin.

Now Johnny had been telling himself what a godsend some new face would be to him, yet he did not rush out to welcome the callers and ask the news of the outside world which Cliff was so chary of giving. He did not by any sound or movement declare his presence. He simply craned and listened.

One of the men he could not see because of a great, overhanging limb that barred his vision. The other happened to stop just opposite a very good peephole through the leaves. The kiddies were standing back shyly, patently interrupted in their pretended play of trundling the wheelbarrow and dragging the stick horses over the yard. Rosa, the thin-legged girl, stood shyly back with her finger in her mouth, in plain sight of Johnny though she could not see him in the deep shadow of the leaves.

It was the man that interested Johnny, however. He was a soldier, probably one of the border patrol. He sat his horse easily, erect in the saddle, straight-limbed and alert, with lean, hard jaw and a gray eye that kept glancing here, there, everywhere while the other talked. It was only a profile view that Johnny saw, but he did not need a look at the rest of his face with the other gray eye to be uncomfortably convinced that not much would escape him.

"It circled and seemed to come down somewhere on this side the Potreros and it has not been seen since. Ask the kids if they saw something that looked like a big bird flying." This from the unseen one, who had raised his voice as impatience seized him. These Mexicans were so slow-witted!

Johnny heard Mateo's voice, speaking at length. He saw Rosa take her finger from her mouth, catch up a corner of her ragged

apron and twist it in an agony of confusion, and then as if suddenly comprehending what it was these señores wished to know, she pointed jerkily toward the north. Perhaps the others also pointed to the north, for the lean-jawed soldier tilted his head backward and stared up that way, and Mateo spoke in very fair English.

"The kids, she's see. Me, I dunno. I'm busy I don' make attensions. I'm fine out when—"

"We know when," the efficient-looking soldier interrupted. "You keep watch. If you see it fly back, see just where it comes from and where it goes, and ride like hell down to camp and tell us. You will get more money than you can make here in a year. You sabe that?"

"*Yo se, señor*—me, I'm onderstan'."

"You know where our camp is?"

"*Si, señor capitán*. Me, I'm go lak hell."

"Well, there's nothing more to be got here. Let's get along." And as they moved off Johnny caught a fragmentary phrase: "from Riverside."

The children had taken up their industrious play again, and their mother had turned from the open doorway to hush the crying of Mateo's youngest in the cabin. Mateo called the children to him and patted them on the head, and the señora, their mother, brought candy and gave them. They ran off sucking the sweets, gabbling gleefully to one another. Cliff Lowell had been right, nothing is so disarming as a woman and children about a place where secrets are kept. There had been no suspicion of Mateo's cabin and the family that lived there in squalid content. The incident was closed.

But Johnny slumped down in the seat again and glowered through the little, curved wind shield at the crisply wavering leaves beyond the Thunder Bird's nose. He was not a fool, any more than he was a crook. He was young and too confiding, too apt to take things for granted and let the other fellow do the worrying so long as things were fairly pleasant for Johnny Jewel. But right now his eyes were open in more senses than one, and they were very wide open at that.

There was something very radically wrong with this job. The fiction of legitimate news gathering in Mexico could no longer give him any feeling save disgust for his own culpability. News gathering did not require armed guards—not in this country, at least.

—and such mysteries as Cliff Lowell dealt in. The money in his possession ceased to give him any little glow of pleasure. Instead, his face grew all at once hot with shame and humiliation. It was not honest money, although he had earned it honestly enough. If it had been honest money, why should those soldiers go riding through the valleys looking for him and his plane? It was not for the pleasure of saying howdy, if Johnny might judge from the hard-eyed glances of that one who had stopped in plain view.

It was not honest money that he had been taking. Why, even the kids out there knew it was not honest! Look at Rosa, playing shrewdly her part of dumb shyness in the presence of strangers—and she thinking all the while how best she could lie to them, the little imp! It was not the first time she had shown her shrewdness. Why, nearly every time Cliff wanted to make a trip across the line, those kids climbed the hill to where they could look all over the flat and the near-by hills, and if they saw any one they would yell down to Mateo. If the interloper happened to be close, they had orders to roll small rocks down for a warning, so Cliff one day told Johnny with that insufferably tolerant smile. Cliff brought them candy

and petted them, just for what use he could make of them as watchdogs. Would all that be necessary for a legitimate enterprise? Wouldn't the guards have orders to shut their eyes when an air plane flew high, bearing a man who gathered news vital to the government?

Once before Johnny had been made a fool of by horse thieves who plied their trade across the line. They had given him this very same air plane to keep him occupied and tempt him away from his duty while they stole Rolling R horses at their leisure. Wasn't this very money—thirty-two hundred dollars of it—going to pay for that bit of gullibility? Gulled into earning money to pay for an earlier piece of gross stupidity! "The prize—mark!" he branded himself. "By golly, they've got me helping 'em do worse than steal horses from the Rolling R, this time; putting something over on the government is their little stunt—and by golly I fell for the bait just I done the other time! *Huhn!*" Then he added a hopeful threat. "But they had me on the hip, that time—this time it's going to be different!"

For the rest of that day he brooded, waiting for Cliff. What he would do he himself did not know, but he was absolutely determined that he would do *something*.

TO BE CONCLUDED.



WOODROW WILSON: PLEASE NOTE!

IN Asheville, North Carolina, the visitor may find, in the course of a walk of three or four blocks, all kinds of men, those from the cities and those from the mountains, some educated and some ignorant, those who are handsome and those who would stop an eight-day clock at midnight. But one kind nobody has ever found: those who feel unable or unworthy to criticize anything and anybody.

On a sunny morning last September a group of mountaineers, more familiar with the voices of nature than with the wisdom in books, sat on the curbing near the principal drug store.

"I heered ole Bob Davis say," observed a gaunt, lanky fellow, "that the *President* kin write out a message to Congress in about one hour or so."

"You mean a whole message *intire?*" asked an older man.

"Yas, suh; the whole dingbusted dockymen!"

"That that is the trouble with these hyuh l'arned men," explained the patriarch. "Jest as soon as they gits reelly expeart with the pen an' ink, they takes a lot uv chances, hurryin' an' slidin' over their paper wuss than these hyuh crazy autermobeel drivers does, comin' down a mountain road."

A Delicatessen Delilah

By Holman Day

Author of "Sand Locked," "Handing Pidgin the Hot End," Etc.

The nice town that "Steer" Lyte adopted turns on him just as he felt he had saved it from the latest con game. Poor Lyte feels himself a goat of the noblest order, but there is little satisfaction in being misunderstood. But he has one fair lady's sympathy

NEITHER Mr. Peter Vonatell nor Mr. Langhorne Lyte displayed any great enthusiasm in regard to each other when the former walked into the latter's single-chair barber shop in Anson. Mr. Vonatell blinked with considerable discomfiture, and Mr. Lyte frowned.

There was a period of silence.

Lyte yanked the cloth off the chair. "You're next!" he said with a grim twist of his mouth.

But the patron stood irresolutely in the middle of the little shop.

"So you've turned back to the barber game, have you?"

"No, I'm here shoing hosses."

Mr. Vonatell exhibited resentment and looked at Lyte's six feet of robust body, up and down. "You're better fitted for that than you are to handle a razor. I'll bring a hoss around to you some day." He turned to go.

"Just a minute, 'Sniffer' Vonatell. You're right—I've turned back to barbering and I'm earning an honest living in this little town. I'm off the jasper fleecing forever. But I reckon you're still in the game. I've adopted this town, and I don't stand for it being stuck up by you or anybody else. I'm swatting every crook that buzzes into this burg." He snapped thumb and forefinger. "Zit!"

Vonatell brandished a little black case. "Look-a-here, 'Steer' Lyte. I'm off the games and earning an honest living, too. If you're carrying the front-door key of this town, you'll have to show *me*!"

"And before you can wipe your feet on the 'Welcome' mat, you've got to show *me*!" retorted the self-appointed guardian. "I can put you on the blink here, and you know it."

Evidently, Mr. Vonatell did realize how

much damage a busy tongue in a barber shop could do; he unstrapped his black case, muttering wrathful profanity. He took out a contrivance of glass and nickel. "I'm making a house-to-house canvas with that, taking orders." He put the thing back into the case. "Now keep your yawn quiet!"

"Just a minute, I say! That peekaboo business don't go. What's the big idea with your game, there, and how many can play it?"

"It ain't a game."

"Well, having known you as long as I did on the circuit, you'll have to excuse me for thinking a cussed sight different."

Again Mr. Vonatell yanked the queer-looking object out of the case. He advanced on Lyte and shook it under his nose. "That's the *E Pluribus Unum Kitchen Companion*. It mixes salads, grinds coffee, smooths batter and beats an egg so that the egg goes as far again!"

Mr. Lyte picked up an egg which he intended to use in his special egg-shampoo mixture. "Make that egg go some and maybe I'll believe a part of your story, son."

The demonstrator beat the egg with angry violence. "Now what else do I have to do? Sing a song, spring a gag, or go before the judge and take oath?"

"I don't see any dice or a roulette spinner," remarked Lyte calmly. "It may be that you're telling the truth for once. House to house, eh, Sniffer? Back to your old job, I see. What game are you advance man for this trip?"

This mild query evoked more fury from the other than seemed to belong with the question.

But Mr. Lyte had touched a tender spot which he knew exactly how to reach,

Sniffer Vonatell had won his nickname by going ahead of gold-brick sellers and confidence men and securing advance knowledge on which they could trade in small towns.

Mr. Lyte checked him. "That's enough, son! But I propose to use my wide and extensive knowledge of grafts for the benefit of this town. I have raced out a whole lot of 'em during my short stay here. Result is I stand mighty high." He pointed to a clipping from a newspaper; it was pasted in a corner of a mirror. "That's from the *Anson Advocate*. It says I'm genial and hopes I'll long remain here to do credit to the town. So, you see, I'm on record before the American public. You're a surer signal of trouble than a sun-dog is. I don't reckon I'll take chances on you. If I let you stay here and you manage to put something across, I couldn't explain to the citizens," he said in a patronizing tone. "I have my standing to take care of. For instance, I have been elected as honorary member of the fire department, already. For chief, they've got an old has-been who can't even wash windows with a lawn hose. The boys are hinting that honors are likely to come my way. So I think you'd better run along to somewhere else with that pleurisy onion of yours."

"Aw, you can't gallop me, Steer Lyte."

"That's just what another blow-hard thought—and I run him out of town two days ago."

The next moment it looked as if Barber Lyte was having a rush of business all of a sudden. Three men walked in. They were President Ruggles of the board of trade, Selectman Springall and Chief of Police Trask.

"We'd like to see you alone, sir," stated Mr. Ruggles. In his pride at being able to show off some distinguished callers to Vonatell, Mr. Lyte failed to note that there was something ominous in Ruggles' tone and manner.

"He don't count, president," he stated, with a disparaging thumb jerk at Vonatell. "Shoot!"

"What makes you think that this town needs a guardian?"

"And what makes you think that you have a right to appoint yourself as guardian?" supplemented the chief, wagging his beard and looking hostile.

Selectman Springall waved a sheet of pa-

per. "I have just received this letter from Mr. Wormell, sir. We were much astonished by his sudden departure, right at the height of the boom he was organizing for the benefit of this town. He writes that you drove him away by threats. What have you to say about it?"

Mr. Lyte, yanking his head around to face each attack, looked dizzy.

Mr. Ruggles shook his finger at Guardian Lyte. "You have hurt this town more than words can express, sir."

"I raced him because he's a crook."

"What proof have you?"

"Look here, gents, I ain't hanging no lillies of the valley onto myself. I have owned up to all comers that I have been in the game most of my life. And that's how I have an instinct for crooks. That Wormell is one. I didn't wait for him to put it over. That's why I'm valuable in this place."

"To put what over, that's what we want to know?"

"Well, I'll be honest about that, just as I've been honest about myself. I don't know exactly what he was up to, but judging from the pains he was taking, it was going to be something big."

"And so, on your mere blundering, thick-headed suspicion," demanded the selectman, "you have driven away, have you, a man who was promising to do so much for Anson?"

"That was all he was doing—promising! And he has showed himself up by skipping when I let him have the gaff. How about that?"

"The gentleman left in disgust. He says that if we condone your actions he will give his services in booming some other town where he will not be subjected to abuse and brutal assault," declared Springall, referring to the letter. "And now do you brazenly confess that you have no actual proof against him?"

Chief of Police Trask shook his gold-laced cap under Lyte's nose. "Ever since you have been in the village you have been trying to tell me my business. Don't you think I can detect crooks?"

Mr. Lyte was not a patient man. "You couldn't detect a hornet on the end of your nose," he blazed. "You was letting seventeen brace games operate here on carnival day, till I pointed 'em out. And I—"

"We are not here to debate this matter,"

interrupted the selectman. "It is possible, if we can inform Mr. Wormell that we have eradicated an element that interfered with his plans, he will return."

"Meaning, in regular language, for me to beat it?"

"We have the good of our town more at heart than you, a mere stranger, and you can draw your own conclusions," said President Ruggles.

Langhorne Lyte towered there in his little shop and pondered for a few moments. He looked from face to face and, lastly, surveyed the malicious grin on the countenance of Mr. Vonatell. The big chap who was versed so thoroughly in all phases of the game of graft, knew in his soul that the man whom he had shooed out of town was a crook, though there was lacking the actual proof that these village innocents demanded; Lyte had been priding himself on the fact that he had been able to anticipate Wormell's projects. This Parthian arrow of a letter—he scowled on it.

"You think, do you, that he won't come back if I stay here?"

"The letter distinctly says so," declared Springall sternly.

"Then I'm going to stay. I can do that little for the town."

This impudence left the delegation without voice for a few moments. They exchanged glances with each other and then focused a venomous stare on the big chap.

"You poor fishes," said the unabashed Mr. Lyte, "while the hard-working folks in small towns are piling up money, there are lots of men working just as hard with their wits to think up schemes to get that money. I know a hokum school with professors and a president where they teach courses in everything from penny pitching to the farm swindle. And, believe me, the fellers that's doing the heavy thinking in that school ain't no slobs. So it's no wonder that you were falling for Wormell. I don't expect to get no medal on me for staying here—but I'm going to stay!"

"If you go to meddling in anything else to the hurt of this town," shouted the selectman, "we'll see that you're taken care of."

"All right," agreed Mr. Lyte. "That's only a fair return for my taking care of the town."

"Have you the cheek to say that you're going to keep on?"

"Say, after this, if I saw a stick-up man getting ready to hold a candle to the soles of your feet to make you dig, I'd lend him a match. So don't go to fretting up your cotton undershirts, gents. But as for that Wormell, I made it a personal matter, and I'm seeing that thing through and I shall stick on here. So, having settled that matter, all genteel and pleasant, allow me to ask which of you is next?"

He went and stood by the side of his chair.

The delegation marched out. The chief closed the retreat and banged the door.

The smiling Mr. Vonatell set down his little case, hung up his hat and leisurely began to remove necktie and collar.

"Pleasant little town to live in, after all," he twittered dulcetly. "I can see now why you have settled here. They're so easy you want a monopoly."

Mr. Lyte did not reply. He looked from the newspaper clipping in one corner of the mirror to a belt draped over the other corner; the belt was inscribed: "Heavy-weight Championship, Maverick County." His gaze dwelt longest and most gustfully on the belt.

Sniffer sat down in the chair and surveyed himself critically. "I reckon I'll have a trim, shave—twice over—facial massage and shampoo. Making it house to house as I do, meeting all the ladies, sociable and friendly, and relishing a talk on family matters"—he winked at Lyte—"I find that looks is half the battle. Now an up-to-date head-barber job, Lyte! I expect to do real well in this town."

"I hope you will," stated Lyte curtly, twitching the cloth around his customer's neck.

"This Wormell seems to have hit 'em pretty strong—they're all for him. Any tip for me in it?"

"You might unroll a tape measure and parade around such of the vacant lots as he didn't get to. And his highest talk block was only five stories! It don't take any more breath to say 'ten.'"

"But it doesn't take much of any breath to sell the *E Pluribus*. It sells itself. I'm glad I've reformed," cooed Mr. Vonatell.

Mr. Lyte proceeded to belie the jest about the talkative barber: he finished the job without speaking a word; when his customer paid and departed, Vonatell merely smiled.

It was getting near noon, the hour for

his boarding-house dinner, and Mr. Lyte locked up shop and went out to the street, his lop-eared dog Cyrus at his heels.

On the opposite side of Main Street was a store that had been vacant for some time. He noted that the door of this store was open and that a stately and buxom blond lady was framed in it. She put her hand edgewise to her forehead, peered, and then hailed him with an astonished delight that attracted attention from the passers.

"Suffering Cephas! Nan Halloran!" he said, when he was halfway across the street on his way to her.

Their meeting was so cordial that the Main Streeters took notice; as a matter of fact, the blond lady was of a sort who would draw considerable attention, all by herself. There was no self-consciousness in their greeting; they stuck out their hands and shook as pals. This was the widow of his old sparring partner, and she had had her share in the work on the circuit; she had been billed as "Princess Diana, Champion Lady Bag Puncher and Club Artiste."

"Nix on barking me on the street as Halloran," she warned. "Madame Juno, that's me, Steer!"

"When it comes to a billing name, you sure do pick a good one. But gee, girl, you can't kite 'em here in this dump with a bag-punching caper!"

"Again off! Delicatessen!"

"Worse!"

"Welcome to our city—bingo!"

"You might as well go over into that neck of woods, yonder, and set up an ice-cream parlor for rabbits."

"Steer, you don't know what a woman like me can do with a novelty in a place like this. Don't try to discourage me. I'll have every old gazabo in this village standing round and tasting liverwurst and meat loaf and cheese off'n the end of a knife—and I'll send 'em home with arms full of bundles."

"Maybe so, after you turn them lamps on 'em. I'll admit I'm a little sour on the burg to-day. The town has been my doughnut for some weeks, and was tasting good. But I've just bit onto a nail."

"What's your graft here?"

He pointed to the striped pole that projected from the second story of the brick block opposite.

"Oh, tonsorial artist!" There was a touch of surprise in her tone.

"Back to the old job—reformed!"

"Me for the quiet life, too. But why the jolt about the town?"

"Nan, when a feller adopts a town and settles down in it, it's up to him to grab in on what he thinks can be his specialty in the way of public spirit. So I done it. I've took it on me to shoo away the crooks."

"Pete Vonatell just walked past here, trailing lilac perfume. Go after him—you can't lose the scent."

"I put the lilac on him. Just finished shaving him," he confessed sourly.

"I thought you said—"

"I said it. But all of a sudden they seem to think that I'm taking their playthings away from 'em."

"They sure do love to be hooked, some of these Hezekiahs. Have they bought gold bricks here yet?"

"No, but they're saving up their money to do it."

"And you're interfering with the poor, dear folks' amusements! I'm ashamed of you, Steer. Why, what a dreary, dismal place this world is going to be pretty soon, without booze or bunko! Why don't you lay off and let this town be happy?"

A half dozen or so of the business men of Anson were visible at the doors or in their windows. They were surveying the big chap with evident disfavor.

"Look at them fellers' faces, Nan! If I'm any judge, I'm about as popular in this hamlet as a caterpillar on a schoolma'am's neck. I'm giving you a straight tip! Give me a slap on the jaw, while they're piping us, and I'll fade away. If it stands that we are friends, I can see where business, when you open up your delicatessen store, will be about as lively as a Christmas snowball auction in upper Greenland."

"Are you losing your mind, Steer?"

"I've lost my grip. It's a bunch of aunts, uncles and second cousins here, Nan. They are snarled up like angleworms in the frosty season. If you can get 'em coming to you, they'll be standing in line. But if you start 'em to going away, you'd better buy a concertina to console your lonesome hours with. Now take my advice and shoot out the haughty chin at me! Let 'em see that you hain't got any more use for me than an infant has for a plug of tobacker. I warn you! Alongside of me Jonah was a rabbit's-foot kid!"

"Steer Lyte, if ever by look, word or deed, I throw down the best friend poor Breck Halloran ever had, may I never have anything but sawdust to stuff my sausages with. When I looked across the street and saw you my heart came into my mouth. I thanked my God that I wasn't stuck in here without a friend. A place where there has never been a delicatessen store is a sure lonely dump!"

Mr. Lyte was animated by two emotions while she insisted. He was so recently from that depressing interview with the town magnates that he was convinced that he was a dead one in Anson at that moment. Secondly, Mr. Lyte was harboring a certain rather tenuous hope.

However, he put his spirit of sacrifice in the aid of Nan Halloran to the fore; otherwise, he never would have stripped bare that humble, secret hope. He could not bear to think of her losing any of her little store of money.

"Nan, it's going to be just as well for me if you act as if you don't know me over and above much! I'm going to come across to you, feeling that I can do so in the case of an old friend. You know I never had no education and I look up to them that have knowledge." A bit of a flush showed on his cheek. "Since I've been here I have fell in more or less with a nice girl. She teaches school."

"Oh, that's it, is it?" queried Madame Juno tartly.

"She ain't too young, and that's right, seeing that I'm over forty. It ain't all fixed by no means but I'm hoping——"

"I get yer--say no more!" she snapped. "Knowing me will queer you with your schoolma'am! My Gawd, it's a wonder Breck Halloran ain't trying to bust out of his grave!"

"But for you and me both—you understand——" he faltered.

She stepped toward him and doubled her fist. He had no further need to urge her to a pose of play acting to show hostility. She was in wrathful earnest.

"That's enough chatter! Not another word! On your way!" she cried.

Therefore, under the stares of the Main Street observers, the big fellow went on toward his dinner, though he didn't feel any particular appetite right then.

He felt less appetite at table; Mr. Vonatell had taken up his residence at the tav-

ern, too, and sat opposite Mr. Lyte. That derisive smile was ever ready.

Two weeks later, at each meal, Mr. Vonatell was still sitting opposite Mr. Lyte and was just as amiable as ever. Every day he came to the barber shop to be shaved. His custom helped. Mr. Lyte's other trade had fallen off. The members of the volunteer fire department stuck by pretty well, but they were what Selectman Springall categorized as "the rougher element" when he discussed Lyte in the safe circles of business heads. "This person is a naturally quarrelsome, meddling, impudent plug-ugly. He will be into some fresh scrape before long. All we need to do is to sit tight and let him work out his own destruction. Then we'll railroad him out of town and will have our self-respect again."

Barber Lyte was fairly well aware that this armed-truce attitude governed his stay in town. He put on a little more outward bravado in order to cover the humiliation he felt. Few persons in the world had ever found out how much actual honest sentiment there was in Lyte. He usually blustered in order to conceal it. He liked the little town. He had started in so heartily to reform himself and to get ahead in the estimation of men!

Every now and then, when he received some special snub, the feeling rose in him, bitter as gall, that he'd better give all up and go on his way.

And then that provocative smile of the lingering Mr. Vonatell would make him ugly enough to stick on and face the frowns.

Madame Juno's frown was a bit more emphatic than any of the others, whenever he chanced to see her face. In his heart, he excused her with a sigh. He was conscious that in wounding her feelings, as he had in his awkward effort at sacrifice, he had overcome the thing considerably. But he had acted on the spur of the moment, doing his best in his poor way. He hadn't the courage to go to her and entreat a better understanding. She had caught on in Anson, most indubitably, and business was humming in the delicatessen store and he felt that any resumption of friendliness would hurt her. There were always folks looking zestfully in at the windows, as much at her as at the dainties she displayed. Her prediction as to the "samplers" was fulfilled. They stood in front of the counter and took nips of this

and snips of that off the end of the knife blade.

In spite of his determination to "lay off" his self-appointed task, Lyte was wondering constantly just what graft was coming to town. He found himself unable to take stock in that *E Pluribus Unum* thing. He knew Mr. Vonatell too well. Steer studied all new faces in the village, trailed strangers unobtrusively, guessed as best he could at their motives. He was sure that the Sniffer was ahead of the "big show."

One day Steer spied "Chicken" Welch and "Pinch" Mahony in the village, and that night the safe in the express office was blown. The next day Guardian Lyte was full of remorse, but he thought upon Chief Trask and that gold-laced cap, and hardened his heart and kept still.

He did not hold Sniffer responsible for the visit of the cracksmen. Mr. Vonatell played a smoother and a craftier game, he knew. Furthermore, while having a shave, Mr. Vonatell bawled Mr. Lyte out with satiric unction. "I supposed you was tending to all such matters here, or else I'd have reported 'em, myself! You, being the official can-
tier, I was leaving you alone to operate. The town bosses seem to like your system."

Barber Lyte purposely nicked Mr. Vonatell and, while treating the wound with a stick of alum, suggested that worse might happen to a wagging jaw. After that there was no sound except the whisper of the razor.

"Sorry to tell you that I've got to go on to pastures new," stated the customer when he settled for the shave. "If the world wasn't hollering so loud for *E Pluribus Unum* I'd hang around here longer because I know you need at least one good customer." The smile was broader than usual. "Look here, Steer, it's pretty hard to beat any facts into your bean, and you're so crooked yourself that you can't believe that anybody else is straight. But I reckon you've found out by this time that I'm really *E pluribus*ing."

"I believe your story."

"Thanks!" Mr. Vonatell started for the door.

"It's a dago name for the same thing."

"Once I knew a bulldog that hung to a root till the tide came up and drowned him. Good day!"

Mr. Lyte pondered on that brief parable. He realized the quality of his native stub-

bornness. He also admitted the worldly wisdom of the man who had just walked out. It was not unlikely that Mr. Vonatell was right about the danger of hanging too long to a resolution.

"Cyrus," Mr. Lyte informed the lop-eared dog, "the feller who stated that hell is paved with good intentions sure did ring the cane. My good intentions seem to be making this town a branch of the main re-
sort, so far's I'm concerned. I'm going to jack the paving job and tend to barbering."

And then came a stranger who wore a frock coat and a white necktie and walked with a limp. Though he had grown dabs of whiskers in front of his ears, Steer Lyte recognized him. This, to be sure, must be the real show behind Sniffer Vonatell! The big fellow followed the person down the street, pulled him into an alley and declared recogni-
tion with profane vigor.

"And now beat it, vamoose, kick your-
self out of this place with both feet or I'll use one of mine. If I see you in town half an hour from now I'll have you run in!" He banged the flat of his hand on the stranger's back and the man fled.

In spite of his previous determination to let Anson get what was coming, the big fel-
low could not resist his impulse in such a dead-open-and-shut case as this. And the man's instant flight, without word of pro-
test, stirred pride of achievement.

"I'll throw a few little side tricks like this one," he told himself. "It'll be strictly private. There's one fellow this town will never see again!"

But Mr. Lyte did see him very promptly. He came into the barber shop convoyed by the Reverend Delano Tuttle of the Method-
ist church.

"You have wantonly and grossly insulted and terrified Presiding Elder Weever! He supposed you were insane. But I have brought him here to show you up for what you are, a rowdy who must be driven from this town."

Mr. Lyte turned from his work on the face of a customer whose identity was pro-
claimed by the gilt letters on the private mug, then down from the rack and in use,
as "P. J. Tubbs."

"Don't let that feller put anything over on you, parson," insisted the crook encyclo-
pedia. "I've known him from wayback! Why, that's 'Prince Albert Pratt,' the slick-
est confidence man who ever dropped down

into the bush from the Big Village. Pratt, didn't I tell you to beat it?"

"You renegade idiot, I was in college with this gentleman," shouted the local pastor.

Customer Tubbs was sitting upright, staring pop-eyed over the generous mass of lather.

Mr. Lyte was in no manner convinced. "And I knew him in college, too! We was in the same hinky-dink school where they teach everything from penny-pitching—"

"Back up!" warned Mr. Tubbs in a hoarse whisper. "That's our presiding elder. I go to that church."

"This confirmation from a regular customer was enough for Mr. Lyte's conviction. The breath seemed to be knocked out of him. He tried to speak and merely croaked wordlessly.

"Not a word, sir! No apology can suffice. I have brought this abused gentleman here so that you may gaze on him. Your case will be attended to. Tremble at the thought!"

The clergymen hurried out.

Mr. Lyte, wide-eyed, mouth open, rapped knuckles against the side of his head like one who wanted to test out something. "No, it don't sound all hollow, not quite." He looked at himself in the mirror. "I went through a insane hospital once—and I don't look like them critters. But, by Judas, when Prince Albert Pratt walks up to me on the street, and he ain't Pratt but is a presiding elder, then something has slipped loose in me."

"That's the Reverend Weever, all right." Tubbs leaned back and refrained from further speech, with the appearance of a man who had not the courage to tackle a topic as big as the one which had been presented. Nor did Mr. Lyte display any desire to do more talking.

He locked up his shop after Mr. Tubbs had departed.

He marched across to the delicatessen store. Prosperity had enabled Madame Juno to hire a young woman to help her. Therefore, when the big fellow asked her to give him a few minutes in her private office, she accompanied him, though she showed very little cordiality.

"Nan, don't give me the glassy eye—not now! Love of Mike, don't. I'm in an awful mess."

She softened instantly, touched by his

dolorous tone. "It's all right, Steer! I'm no hand to carry miffs!"

"I was trying to help you—but we'll talk all that over later. Nan, I know I have lost my grip—I ain't wise to the gang or the game any longer. But I don't want to feel that I'm getting blind and crazy. Did you see anybody on the street to-day who looked like Prince Albert Pratt?"

"I sure did—either him or a dead ringer!"

"But it ain't him. It's a presiding elder—and I yanked him by the arm and warned him out of town."

"I hoped you'd take my tip, and lay off! It's stuff that don't get you anything."

"You've made me feel easier about not being plumb daffy! That's one thing I came over here for—to get your opinion. Another thing is to say good-by."

But she did not take his hand. "You mean you're going to shake the town?"

"Sure! I've got to."

"I'm too good a friend of yours, old boy, to stand by idle and see you take the count when you're only against the ropes by a false shuffle. We all make mistakes. If you don't stay here now and see the thing through, the thoughts of it will hurt your courage, whatever place you settle in. That's right dope! I know what I'm talking about!"

Mr. Lyte did not know much about psychology, but he realized that she was putting some of his own thoughts on the matter into words.

Now she took his hand. "And about the girl, Steer? You can't run away like you plan."

"Since the big bugs here landed on me and called me them names I've been kind of ashamed to hang around her much. It was just the same, I felt, as it was in your case: she's a schoolma'am, before the public like you are, and I was afraid I'd be hurting her. I'll just duck—that's all!"

She threw back her sturdy shoulders. She folded her muscular arms. "Steer Lyte, you say you have lost your grip. But if you have turned into a quitter, then you can't face Breck Halloran over yonder nor look his wife in the eye here. If you had done anything crooked in this town 'twould be different. But you have only tried to help, according to your lights. You're a well-meaning old slob, and the folks have got to find it out and I'll help 'em to find it out. Give me the honest grip, old pal! I'm with

you. You're going to stay here, and I'll talk to that girl about you, if it comes to that. Now, what?" It was challenge. New determination came into his face. "You ain't going to let a bunch of hicks, that you've tried to help, go ahead now and sluice you to a fare-ye-well, are you?"

"No!"

"Stay with 'em, both fists up, strictly on the defensive till you can land a good wallop. Do you promise?"

"Yes!"

"They'll wake up, give 'em time!" she declared as he walked out.

He crossed the street, the key of his shop in his hand.

On the street floor of the brick block, beside the doorway leading to the upper floor, was the establishment of "T. Snell, Stoves and Tinware."

T. Snell stood on the store steps and a considerable gathering of citizens surrounded him.

Mr. Lyte, circling the group, was hailed by T. Snell. "Got a minute to spare?"

"I'm always ready to listen to business!"

Mr. Snell was not assuming full responsibility. "The meeting is now open," he said.

After a few moments, in the midst of the group, there was a throat-clearing rasp like the sound of tearing cloth. "Them of us who have always lived in Anson take an interest in our home town and its progress and prosperity such as them who simply flit in and flit out can't be expected to take. The flitters think of themselves first and of the public good second. As the thing stands now, the public good of this town is in a ticklish position unless steps are taken to show that we don't condone certain actions."

There was bodeful silence; a few dared to stare at Lyte; the others kept their backs toward him.

"Them as condone will say 'aye,'" suggested T. Snell. Silence. "Them as don't condone 'No.'" Apparently all voices joined in chorus.

The big fellow walked backward a few steps and stood in the street. "I seem to be considerably in the minority, gents. In fact I don't seem to belong to your meeting at all. But listen to me! If you think I'm going to stand here and organize myself into a convention and vote to hand myself a good-by note, then you'd best to give your heads another wag and let your brains swash up

against the rafters; your brains may be clearer when they settle again."

"Do you refuse to leave for the good of the town?" demanded a voice.

Nan Halloran had said, "Stay!" He had given her his word. That made Steer's obligation binding, so far as his notions of duty went. He straightened. "I ain't on rollers, gents, and it will be dangerous business trying to put skids under me." He started for the doorway.

"This town has a duty to perform!" shouted Mr. Snell in a passion.

"Go to it!"

Unopposed—his eyes hard and his fists doubled—he ascended to his shop.

"If I was in any ways inclined to be oversensitive in this thing," he informed Cyrus, the dog, "I might think that they're kind of hinting round, easylike, that they'd be glad to have me leave town. But you can't take much stock in anything you hear these days."

Before he locked up shop at ten o'clock that evening he heard considerable!

There were plenty of visitors, but not one of them came to sit in his chair. They were delegations. President Ruggles of the Board of Trade, flanked by two members, dwelt on the financial loss involved in Wormell's case. Selectman Springall spoke as civic head. Three women and two men from the Anson Reform Club ordered him to leave, charging that he was an undesirable citizen. The Reverend Mr. Delano Tuttle was ineffective, representing the Minister's Union, because he tipped back his head, wrinkled his nose and was both peremptory and caustic and would not consider humble apology which Lyte proffered.

Then the waves of the delegations ceased beating up against this cliff of dogged defiance.

After a few days Mr. Lyte would have welcomed more delegations to relieve his loneliness. Dust gathered on the gilt-lettered mugs of the "regulars." Even the fire-department men were showing signs of being influenced by the boycott. And T. Snell stood on his store steps and warned drummers and other transients that any dealings with the scoundrel on the upper floor would be regarded as a slap at the business men of Anson. Just what there was to look ahead to was not plain to the despairing fellow who honed razors and waited for trade. But that good sport, Nan Halloran, was watching him

in this test of endurance, and there was still that secret hope, now very vague; the hope must vanish entirely if he slunk away. He hung on grimly.

The Honorable Alanson P. Tarbox had been in town all of a week before Steer Lyte paid any attention to him or heard much about him. The deserted barber shop was no longer a news forum.

The first information Lyte received regarding the Honorable Tarbox was given in by Hose-foreman Pike Doughty; being a general pessimist who disagreed with nigh everybody in the town of Anson, he had continued to stick by the barber; it was simply another manifestation of Mr. Doughty's perverse desire to aggravate his fellow townsmen.

"Gor-ram it, do you mean to tell me that you haven't heard about Alanson P. Tarbox coming back here and what he lots on doing?" demanded Doughty, pricked to resentment by Mr. Lyte's continued indifference in regard to the topic.

"I don't know whether I have heard or not," stated Barber Lyte, slapping on more lather. "And, furthermore, whatever he is or whatever he ain't, I don't give a hoot!"

That attitude provoked the hose foreman's perversity. "Look here, when I take the trouble to tell a man about anything I expect to be listened to. He's that gent that's on the street the whole time, with a plug hat and goat whiskers and long hair."

"I take about as much interest in strangers these days as a clam does in a toothpick," stated Mr. Lyte wearily. "Let 'em come and let 'em go—I've had my lesson."

"If you was a native of this town you'd take an interest in Alanson P. Tarbox all right. Don't you know what he says he has come back here to do?"

Barber Lyte turned away to strop his razor and yawned. But he stimulated rather than discouraged the volunteer news bureau.

"He's going to buy the old run-down Tarbox home place and build a mansion. Says he don't care how much money he spends on it."

"Neither do I."

"I tell you again you'd care if your folks was natives of this town. He run away from home when he was a little shaver. Now he has come back, and he is going to pay up to creditors all what his father owed round town when he died. He says it's his sacred mission. How about that?"

"What bughouse let him out before he got cured?"

"Say, do you believe anything that anybody tells you?"

"Yes!"

"What?"

"I believe now what them delegations told me about how popular I am in this town. But I wouldn't take their word for it if my business wasn't backing up what they said."

The shave was finished and Doughty bounced out of the chair without waiting for the talcum. There was malice in his expression. "Perhaps you'll stop garping and show a little interest when I tell you of the stand that Alanson P. Tarbox has taken in regard to you."

"Do you relish poetry?" inquired Mr. Lyte with bland irrelevancy.

"No!"

"Then I'll give you a verse that fits with what you said about his opinion of me: 'Dan'el was in the lion's den—the lion no bigger'n a spaniel. Dan'el wasn't afraid of the lion, and the lion didn't give a cuss for Dan'el.'"

"Do you want to know what Alanson P. Tarbox says about you?"

"No!"

"Then I'll tell you! He says that seeing how he has come here and is going to show so much public spirit, he feels that it is a part of his duty to drive away a man who has become an eyesore to all the better elements. He says he knows how he can take the burden of the thing off the shoulders of the citizens, because somewhere out West in the old days he was chairman of a Vigilance committee. Yes, that's where he comes from—out West. He says a peaceful town like Anson needs an experienced Vigilancer like him to take the burden of the thing."

Mr. Lyte looked out of the window.

He saw the Honorable Alanson P. Tarbox taking it easy in Madame Juno's delicatessen store.

"Yes, there he is," remarked Doughty. "He has been shining up to the madame quite a lot lately. When he builds that mansion for her and him she has certainly got the looks to set it off!"

Sudden, irrepressible rancor that he could not exactly explain to himself flamed up in Lyte. He had been accepting rebuffs from the citizens of Anson in a more or less resigned mood for he was conscious that he

had innocently offended in one matter, at least. But to have this unknown, whom he had never injured, volunteer to organize a Vigilance committee—probably stir to violence persons who had been contented with a simple boycott—this was something which touched off the tinder in him.

"By the jumped-up judissimus, I've been ready to take on all comers who *belong* in, but when they try to *horn* in I propose to have a few facts, thereto and pertaining." When he rushed out of the shop, both the lop-eared mutt and the hose foreman trailed him with appearance of great interest.

The Honorable Alanson P. Tarbox was interrupted in a chatty discussion with Madame Juno on the subject of cheeses.

The interrupter was in no mood for a preface. "Speaking of cheeses, you're a piece of one, if you're making cheap talk about how you'll run me out of this town!"

"I'll have no arguments with you, sir," stated Tarbox stiffly, fixing his eyeglasses more firmly on his nose. "I have heard all about you."

"Here's a man who says you're round making your threats about me," shouted Lyte, wagging a forefinger in the direction of the attentive Doughty.

"Look-a-here, Honorable Alanson P. Tarbox," put in Doughty, his pessimist's soul finding something to relish in all kinds of trouble, "I have heard you making your talk, and I stand to it that you have made it. A man that makes talk has got to back it up!"

"You come along out of here—out of the presence of a lady. I've got something to say to you," stated Mr. Lyte with determination.

Madame Juno caught his eyes and shook her head warningly, but he was beyond reach of her rebuke at that moment.

"I ain't going to hurt you, Tarbox, if that's your name. But if you have been bragging, like Doughty says you have been, then the line of talk I'm going to hand you would spoil the flavor of a good deal of the cooked food in this store. I tell you to come along over to my shop."

Mr. Tarbox grew pale. He turned his back and walked toward the madame's private office, evidently seeking a place of refuge.

"Don't get in any more Dutch than you already are in this town," the madame advised in cautious whisper.

"I'd rather have anybody punch me in the face, man-fashion, than turn his back on me like I wasn't fit to talk to. Say, Tarbox, where's your manners?"

"Away with you!"

"I tell you to come along."

"I'll have you arrested, you ruffian!"

"This is a good time to test out whether you and your committee are able-bodied enough to do it!" flared the big fellow. His much-tried temper got away from him. He rushed at Tarbox and grabbed one of the gentleman's ears. "March!" he ordered. "This will tell your committee the story and we'll see what they'll do about it!"

The tableau needed no words when the two stood in the street. Barber Lyte, thus manhandling the benefactor who was promising so much, was defying the town of Anson!

And then, all of a sudden, his wrath went out of him. He had looked full into the eyes of a young woman who was convoying her little brood of scholars along the sidewalk. She stopped for a moment and then hurried on. But those eyes, amazed, reproachful, horrified, had done what a mob with clubs and guns could not do.

Mr. Lyte yanked his nipping grasp from the captive's ear. "Honor'ble Tarbox, I ask for to be excused for tackling you. I went blind all of a sudden, like I do too often. Yes, that's it, gents!" he cried, addressing the crowd that was gathering. "I'm coming across to you, fair and open. I mean all right, but I don't fit nowhere. I'll go down South and live with alligators and baboons where I belong. Say no more! I don't need threats! I know what I am myself! Right now I'm throwing myself down harder than you can do it. I'll go away and then the town can prosper!"

"Good riddance to bad rubbish," squealed T. Snell from a safe distance.

The Honorable Alanson P. Tarbox was bulwarked by his sycophants. Over their shoulders he said: "The only reason why I do not throw you out of this town bodily right now is because I have too much regard for its honorable reputation to start a public disturbance. But I advise you to get out of Anson mighty sudden and stay out. Otherwise, I shall act!"

The big chap started away, flourishing his open hand over his head. "No more words needed," he said humbly. "There's a barber shop for sale!"

One caught step with him, an elderly man who had the pinched nose and the lip-licking tongue of the money-file. "That's good advice the Honorable Tarbox gave you just now, mister. He's got us all with him because he deserves to have us with him. When he waves his hand Anson will act."

"Oh, you're a creditor, be you? How did he ever get any money out of you—give you ether?" asked Lyte sourly.

"He never got any money out of me."

"I know a blamésite better, else you wouldn't be risking wear and tear on them two gold front teeth by praising him."

"I'll say this about the Honorable Tarbox," squealed the gentleman whose local sobriquet was "Ten-per-cent Tom," "he has come to me like he has come to dozens of others in this town who didn't remember that he or his father owed us a cent. That's the kind of a hero he is! Had to explain to us how he owed us. With me, it was apples he took from my orchard when he was a little shaver. Reckoned at compound interest for forty-one years! Comes to something, I tell ye!" The thin tongue curled gustfully over the lower lip. "'No matter how much you've got,' says he to us. 'This is a matter of honor and conscience. It's a debt. I shall pay.' Lyte, that's the man you let your cussed temper loose on!"

The big fellow marched along.

The President of the Board of Trade put up a hand. "You may find something in the post office interesting, sir."

Mr. Lyte had never found anything in the post office interesting, for he wrote no letters and never received any; now curiosity turned his steps there. Men who were standing close to a square of paper tacked on a bulletin board muttered, stepped aside and appeared to be sourly inviting him to "read that and see what you think about yourself!"

He walked up and gave the matter close attention. Above the square of paper was another slip:

"To my old townsmen from Alanson P. Tarbox. Below is what you will be asked to sign on settling day. I shall have the papers bound in an album, with gold clasps, and shall exhibit same in all large centers in order to stimulate mankind to be honest."

The paper below had printing in flowing script:

I, by my signature hereunto attached, do testify, with heart full of thankfulness because

of the honesty of a man who has tried to do right and pay just dues to all men, that I have this day received from friend and fellow townsmen, Alanson P. Tarbox, the full amount in which his family stood indebted to me. Thus he has set an example for all men to follow. World please take note. His old town loves him.

"Barber," called one of the bystanders when Lyte had almost reached the door of his retreat, "what do you say on that text?"

"Gather round with your little tin dippers! The keg is about to be tapped!"

That evening Lyte remained in his shop till nearly midnight, though he had no customers and did not expect any. He sat and pored over the funny papers he had bought for his patrons, but he found no humor in anything. The streets were in half light when he started for the tavern. From the dark recess of T. Snell's store front a voice hailed him.

"It's me—Nan!" He went back. "I've been watching your light."

"I'm sorry you're taking chances, sis. It's bump for you if you're seen with me!"

"Steer, you have balled this thing up proper. But I won't be able to sleep nights if I find that they have put something over on a pal. We ain't to the bottom of this thing as yet, I tell you!"

"But I'm at the end—me for the road."

"Let that go for a stall! It's best to have 'em think so! The way the old sponges feel now while they're waiting to soak up that cash, you would get a ride out of town on a rail if Old Ready Money should stick up his finger. Steer, let me tell you, that old deak ain't right!"

"I feel the same way."

"Coming here and hunting up chances to pay old debts. Nobody does that, anybody that's honest!"

"Of course they don't do it," agreed her fellow skeptic.

"Never was done as a straight proposition!"

"Never! Not by anybody."

"That makes it a shine of some sort."

"Sure!"

"We're wise to it because we're on the outside and ain't looking at him through specs made of silver dollars!"

"Nan, the minute I heard what he had come back here to do, I says to myself that Sniffer's party had got along."

"Well, what's the big game?"

"I thought I knewed 'em all. This has .

got me buffaloed. I've lost my grip, anyway. I ain't ever going to brag again. And let the ducks have their feathers pulled—I don't care!"

"Steer, we hadn't ought to let it be done! Heap coals of fire—that's the motto for folks who are trying to show the world that they're off the games. We're wise to him! He's a crook!"

"Again I'm right with you!"

"Do you know what he's trying on? It's a scream! He's trying to make up to me!"

"Why don't you land one on him—one would be enough!"

"I've been testing him out—told him I'm married, and then he asked me to elope with him. So, you see, he ain't straight."

"I'd better go beat him up on general principles. It can't make things much of any worse for me."

"What? Would you spoil my millionaire prospect?" she chuckled.

"Oh, I suppose you may as well set out your tub along with the others. It looks like a shower!"

"Steer, it's because of you and to help you—and that little prospect of yours—that I'm gritting my teeth and allowing him to talk to me. If you can only get the goods on him you'll be squared in this burg. You've got to land him, pal—you've just got to!"

Their conversation had been absorbing and they hadn't noticed the stealthy approach of several persons. Somebody suddenly snapped the button of a flash light.

"You see, gents!" His nasal rasp revealed T. Snell. "Making my store door a hangout for their flirting. The men of this town have known how to deal with a certain barber shop! We'll see that the women of Anson handle a sausage store the same way!"

Lyte drove at them, head lowered like a charging bull; but they scattered and escaped in the darkness.

He bawled curses after them and strode back to Madame Juno.

"It's a starry night for a ramble," she said caustically; "where do we go from here?"

"You haven't got a chance—not after this," he lamented. "A boycott in this bunch of first aunts and second cousins means bump, as I told you!"

"Say, pal, it takes a long time to get together seven hundred dollars, punching a

bag!" she said in tones as doleful as his. "And you are right about the females in a place like this."

"Wants you to run away with him, eh? Opened up to you any?"

"Plenty of mush—that's all. Says I'm out of my element here!"

"No line on the game?"

"No."

"Any hint of a special clean-up soon?"

"Says I won't ever need to hurt my eyesight hunting for cheap items on a bill of fare. Of course that ain't showing me his bank book, but he talked as if he could deliver goods."

"Nan, me and you are now against the field in this thing."

"Sure thing!"

"I'm no hand to give a lady the hot end of any proposition, but you're the one to put something over in this case. We agree that he's a crook. Nobody is honest like that!"

"They don't do it like he says he's going to do it—not any more since the twelve apostles cashed in."

"You know something about the Bible, do you?"

"Not an awful lot, but some."

"There was an easy mark with a lot of hair—something in that line—and a dame got to him—"

"Delilah. She trimmed Samson two ways—hair and his rep."

"Well, you've got plenty of hair to work on in this case. What do you say?"

"Steer, I've a notion that business will be dull with me to-morrow. He'll find my store a lonely place to loaf in!"

"What's this 'settling day' your friend speaks of in his advance billing?" he asked sardonically.

"They are going to lend him the town hall and furnish the Anson Silver Cornet Band, and he's going to hand 'em their dough to a jig tune so that the thing can be paraded in the papers to give the town a boost."

"And I thought I knewed 'em all—every game!" he mourned. "They must have added a few new perfessers in that hinky-dink college!"

"It's plain that he wants to run you off the reservation, first, and if he thinks that you have left town he won't be looking over his shoulder quite so sharp. So why don't you tack an 'Out of Town' sign on your

door and lie low up there? And I'll hurry him so that he and I can elope that much quicker," she rattled on. "Whatever the stunt is, I'll make him pull it right away."

"It's the only chance we've got, Nan. Otherwise, it's both of us for the pike! You're right. I'll stay under and tread water till you get a line on him."

"Wait here, pal, a few moments! I'll run over to the store and bring you plenty to eat. I'll be glad to reduce stock. I see dull times just ahead in the delicatessen trade!"

"I feel like a coward, Nan," he said, when she came to him with her bundles. "I've always been an open fighter, you know that!"

"Leave it to Delilah this time, son, leave it to me!"

"I'm hoping and praying that there will be open fighting at the wind-up. If there isn't I'm going to feel like a punk performer."

"This thing needs the delicate touch, pal."

"But save me a place for the punch!"

"I'm going to rush him for all I'm worth. Watch my window show. I'll think of a way to post you as to the big day."

It was plain to him the next day that Nan Halloran had not lost any of her ability to operate rapidly. In the show window she placed a card which advertised that to-morrow a Swiss cheese would be cut. The "to-morrow" was in big letters and fully informed Mr. Lyte. With Cyrus for company he waited as patiently as he could. He heard some of the voices of the street. There was plenty of delighted gossip regarding the prospects.

The interned barber found Main Street decidedly lively the following afternoon. The broad stairs which led up into the town hall were visible from his window, and he sat and watched the populace go thronging up. The Honorable Alanson P. Tarbox marched down the street, with his retinue of town magnates, behind the local brass band, and stamped in triumph up the stairs.

Mr. Lyte cursed aloud and Cyrus growled.

"I know it, and you're saying a whole mouthful, pup! Something is going to be pulled on the poor fishes. You and me understand it, because we're on the outside, looking in. Where you and me have gone wrong is by waiting for a dame to do man's work!" Steer's fumbling hand sought comfort, and he stroked the dog's bristling

mane. "We've both got good eyesight, mutt; we see where we get off!"

Madame Juno, venturing into the brick block, was admitted after she had whispered through the keyhole. There was little hope in the eyes which Lyte rolled at her nor did her demeanor suggest encouragement.

"Steer, I told him that I'd run away with him."

"Everybody's doing it," said Mr. Lyte despondently.

"I told him I would, so as to coax him to give down. He don't give down."

His temper blazed. "I hadn't no business leaving it that way! You do punk work on Samsons."

"But he's putting over a clean-up. I sense it!"

"Now tell me that my name is Lyte and that's the town hall over there, and I'll call it a clairvoyant reading and pay you two dollars."

"I've done the best I could," protested the lady indignantly. "My Breck in heaven forgive me! I even let him kiss me—that old hair mattress—that's what I done!"

"And it didn't get you nothing, eh?"

"I picked his pocket—the only one I could get at handy. But this is only some more of the bunk that he has been plastering up on bill boards!" She jammed a wad of folded papers into Lyte's hand. Steer wet his thumb and leaved them without much interest. Some of them were copies of the notice he had read in the post office. Others, printed in script on the same size of sheet

—
The big fellow leaped to his feet. "Where's a man who knows what a law paper is when it's stuck under his nose?" he shouted.

He slammed his shop door back against the wall with a force that shivered the glass in the panels. He ran down the stairs. Coatless, hatless, Cyrus scurrying at heel, he rushed across Main Street and galloped up the broad stairs which led to the town hall, taking two stairs at a leap. He elbowed frantically through the persons who were crowded at the door. He yanked a man off a settee at the rear of the hall and stood in the evicted one's place and shot an eager gaze over the expanse of assembled heads. There was Lawyer Trufant!

Thrusting with broad shoulders, trampling with relentless feet, careless of the sensation he was making, he forced his way up

the aisle and held before the lawyer's startled eyes the bunch of papers.

"That onc," he gasped: "What's the law of it?"

Squire Trufant put on his spectacles and perused; Lyte leaned over and kept the eyes of others from the paper.

"Where did you get this?" There was baleful tenseness in the lawyer's whispered query.

"His pocket was picked for it—him!" Lyte's wavering finger indicated Tarbox, who was seated at a table on the stage.

The squire half rose. "If this is what they're signing—if the papers on that table—I wonder—"

"If you want them papers, squire—well, you keep your setting!"

There was a considerable of a haze in front of Mr. Lyte's eyes when he rushed up the aisle. Across the stage stretched a queue of the citizens of Anson; some of them were descending the stairs with checks in their hands; one citizen was seated at the table, pen poised ready to sign a document.

Lyte did not bother with the stairs—he climbed onto the stage and scrabbled up papers from the table, having devoted one second to an open-handed cuff which sent the Honorable Alanson P. Tarbox staggering back against a drop on which was portrayed a marine view; the painted ocean cast him up and he fell on his hands and knees. The big chap jumped to the floor and ran down the aisle. He showered a snowstorm of sheets of paper on the lawyer.

When Trufant stood on the settee and shook handfuls of paper above his head, both respect for him and curiosity to learn what it was all about had effect after a few moments of tumult.

"Listen to me, fellow townsmen! Those of you who have signed, as I find by hasty examination, have not signed that testimonial, copies of which I have seen posted. You have signed thirty-day notes for stock in a gold mine, named here as 'The Consolidated Meteor.' From where I stand I can see that you who have signed are holding stock certificates. I do not know what the value of that stock is—but that's what you have bought."

"The stock is our bonus—a present to us," declared a citizen.

"Notes such as these, if discounted by innocent parties, can be collected to the last penny."

There was a pregnant hush!

"Some one of you who has a check—tell me on what bank it is drawn," cried the lawyer.

"Tohatchi, New Mexico," quavered a voice.

"That sounds as if it might be a long way for checks to travel from here?" remarked the lawyer dryly.

"It's 'way off up in the hills of the Navaho country," thundered Mr. Lyte. "Listen for once to a man who can tell you something! It's a week's ride from the nearest railroad station on a cayuse. There's a whole lot I could say, but I ain't going to say it."

"But I have just a word to say," stated one of two sturdy men who had walked upon the platform. The other marched to Tarbox. The speaker faced the assemblage and flipped his coat to show a badge. "We have been trailing this crook. We have been on the side-lines here for two days waiting for him to put this over, in order to get the goods on him. The thing has been sprung by our friend, just now, a little sooner than we planned on."

"I'm sorry I butted in, detective," apologized Mr. Lyte.

"You needn't be sorry. I'm much obliged to you. I'm glad to find one man in this town who isn't dead asleep! The town ought to be proud of you and be thankful because it has a citizen who can spot a crook." He pointed to the prisoner. "His name isn't Tarbox. What's made any of you folks think that he was a native of this town?"

"He said so," squeaked T. Snell.

"Yes, on the strength of what his digger-up came here and snouted out for him."

"I spotted that guy, too," stated Mr. Lyte proudly. "Sniffer Vonatell—I've been waiting for the big show."

"Correct you are, son," said the admiring detective. "You ought to hitch on with our agency."

"Nothing doing!" returned Lyte. "I've got a corking one-chair tonsorial parlor here!" He distributed defiant stares upon the shamed faces that were turned his way.

"And if you don't get patronage enough for four chairs after this, then you'd better move to a place where there's some public spirit," declared the detective. He turned to his comrade. "Slip the nippers on him, Tom, and yank him along. Gents," he

added, "it's plain to me that this town needs a guardian of just about the size of the big chap, and I advise you to induce him to stick on."

"Fellow townsmen," cried Lawyer Trufant, "we are deeply indebted to one of our citizens for his honest, manly shrewdness. He——"

"Just a minute!" broke in Lyte with determination. "I don't want any speech made about me."

"It is due you, along with apologies, and I must insist."

"Then here's where I beat it back to the shop. Let me out!" He began to shoulder his way down the center aisle.

But there was another matter to be squared.

"If there's any credit coming, it's due to the one who first sized him up and gave me the tip—and got abused by some old ghost-

ers for doing so!" He shouted this while he forced his way toward the door. "It was Madame Juno who called the turn, you poor simps. If you don't eat your heads off on delicatessen after this, you are pikers! Good day!"

Mr. Lyte managed to get out of earshot, disdaining all the hands that were outstretched to him.

Madame Juno was on the broad stairs; she seemed to be rather uncertain whether to climb farther or run away.

Above sounded the roar of cheers.

"Got 'em with him, has he? Paying 'em, is he? Say, Steer, it's a case of our beating it, ain't it? Well, good-by, sweet seven hundred dollars!"

"Nan, you trot back to your delicatessen shop and get ready for business. There's going to be a rush—leave it to me! I never hog honors!"



WHY WESTERN SOLDIERS ARE TALLER

WHEN the complete statistics of the Union armies in the Civil War were made public it was learned that soldiers from the Western States averaged one inch more in height than the Eastern men. It is too early to say what the average difference is in the great army which is now demobilizing, but all the indications are that the Westerners of to-day are at least an inch taller, and it may be that this average will be exceeded. Wherever groups of tall soldiers are seen about the streets, it is a pretty safe bet that they are Westerners or Southern mountaineers and the pictures of the troops at the front which show the men from the East and those from the West in juxtaposition always convey the fact that the latter are larger.

Ethnologists have been puzzled by this difference. In Civil War times the people of the two sections were largely the same in race, for the immigration which has brought so many inhabitants from southern Europe had hardly begun. Professor Franklin H. Giddings of Columbia has said that the more adventurous spirits went West in the early days, and that men of this character are generally larger in physique. This but partly explains it. The main reason seems to be the outdoor life and the greater physical activity of the Westerner. There are few factories as yet in the West, and the people there engage in the kind of activities that cause them to inhale larger amounts of pure air. They are also great travelers, and think nothing of riding thirty miles on horseback in a day, or one hundred miles in an automobile. The comparatively drier atmosphere of the West and, in some sections, notably Kentucky, the limewater which they drink, also add to their vigor and stature. In the State of Washington alone a division of soldiers was formed in which not one man was less than six feet tall. Probably no Eastern State could have matched that command.

Open-air life seems to produce larger human beings everywhere in the temperate zones. Thus the English, a more athletic race than the French or Italians, are greater in physique than either of those peoples. In the tropical countries every one lives out of doors, but none takes any more exercise than he has to, and therefore few inhale enough ozone to make them grow large. The hill tribes of India are larger than the people of the lower and warmer climes, and the Highlanders of Scotland are more vigorous as well as taller than the dwellers in cities.

The Bear Trap

By W. P. Lawson

Author of "Work-Found Wanting," Etc.

A story of the woods of the Black Range and the breaking in of a forest ranger

THE woods of the Black Range have many moods. Sometimes they are friendly, alluring, as if garbed and garlanded for the visitor's sole delectation. Again they frown aloof, menacing and mysteriously repellent, the abode of goblins and evil genii. Moreover, it is hard to guess the source of these caprices—whether their origin is in the dark trees and thickets, or in the far sky that breeds the singing winds, or in the lights and shadows of the human soul which feels and notes these forest vagaries.

To Tom Dunning, seated before his camp fire in the heart of the spruce timber on Hillsboro Peak, the woods seemed ominous. In the early October darkness the wind was slowly waking. Night voices grew momently in volume and variety. There was the crisp undertone of crickets, the soft hoot-hoot of an owl, the far yapping of coyotes, now and again the wail of a lonely wolf or a panther's eerie cry rising and falling desolately, like the scream of a damned soul.

The tall trees swayed to and fro, sighing mournfully. They seemed to press in on every side, threatening the tiny flare of light which gleamed fitfully in that enveloping blanket of blackness.

Dunning's town-bred nerves were tense. He had not been long in the forest service; this was his first field trip alone. And had he consulted his feelings of the moment, the first had been the last. He tried not to admit it, even to himself, but a shameful thing called fear was creeping slowly in upon his soul's inner citadel.

Resolutely he set himself to still the encroaching panic. To think that thus early in his trip he should be giving way to the weakness of an arrant tenderfoot! It must end forthwith—that much was sure!

The ranger would, he well knew, have many such lonely nights in the Black Range before his work was done. Homestead claims were to be examined, timber marked

for sale, trails posted and repaired—a month would scarcely do for the tasks his supervisor had mapped out for him. It was, indeed, a test assignment. And the traveling, the camping out, the loneliness and physical hazards were but incidental, for all they loomed now so large.

So Dunning reasoned with his apprehensions and won after a time a measure of calmness. But just as he was congratulating himself that his heart had ceased to beat with such unpleasant zeal beneath his service shirt, a new and startling sound brought him upright. There came suddenly to his ears the soft thud-thud of hoofs, muscled on the dirt trail by which he had made camp.

He listened, breathless. The sounds came nearer. A horseman emerged from the blank wall of brush about, and drew rein in the circle of firelight. Dunning just noticed that he was large and gaunt, and clad in customary cowboy attire; then his eyes were caught and held by a figure, bound and helpless, upon a second horse, a led animal. The prisoner was the ugliest Mexican the boy had ever laid eyes on.

He was stockily built, dressed in a cotton shirt and overalls of dirty blue. A greasy sombrero came low over his shock of coarse black hair. His features were of the lowest peon type, thick and uneven and rigidly impassive.

His face would have been lifeless but for the eyes, black and burning beneath straight brows. They reminded Dunning of the eyes of a hawk he had once killed. The bird had died, he remembered, without its eyes once losing their unwavering look of concentrated ferocity.

Then a voice, cheerfully familiar, cut short his observations.

"We-el, sir! If this ain't a plumb cordial welcome to give a old friend, I'm beat!"

Dunning's glance shifted quickly to the speaker, the first horseman, whom he had so casually inspected. An exclamation of

pleasure, tinged with relief, broke from his lips.

He strode over and grasped a calloused hand.

"Windy Jake!" he cried.

There was a fervent note in his voice which brought a grin to the old-timer's face.

"I've heerd tell," he rasped dryly, "that it ain't the most sociable pastime in the world, settin' out by a feller's lonesome on one these here peaks."

He dismounted and unwound his tie rope from the saddle horn, then approached his silent prisoner.

"Now Manuel," he said, not unkindly, "I b'ieve I'll jest stake you out here for a spell till I get us all some supper."

He helped the Mexican from his horse and propped him against a tree trunk, a little distance from the fire. He loosed one hand so that the man could feed himself, when food should be ready, then set about his work.

As the Mexican's eyes followed Windy their expression changed. There crept into them a look which puzzled Dunning. The glance, if it meant anything in the world, spelled devotion.

Dunning was curious, but he knew better than to court disappointment by untimely questions. So conversation dropped till Windy and Manuel had eaten their fill of the meal which Dunning's larder and the fire guard's energy provided.

Windy finally rose and sighed with repletion. He rolled a cigarette and presented it to his captive, then struck a match and held it so that the man could get a light.

"*Gracias, señor!*" murmured Manuel in a musically resonant voice which rang oddly from its unlovely instrument. And again a soft gleam filmed his fierce eyes.

Then at length Dunning's self-restraint was rewarded. Windy seated himself by the fire, filled his pipe, and broached the matter which filled the ranger's mind.

"I got a probulum to figger out," he began, "and I ain't right sure how it's goin' to be figgered. It's got to do with Manuel there!"

He jerked his thumb toward the Mexican, who was again impassive and apparently detached. Windy, for his part, seemed not at all estopped by the fact that the subject of his remarks was within easy earshot.

"If you'll tell me what it is——" Dunning suggested.

"Of course I'll tell you," broke in Windy, "how else could I get your idees on the affair? But I'll ask you to refrain from bustin' in while I spin the yarn, so she can flow full and complete. It's right complicated of a business."

"Fire away," said Dunning.

His companion sat silent a moment, puffing slowly on his blackened brier.

"It started over to Mogollon," he began, "where I was tendin' bar since I quit the fire guardin' we was workin' on last summer. I was workin' in Sol Byrne's place, a right nice saloon with easy hours and no outside work to speak on, only when some of them Mogollon poker players got on the prod now and again.

"But take it on the whole, I was gettin' along fine. I didn't have more'n two or three throw-outs to make a week, I was drinkin' mod'rate, and I'd saved up a right smart little stake. That was before Mowrey come."

Windy paused and gazed thoughtfully into the fire.

"I'd best tell you what this Mowrey was like," he went on, "so's you can savvy better what come after. He was a big, upstanding feller about six feet two, and plumb rugged built. His neck grew about twice as thick as 'twas long and his face was the color of raw beefsteak. And he had a voice on him like a yearlin' bull, which he didn't spare none to use loud and frequent.

"He come to Mogollon to put through a engineerin' projekc for the Cooney mines, and nobody seen much of him till it was done —only the men workin' for him. But they saw a-plenty, if you could believe 'em.

"After his job was finished he begun to show up round the saloons. He landed in the Rialto—that was the name Sol give his bar—one evening about five. I reckon he'd sank several on the way, from his looks.

"'Gimme brandy,' he says, bellyin' up to the bar, 'and be dam' quick about it!'

"I was servin' Pecos Tully, one of the poker crowd, at the moment, and it struck me this Mowrey was some lackin' in polish, the way he acted. So when I'd set out Pecos' whisky I says: 'Mister, I ain't got but two hands, and as you could see without spectacles they was busy when you gave your recent order. If you're still in the notion I kin serve you now.'

"The feller laughed shortlike and says: 'That's all right, bartender, you neenter

apologize; only where I live it's etiquette to quit waitin' on cattle when a man shows up!"

"Well, that there remark riled Pecos right bad, and he called Mowrey some uncomplimentary name I don't just remember at the moment, and Mowrey hault off and knocked Pecos onto his back, about four feet from where he'd been standin'. He lit all sprawled out, but come back jumpin', and drawed his gun as he riz."

"Then what?" asked Dunning, for the raconteur had paused, tantalizingly, ostensibly to replenish the fire.

"Oh, then," said Windy, "of course they wa'n't nothin' for me to do but reach over and rap Pecos on the head with the bung starter, because I couldn't stand for no gun play in the saloon. It don't do a house no good to have killin's goin' on there."

"And when I thinked of that fact, and the way Mowrey stood there without movin', a little mean sort of smile on his face and his hands in his coat pockets, it kind of chafed me.

"What's wrong with you, mister," I says, "comin' into a respectable place and startin' a jam this-a-way without no reason? If this bung starter hadn't of been lyin' handy you might of got shot up, and then lookit the black eye it would of give the house!"

Mowrey just laughed. Then he pulled one hand out of his coat pocket and held up a .38 derringer.

"The worst that could of happened to me would of been a burnt-out coat pocket," he says, "don't you worry about your Uncle Dudley, bartender! I allus make it a point to get out of anything I get into."

"With that he left the saloon and we started to get Pecos out'n his trance. He took it good-humored when he come to, after we'd showed him where he was in the wrong drawin' a gun that-a-way. And he left that night for his ranch, and so the incident passed off smooth and easy. But I begun thinkin' about this Mowrey. Seems like I couldn't git him out'n my mind.

"I knowned he was a bully—what he'd done and what I'd heerd of him proved that much. But the worst of it was, he was the kind of bully with nerve enough to back his plays, which ain't such a plumb rare sort of critter like book writers and such would want you to believe.

"Well, next mornin' he come round bright and early, full of a idee he'd thunk up over-

night. He'd fell in with a bunch of fellers from the woods and the huntin' yarns they'd told him had got him goin'. Nothin' must do but he must git out and shoot him a bear.

"That suited me fine, so I encouraged the idee till I learnt it was his notion for me to be in on the deal.

"'I been fascinated by your sad but honest countenance, bartender,' he says, 'an' the neat and graceful way you put that riotin' loafer out with the bung starter last night. Can you cook?"

"'I ain't never starved to death,' I says, 'though I been hustlin' round in these mountains for twenty year or better. But you fergit I got a job!'

"'Chuck your job!' he says. 'I've got plenty of kale; name your price and you'll get it! And if Byrne don't take you back when we get in I'll have his license!'

"Well, I had a good enough job, like I said, but bartendin' at the best don't stack deuce-high agin' a huntin' trip, so finally, after some talk, I called out Sol and he agreed to hold my job open till I got back, and Mowrey and me made our arrangements and got together an outfit and a good supply of chuck and started out.

"We'd decided to come over here in the Black Range, because it's easy the best huntin' country in the State, and I'd figgered on campin' with Manuel here. He's got a homestead claim up the ridge a ways, with a log cabin and a corral and one of the best springs in the mountains. He does considerable trappin' during the fall and winter, and I thought we could p'raps get an idee from him whereabouts the bear was travelin' and mebbe take him along with us if he was needed.

"Mowrey didn't fall in love with the idee of palin' round with a Mexican none when I first broached it to him, because he'd lived in old Mexico and got his idees of the breed from there, whereas you are aware they's as much difference between them old Mexico hombres and the local product as they is between stud poker and casino. I'd knowned this Manuel for three years or such a matter, and I'd even been able to do him a favor now and again, and while he ain't no movin'-pitcher hero for looks, I sort of sized him up as bein' a mite above the average for honesty and gratitude.

"So Mowrey finally seen the point, after I'd explained it sufficient, and we hit Man-

uel's place no longer ago than this evenin'. And that's where the myst'ry begun, as the feller says."

Windy had been rolling a cigarette while he talked. He walked over and handed it to the prisoner and helped him light up, then seated himself and took up the thread of his tale.

"It was dusk when we struck the shack, and I let out a yell to rouse up Manuel. There wasn't no answer come, so we got down and went inside and found nobody to home. I figgered Manuel was out with his traps or somethin' and would likely show up soon, so I tells Mowrey to set down and make himself comfortable while I taken the hosses back to the corral and watered 'em and fed 'em and left 'em there for the night.

"This corral was a little ways from the cabin, off in a light stand of aspen where the spring lay. I was twenty minutes or such a matter fixin' up the hosses, then I went back. And I'll be dog-blastid if it wasn't empty again when I got to the cabin. Mowrey had disappeared like as if he was a ghost!"

Dunning exclaimed involuntarily. He threw a dead-pine limb on the fire, which blazed up with a showery cloud of sparks.

"It gin me the creeps, kind of, and that's a fact," Windy went on, "and they wasn't no use a-tall lookin' for tracks, because it was right dark by then. So I got busy makin' some supper and postponin' trouble till I was sure that's what it was. I figgered if Mowrey'd gone off by himself he'd come back when he got ready, and if anything else had happened they wasn't anything to do about it—at the time.

"Well, I was washin' the dishes after a right frugal repast, as they call it, when I heard footsteps movin' cautiouslike outside. I laid hold of my gun so's to be on the prudent side, and just about then the door opened and Manuel here stuck his head inside. I persuaded him to hold his hands up in the air till I'd removed the deadly weepins he carried from off'n his person, and then I tied him up and started in to Hillsboro, which is the nearest place where they is a justice of the peace to be found."

Dunning looked his surprise at this high-handed proceeding.

"But Windy," he objected, "there's no proof that this man had anything to do with Mowrey's disappearance. Some one else might be to blame, or he might have gone off by himself——"

Windy laughed tolerantly.

"Mowrey wasn't the wand'rin' kind, in the first place. In the second place, I kin count the fellers in these hills on my fingers—and I know them all and jest about where they be at this minute. They's another thing mebbe you ain't learned yet. A French feller once told me that in Paree whenever they's any devilment afoot they allus say searchy lee woman. It's the same hereabouts, only we frisk the Mexican—the nearest one. So I lit on Manuel, for when all's said and done, we got to admit he's a chili picker."

"But why should he have done anything to Mowrey? What did he have against him?"

Windy regarded the ranger pityingly.

"Son," he said, "when you ask them questions about what's in a Mexican's mind you're only wastin' your breath. You got to fergit facts when dealin' with them and make use of intuition. Now I had a hunch from the start Manuel was in on the play somehow, and when I asked him plain was he, or not, he wouldn't give me no satisfaction one way or another. He balled up like a porcupine and stood pat. Then I *knowed*."

Dunning glanced at the prisoner, who was still seated by his tree, smoking calmly, his eyes fixed overhead on the dark splotches which were trees. A rush of anger came over the youth, in face of this mulish phlegm.

"Manuel," he cried sharply, "why don't you speak? If you are innocent, say so! If you know where the Señor Mowrey is, tell us!" A thought struck him and he displayed the bronze badge of the forest service. "I am of the government," he added, "a forest officer—see!"

The prisoner gazed gravely at the badge, nodded, and to the surprise of his auditors said simply:

"I will speak."

Windy Jake's face wore an expression of ludicrous chagrin.

"Ain't that just like a dam' Mexican!" he muttered.

Manuel turned his eyes quickly toward him.

"The Señor Windy is my friend," he said with dignity. "I would not speak before lest we quarrel concerning the matter. I have not forgotten how the señor save my life one—two times. I do not wish that we quarrel."

The señor's face had flushed red. He mumbled incoherently. But he seemed not altogether displeased.

Dunning hardly absorbed the byplay. His eyes were on the Mexican's face. He was waiting for his voice. At length it came, low, musical as before.

"Four—five years ago," he said, "I was young, and a happy personage. I work in a mine in old Mexico—"

Windy whistled reflectively, but Dunning stopped him with an impatient gesture.

Manuel seemed not to have heard.

"It was an American mine, so therefore I was happy. I did not work too hard, the pay it was good—and I am married then."

He stopped to put out his cigarette, which had burned to a stump. Then he went on, in an abstracted monotone, as if speaking of some distant person with whose affairs he had only casual concern.

"My wife she is mos' beautiful, like—like the sky at morning. Or like flower one finds by moonlight. She is belov' by all. In the evening we walk abroad to see our friends, or when the dance comes, we attend, or we stay in our small home and make music upon the guitar and sing. We are then most happy—we think the saints smile on us!"

A soft film dropped over the man's eyes. Then suddenly they burned more fiercely than before.

"There are snakes in that old Mexico, señors, same as here. Snakes most poisonous. Señor Mowrey, the boss, was such a snake. He crawl into my small house, he creep into the heart of my wife Ysobel. She is young—she like to be tol' how beautiful she is, I think she mean no harm. But I am wrong. One night I come home and find my wife gone. She leave no word, but I learn, when it is too late, that she have gone away from me with the Señor Mowrey."

A growl came from Windy Jake.

"Th' dirty dog!" he said.

Manuel gave no sign that he had heard.

"Me, I am not good to look at," he said, "but I possess the warm heart. I close my eyes and my heart then, and work hard, for it is necessary that I have money to travel and find the Señor Mowrey. And I make a vow to my saint that when I find him he shall have much pain, even as I had then."

"Months go by, and I am saving much money. I think it is most time to leave. Then one night a knock come at the door.

I open it. Dios! it is my wife Ysobel. But so changed. She is seek, she is thin and without heart, like a dog which has been beaten. She live four days, then she die. And me, I swear again my vow to my saint, and leave."

There was a pause, and Windy, whose fingers were trembling slightly, for the third time rolled and gave to the prisoner a cigarette.

Manuel thanked him, with voice and eyes, then spoke once more.

"At first I make much inquiry for the Señor Mowrey, but it is of no use. No one knows, or will tell me, where he has gone. My money give almost out. Then I think that the saints are not unkind and they will arrange when the suitable time arrive I shall meet him, so I put away thought of the matter so well as I am able.

"I come here and build my cabin, and hunt and set the traps. I wait long, and sometimes I grow tired with waiting. But then I make my vow once more and think upon the ways of the saints, who are patient but not unkind. And always when I go to Mogollon I speak with my friends, who watch with me, and I am somewhat content.

"Then one day I hear what I have waited so long to hear. My friends tell me the Señor Mowrey is in Mogollon. It was but a few days since. I watch for him—I follow him. I could have killed him—and the thought gave me happiness—but I think it is better to wait, so that he shall have great pain—as I did.

"Then I hear from my friends that it is report that the señor and Señor Windy will hunt the bear. I hear they are plan to come to my cabin. Then I am content. I say to myself that the saints have grant my prayers. And I return to my cabin in much haste to make ready."

For the first time a somber smile touched the lips of the Mexican. It was as if he turned pleasant thoughts over in his mind.

"I take my bear trap," said Manuel softly, "and carry him down the trail from my house two—three hundred yards. I dig the pit in the trail to put him in. Then I fasten one end of the chain which is on the trap to a tree. I take the clamps in my hand to set the trap and make all ready."

The bald statement told little. But to Dunning, his imagination wide awake, the words painted a grim picture. He saw Manuel, that somber smile upon his face, lean-

ing over the great trap, adjusting his clamps, turning slowly on the set screws—*por Dios*, it was no child's play to stretch this fellow!

He saw the steel jaws of the monster spread slowly. They seemed to grin, teeth wide apart and shining, with an almost human malice! They ceased moving, opened to their widest extent.

Manuel, as the ranger visualized him, stepped back and gazed gloatingly on the engine of destruction, so still, yet in its coiled strength so obviously competent. Seven hundred pounds of lightning energy in leash, tensely held, poised like a snake, waiting for the instant of sudden and devastating release.

Then would the trapper take a square of weather-worn canvas and lay it carefully over the trap, whose trigger pan showed level with surface soil. Dirt and brown pine needles would be sprinkled over all so that no trace might remain of the lurking death beneath.

Manuel was speaking.

"When all is ready, I return home to my cabin. I wait long time, looking always down the trail which my visitors must take. At last I hear horses' hoofs. I watch with eagerness. They are approaching.

"When they come near I leave the cabin and wait near by, where I am hidden by the trunk of a pine tree. I watch the señors dismount. Señor Mowrey goes within—so welcome a guest—and the Señor Windy leads the horses toward the corral which is behind the cabin a sufficient distance. It is now my chance.

"I advance to the door of the cabin and look within. It grows dark now and the Señor Mowrey cannot know my face. He is seated, drinking whisky from a bottle he has taken out of his coat. He cannot know that it is his old friend Manuel, who one time he knew so well, who watches.

"I simulate much excitement. 'Señor, señor!' I cry, 'have you a gun of power?'

"He is surprise, but he put the bottle back in his coat and say: 'What would you, hombre, with a gun?'

"'It is to kill the bear,' I answer, 'the grizzly—*muy grande*—whom I have but now trapped. The log to which I have attached the chain is too small—I am in fear he may escape. If we make haste we shall come up with him. He is not far away—and he is very beeg, and fierce, señor!'

"The Señor Mowrey laugh, and take his gun.

"'Show me this bear—so fierce!' he say.

"I turn so that he may not see my face as yet, and start up the trail where I have placed my trap. The señor follow me. It is dark now outside and I know he cannot see me. And I have pleasant thoughts.

"Soon I have arrived to where the trap is placed. I have marked the place by bending down a branch to one side of the trail. When we reach there I go cautious and slow.

"'It is but a little farther,' I say, 'not much farther. He was an old bear—*muy malo!* It is necessary now to have prudence.'

"The señor swear loud and push by me, as I have hope. He walk fast along the trail, holding his gun ahead and looking careful to the right and to the left. But he do not look ahead, where is the danger to him. Of a sudden he place his foot upon the trap I have hid—— The Señor Mowrey is then as I would have him.

"For a moment he is stunned—his senses go. His gun flies before on the ground. I take up the large gun and place it at some distance by a tree. Then I take the revolver from his belt and the whisky from his pocket, for I know if he have drink he will not suffer for a time so great pain. Then while he is still without sense I look to the trap. It holds him by the ankle—no man living with his hands can spring the trap. He is safe. Only I place a hand-kerchief about the mouth so that he do not alarm the Señor Windy, or another, by crying aloud. Then at length I seat myself at a little distance and wait for the señor to awake, so that I may speak with him."

So swiftly had the closing strands of the narrative been spun that Dunning but slowly took in the purport of the words. As the nature of the confession came home to him, he felt a shiver course along his spine. He started to his feet. But Windy Jake was before him. The fire guard had leaped up and stood before the Mexican, gun in hand.

Hastily he unbound the impassive prisoner.

"Manuel," he cried hoarsely, "you're a-goin' to take us where that trap lays pronto! You go ahead, just as speedy as your hoss can make it. And if you try a sneak, remember I ain't shot nothin' on this huntin' trip—yet. But I'm willin'!"

The Mexican did not move.

"My life is in the *señor's* hands," he said calmly. "It is moreover now of little value, for I have had my prayer to the saints granted——"

A sudden far-off sound, the faint sound of a single gunshot, arresting, sinister, came to their ears. Instantly the face of the Mexican was transformed. It was as if a mask had fallen. Triumph gleamed from his eyes, lit up his ill-favored features.

With a swift gesture he threw down the butt of his cigarette, stood upright, and extended his arm toward Windy Jake.

"Señor," he said in his deep, musical tones, "it is over. There is now no need of haste. For as I left the *Señor Mowrey*, after I had talked with him as I wished, I was not unkind. I said to him: 'You are in great pain—even as once I was. The saints enabled me to bear my pain, as a man should. You also are of great courage—have I not heard you boast of it? You will play the man and bear your pain. Yet I would test you. If you find time burdensome, I give you a means to fool time. It is for you to decide whether you will take this means or not.' And I tossed him his revolver, with one cartridge in the chamber.

"I have waited for the shot—the shot that shames the *Señor Mowrey*—that proves him not a man of courage to endure pain to the end, but a coward. It is the shot you also have heard. *Señores*, I will take you now to where the trap is placed!"

To Dunning that furious night ride was a fearful passage, a nightmare never to be forgotten. There was a late moon which showed ghastly through the treetops and lighted the way with a misty, uneven radiance. The Mexican rode first, followed hard by Windy Jake. The ranger came last.

There was no word spoken, the thoughts of the three men remained their own. But to Dunning at least the dark seemed full of voices that kept time to his thumping heart as they loped along the soft trail, between the black masses of brush on either side, under the arching treetops. The woods now, in face of the horror ahead, seemed to the youth doubly ominous, for all he had companionship.

As they drew near their destination they dismounted and went forward on foot. Suddenly Manuel, in the lead, stopped short. A cry of consternation burst from his lips. There lay the trap, its jaws tight closed, but

between the teeth was only something that seemed in the moonlight an old shoe, with dark clots at the top. Mowrey had vanished.

Dunning sickened suddenly as Windy Jake, amazed, muttered: "Gone! Twisted his foot—by God! I've knowed bears to do that there—but a man!"

A groan came to their ears. Windy leaped ahead. A few yards up the trail, prone, but free of the trap, lay the unconscious form of Mowrey.

They carried him to the cabin, washed and bound as best they could the torn stump shorn at the ankle, poured water over his head and neck, whisky between the blue lips.

He opened his eyes at length—wide, frightened eyes. His face was contorted. He seemed a wreck.

"That devil," he whispered. "He led me to his trap—left me a six-shooter with one shell. Thought I'd shoot myself. My ankle was cut by the trap. I used a knife on the flesh—then broke the bone with the gun. I—I cheated him!"

Then he fainted again.

Windy straightened and whistled vaguely. He looked at Dunning, who wiped great drops of sweat from a cold forehead.

"He shore had his nerve—this Mowrey! And like he said—he fooled Manuel—some." The fire guard glanced around. "Where is Manuel?" he exclaimed.

The Mexican was nowhere to be seen.

"Vamoosed!" said Windy, and looked again at Dunning, inquiringly this time.

The ranger thought quickly.

"We can't bother with Manuel. We couldn't catch him in any case to-night. One of us will have to go down to Hillsboro for the doctor at once. It had better be you, Windy; you'll make better time. Tell the sheriff about this—this business while you're there. I'll stay here and watch with Mowrey while you're gone. And make haste, man, make haste!"

Dunning's jaw was set, his color had come back. A resolute expression, called up by the emergency, rested upon his face.

Windy stared a moment, then started for the door. He spoke a little later, most confidentially, to his horse.

"Chino," he said, "between me an' you that kid ranger is learnin'. They's good stuff there—good stuff, old hoss!"

“Watch Your Face”

By James Hay, Jr.

Author of “Wanted: Men Who Are Reckless,” Etc.

Here is an interesting talk concerning the private sculptor at work on your mouth and brow, eyes and nose, telling the world what you are. Do you believe it?

WHEN a man tells me he can't get on pretty well in this world, I always know there's one of two things back of his statement. Either he's lying, with the hope of taking something away from me for nothing; or he's too lazy—too ‘sorry,’ as we say down South—to get out and hustle for the money he needs.

“And I can generally tell from his face which one of the two reasons is responsible for his falling down.”

Lighting a fresh cigar from the stump of the one he was just finishing, the colonel took three full puffs. He's a great smoker. Having revealed that fact, I proceed with what he had to say. His own ideas and language are his best introduction. A little farther on, you will see what people say about him—and why.

“Ever pay any attention to the study of men's faces?” he resumed. “I'll tell you what's a fact: it's an interesting thing. I've done a little of it all my life, and I tell you what I've discovered: the things you do and the motives back of your doing them leave plain records on your face, records as permanent as they are plain.

“I knew a fellow once who went around bragging that he had never done a single thing contrary to the law or to the rules of his church. And he was telling the truth; he hadn't. But the first time I saw him, I said to myself, ‘Look out for that fellow! He'd cheat you in a minute if something tempted him!’

“His face was hard. Somehow or other, it reminded me of a billiard ball, smooth and hard; and his eyes were like marbles. His whole countenance was a flagrant advertisement that he was rotten at heart. I was right about him. Fifteen years later he stole all his partner's money.”

“You can put it down as an unfailing rule that your face is the condensed history of

all that has been going on inside of you, deep down in your heart, far back in your soul where you think you keep and hide your secrets. A lot of men think they're so smart, going around false-facing people. They're not smart. They're plain, ordinary fools.”

“The only way a scoundrel can fool you, if you're really trying to get a line on him, is for him to do business with you by letter, or over the telephone, or in the dark. And, by the same token, the honest man, the fellow whose heart is in the right place, shows his worth in his face every time.”

Colonel William H. Osborn is described in two different ways by his friends in Washington and North Carolina: “He's the squarest man I ever knew;” and, “He's the wisest guy you'll find in a week's travel.” Of all the men I've seen in public life he is the only one whose eyes—they are blue and impress you as being very large—are always absolutely frank, and never touched by the vague but unmistakable shadow that comes into men's eyes when they are half honest or trying to conceal something.

Until a few months ago, when he resigned for personal reasons, the colonel was the commissioner of internal revenue in Washington, holding down the job of making the taxpayers throughout the country really pay.

A good many years before that, he was mayor of Greensboro, North Carolina. For a long time he has been noted as the shrewdest politician in North Carolina, not excepting Josephus Daniels, secretary of the navy.

In practically every county in the “Tarheel” State, there are those who rise up and say: “The colonel? Colonel Osborn? The colonel's the gosh-dingedest, slickest horse trader that ever came into these parts!”—which is as it should be; “David Harum” was written in Asheville. In his home town of Greensboro the colonel owns a big sani-

tarium for the cure of the drink and drug habits.

But, most important of all, he has lived more than sixty years and, having reviewed his own by no means uncheckered career and the careers of others, he is ready to take oath that any young man with reasonable intelligence and clean ideals can be successful, can live happily and make himself an important figure in his community and State.

"I tell you," he said, in answer to a question, "this world is a pretty good place. It's the best place any of us has any information about. And, if a man can't get along and be happy here, the trouble is with him, not with the world. If the world were wrong, it would have been altered long ago."

"Now, you asked me a few minutes ago what a man ought to do if he wants to amount to something. There's a whole lot of things he *can* do, but there's one thing he *must* do: watch his money. Nobody's going to respect the man who doesn't respect himself; and the fellow without a savings account is picking his own pocket."

The colonel returned to his cigar.

"Look here!" he said with sudden emphasis. "How do you think a business man feels when a young fellow comes to him for help and, in trying to negotiate a loan, admits that he hasn't any money of his own? I'll tell you how he feels. He feels mad. He says to himself, 'Why should I let this man have money when he's never taken the trouble to let himself have any?'

"The man who's been out in the world for a year or two, and has had a job that paid him fair wages, has got something wrong inside of him if he hasn't laid out a system for saving a little something every week. If he thinks the money he's getting for his labor isn't good enough to be looked after, he's not going to have much respect for the money he borrows.

"If he hasn't enough respect for his brains or his muscles to make him save at least a little of what they've earned for him, he's going to think that the money I've earned with my brains or my muscles isn't very valuable or important either. I know that, and that's what makes me refuse to lend him what he wants."

"Here's another thing: no fellow with any get-up-and-get in him has time to spend

profitably on himself all the money he can make in these days of prosperity."

"You think that over. It's true as gospel. He *can* spend it on himself, but he can't do it profitably. He can't do it in a way that helps his standing with older men or with the business community at large.

"I know this sounds like old stuff. You're probably thinking this minute that I haven't anything original to say about life. I haven't—and this is old stuff. But that's why it's solid stuff. All the fellows I've ever known with brand-new systems for beating the game of life have gone—I don't know where they've gone. I do know I haven't their addresses. They don't seem to have established themselves anywhere at all."

"It all comes back to this: the way you treat your money is pretty generally the way the world's going to treat you."

He pulled open a drawer of his desk and held up a tin box. It was about three inches square and one inch deep, and the top had a slit in it. As he moved the box, something inside of it jingled.

"This is the way I try to save my loose change," he explained. "I've got another one just like it at my house. Whenever I come in from lunch or from a trip downtown, I pull out the dimes and quarters and so on, and drop them into this box. You can laugh if you want to, but I'll be dog-goned if it isn't a good system. The men who can buy the most Liberty Bonds are the ones who save in this way and, of course, in larger ways if they're able."

"You have no idea how fast the coins mount up. When the box gets full, I empty it and Sam—the colored janitor here—takes the money to the bank for me. Sometimes it's ten dollars, sometimes twenty. Try it some time."

"How about what our faces show?" I asked. "Can you tell by a man's face whether he handles his money properly?"

"Anybody can," he replied quickly. "Why, it's the simplest thing in the world! The man who saves money gets the best of his tendency to be slipshod. And the one who doesn't save and who does throw it away is the one who overindulges himself."

"Nobody yet has ever gotten anywhere by trying to drive self-indulgence and success in double harness."

"When I see a fellow who has loose, slack lips which he's always moistening with the tip of his tongue; and heavy nostrils; and thick, coarse eyelids—when I see a face like that, I don't set the owner down as an early riser who is keen on his job every morning. I know he thinks more of what goes into his mouth than he does of what he might put into the bank.

"Ever notice these fellows who have about a thousand wrinkles in their faces, and shifty eyes that are darting around all the time, and a peculiar sort of glitter in their glance? They are the ones who hate work and yet spend a whole lifetime at hard labor trying to 'put over schemes' and get ahead of plain, honest men.

"I often hear people say, 'That man's all right—he looks you straight in the eye all the time.' They don't know what they're talking about. The biggest rascals I've ever encountered made it a habit to come into my office and stare into my eyes from the time they entered the room until the moment they closed the door. They weren't on the level. They were just brazen.

"No, sir! The fellow who doesn't think his face shows what sort of a man he is doesn't know what he's talking about. I tell you what's a fact: your face is the mirror of what you really are—not what you do in church, or in public, or on the street, but what you really do. And what you really do must take into account *why* you do it.

"Your motives are a big part of what you do. That's why the hypocrites fall down with such a thud sooner or later. They're the people who think they're just about the slickest things going. They do something which they know—although they think it's absurd—will appeal to the public. Sure enough, the public applauds. Then, when they get off by themselves somewhere, they

Mr. Hay's little essays are a feature of the POPULAR. Have you read all of them? We will give you a list of them if you want it.



PROMOTED BY SELF-RESTRAINT

IN less than a year after this country went to war Brigadier General Robert E. Noble, U. S. A., reorganized the medical department of the army and increased it from 7,000 officers and enlisted men to a total of 125,000—and the manner in which he did it raised him from a major to his present rank.

The general, by the way, has never smoked, chewed tobacco nor drunk alcoholic beverages; neither does he drink coffee or tea; neither, also, does he take any food in the middle of the day. If he feels a little muggy or below par—which happens once in a blue moon—he cuts out food altogether for a time.

just have to smile because it's so easy to fool the public.

"After they've done that smiling trick for a good while, their public smile gets to look like the secret smile—and the game's up! Every time I see a man with that oily, half-hearted, simpering, half-grown smile on his lips, I know it isn't a smile. It's a grimace, a confession that the fellow's always thinking how he's fooling somebody, fooling people for his own good. And I know another thing: he's getting nearer and nearer to the time of his downfall. His face has begun to tip him off. His secret thoughts, his real desires, have crept out of the dark and into his face.

"You take a man who sticks to his job and saves some of his pay right along—first of all, he's a clean-looking fellow, his eyes are clear, his features are well defined."

"No face gets bloated and red as fire because its owner has a habit of sprinting to the savings department of a bank every Saturday. That fellow's sprinting is to a saloon or a restaurant or some other dissipation."

The colonel relit his cigar.

"It's a good game, this old world," he said appreciatively. "It's a particularly good game for a young man. Any young fellow who respects his money is well on his way toward being respected by the world. And, when he has good men's respect and a little something laid away in the bank, nothing can stop him. If he needs it, he can borrow money for business purposes—he never is obliged to let an opportunity slip past him."

"Youth and the saving habit, not forgetting all the other good habits that go with saving—it's a combination you can't beat!"

Aboard the "B-25"

By George Bronson-Howard
Author of "The Black Book," Etc.

An instance of the desperate game of hide and seek which was played on a transport not so long ago. Perhaps some of our soldier-boy readers will remember the mysterious doings aboard the "B-25"

SOMEHOW, somebody had discovered that Colonel Rob Jones was aboard the *B-25*.

How this happened nobody quite knew. Somebody had blundered. "Somebody" in the fullest sense of the word, for only a few real "somebodies" knew that the colonel was to be aboard. It had been planned that he should be provided with a set of identification papers—the army officer's substitute for passport—in another name as well as his own, and that he should show the real ones only to the brigadier general commanding the troops aboard the *B-25*, the flagship of the biggest convoy that so far had left the United States.

Evidently, however, some "somebody" had talked, for I had not been aboard more than an hour or so before I heard the colonel's name mentioned.

For two days, the *B-25*—transatlantic transports did not have names then, and their numbers were changed each trip—had remained stationary. From dock to lower deck stretched a canvas-covered gangway—it had been a sweltering day of pelting rain—and back and forth guarding it, preventing passengers from returning to the dock, or dock employees or others without passports, from going aboard, was a brace of military police stalking, the crackling overhead arc lights reflecting ghostly gleams from the shiny steel bayonet blades over their shoulders.

Except for these and the soldiers on duty at the head of the gangplank, there was no one in sight except a youthful A. T. officer making his rounds, and a customs agent dozing at his slanting desk, waiting for new arrivals. For since our convoy was held up until our destroyers should chase the submarines recently active off our coast northward to Newfoundland or south to Tampico, many passengers who would otherwise have

missed the convoy were reported coming aboard. I, myself, had received my orders only the day before.

Standing at the rail, staring shoreward, a man with the red triangle on the arm of his military shirt that signifies a "Y" man, began the conversation that was to startle me.

"I wonder which one of all this crowd is the colonel?"

"What colonel?" I asked mechanically.

Even as I spoke, I saw a straggling group approaching, the taps of whose heels on the bare boards were magnified by the echoes of the great deserted dock until they were like the clatter of clog dancers. The M. P.'s below unconsciously stiffened as they saw officers among those approaching.

As the party drew near the glint on metal of the spitting carbon candle overhead showed a sprawling silver eagle on one officer's shoulder.

"There's your colonel," I said.

"How do you know?" asked the "Y" man, eagerly.

I disabused his mind of any particular credit being due an army man for being able to read shoulder-strap insignia of rank.

He seemed relieved.

"Oh, you mean he's just an ordinary colonel! I was wondering which one aboard was the 'big fellow'—Colonel Rob Jones, you know."

This was rather a "facer;" only five people in all were supposed to be aware of this.

"I don't know," I responded. "Where did you get that?"

"A little bird," he returned with a knowing air. "Yes, sir, a little bird whispered it to me."

I had seen her talking to him earlier in the evening, and she was just that—a "little bird." Her actual rating was that of stenographer to a certain he-gossip named Johnstone, who wore four blue stripes on his arm

and was thereby a Red Cross "major." He it was who now joined us at the rail, scrutinizing the new arrivals eagerly—especially that one with the eagle on his shoulder straps.

The "Y" man, who had introduced himself as "Reade of Montana," nudged me to call attention to what he evidently considered a verification of his story.

The little group having surrendered their war-zone passes and having been given back their passports, were now ascending the gangway; so that we had a better view of them.

There are two types of elderly army man: men of the colonel's age, who after passing the half-century mark—two-thirds of it in the army—either become petty martinet, affecting grim expressions until they become habitual, or else grow mellow and kindly and become as fathers to their men.

This colonel seemed the latter type. He wore the ribbons of certain coveted decorations: the medal of honor, that of the Philippines Insurrection and of the China campaign, to which was added the British D. S. O. evidently gained at the same time, that first "Allied" expeditionary force that marched against Peking under a British admiral. All in all, counting foreign service, he had a string and a half across his breast. Quite a distinguished old codger.

Accompanying him was a girl with a face like that ideal of the Greek shepherd boy of Arcadian days; its tiny perfection accented by her little overseas cap. She wore a tunic like a British officer's, with green reveres, a uniform that became familiar to the streets of New York as that of the Woman's Motor Corps, modeled after that of the London girl drivers for the R. A. F.—the "Penguins," the close-fitting tunic, inclosed by the Sam Browne belt, the short riding skirt, and the high tan boots all contributed to the boyish ensemble. The remainder of the group seemed to be unacquainted with the colonel and the girl: they were mostly Red Cross with a sprinkling of K. of C. and Y. fellows.

"Guess the girl is going to drive for the colonel," said Major Johnstone, whose majority had come to him as a reward for having a congressman for a cousin, and to whom a military title seemed to be necessary for some cryptic reason, for otherwise he could not adequately perform his military task of buying and inspecting bedding for Red Cross

hospitals: base for duration of the war, London.

"Was that Colonel Jones—the famous Colonel Rob Jones?" asked Reade of Montana.

"Eh? What? How should I know? How do *you* know anything about Rob Jones?"

His complacent tone suggested that *he* knew everything. Reade, gifted with an almost feminine intuition, took advantage of it:

"Well, major, I only asked. If there's anybody aboard likely to know, it's *you*?"

Johnstone's elbowed arms slipped along the railing, and he whispered:

"Nobody but me is supposed to know. I hope that secretary of mine hasn't been talking. I had to dictate a letter to her about this very thing. I must warn her."

He was divided between the complacency that goes with the possession of inside information, and the fear that his indiscretion might result disastrously for him.

"Or perhaps you heard it from the captain of the ship. He knows, too. No one else. If every one knew Jones was aboard, he couldn't do any good."

"How did *you* know?" I asked bluntly.

Johnstone did not like my tone. He swelled up again. As a matter of fact, I learned later that it was his stenographer who had the news from a sister stenographer in the war department.

"A man in my position—" he began. But I cut him short, realizing then that his possession of the information was probably accidental, and due to some clerical blabbing.

I walked off, leaving behind me one deeply offended civilian in uniform, and threaded my way along the semilighted decks. Except for the occasional blue skirt of a United States army nurse—the nurses like every one else on board in the stifling heat of New York harbor had removed their coats—every one was in khaki. In that dim light most of the young men in uniform looked part of a solid unit of moving-picture heroes. All wore riding breeches, all were stripped to shirts open at the throat; as they had left insignia and badges on abandoned blouses, one had some difficulty in distinguishing a lieutenant colonel from a field clerk. Only the "Y" men stood out, for they were wearing—and apparently for the first time—peculiarly stiff and ugly pigskin leggings—which they incorrectly called "puttees"—

that needed attention. These were violently chrome of color and the creaking that accompanied the slightest movement of their wearers was like that of a horse in new harness. As for the breeches above them, they had evidently been constructed on the theory that a "Y" man wouldn't be called on to ride a horse, anyhow.

Otherwise, all the men looked alike, for those in the Red Cross had regulation army shirts and leggings or puttees like those of army officers.

It was a varied make-up, that of the "first class" on the *B-25*: Red Cross and Y. M. C. A., both men and women; United States army and navy, and the flying corps of both services—who were apt to consider themselves a special arm in themselves, following the example of their R. A. F. instructors; English, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand officers, who had been acting in the last-named capacity at American camps; French infantry and flying-corps officers; Americans in British uniforms who had been eager for service before their country was; Britons in American uniforms, men lured away by better pay; ambulance drivers wearing French and Italian insignia for the most part, although the majority were American.

Finally there were the casuals, who like myself wore an officer's uniform without badges or insignia except for the "U. S." on their coat collars. These had taken the oath and had officer's rank. They were men who had been taken into the army for special work, but who would not be definitely assigned to it until they were overseas; therefore their rank could not yet be fixed. They did not look unlike field clerks unless the field clerk put on his cap with the narrow white piping that told of his order.

Below decks, there were some four thousand enlisted men: principally from Camp Lewis in the extreme northwest, and Spartanburg in the extreme southeast. With them were the members of ten field hospitals and twelve sanitary trains, plus a number of field-artillery batteries, all carrying their own equipment.

I ascended to the top deck. Lying close to the White Star dock was *A-32*, a deep-sea Leviathan and former crack liner, like ours, all five of her decks black with men and women in uniform.

Across at the Cunard pier was *C-15*, tier after tier of lighted portholes stabbing long spears of light into the listless waves.

Against the Hoboken shore the illuminated portholes of four more lit up the gloomy murk of the hot harbor—four more sea chums.

Ours was to be the biggest convoy that had ever crossed the Atlantic up to that time—early summer of 1918. Seven great transports, guided and guarded by British cruisers, and to be escorted out of port by almost the entire destroyer flotilla of the Northern Coast. The latter would accompany us about as far as Labrador. And, less than a hundred miles from the Galway Light, the British destroyers would bear us company to the Mersey.

It seemed comprehensive enough. Yet the authorities were anxious. They knew that Fritz would strain his utmost to prevent this particular convoy reaching the United Kingdom. If we were to be allowed to send over two such convoys a week—as we meant to do—Von Tirpitz saw the beginning of the end. And besides—

Thirty-odd thousand officers and men at a single clip—the first big convoy! If Fritz could only get that, what mattered the loss of a few submarines, even half the Atlantic patrol.

Think of the wild exultation in Germany, the relapse into lethargy of the British public and the continuance of their pleas for peace recently abandoned. Worse than all, think of the editorial paroxysms of certain pacifist American newspapers putting forth something like this:

Is our purblind pro-British administration so infatuated with the thought of saving England that it will dare sacrifice another thirty thousand fearless young lives to that end? If we must send troopships, send them singly. Let there be two British cruisers to guard each one.

Which would mean that by the time we got an army into France we should have to ask permission of the German military governor to bring it home again. For we could not spare enough warships to guard our transports singly. Yet we dared not send them unguarded. The *Tuscania* had taught us that: had taught us also that each transport must be practically an armed cruiser. By the great convoy system, and by that only, could we get enough men to France, and take the time in between sailings to fit up each ship with heavy naval guns and equip her with depth-bomb batteries.

And we were the first of those biweekly

convoys that meant the end of German victories in France. Over a quarter million men would land overseas each month. Must, if we were ever to reach Berlin, must continue until the "Yanks" alone numbered close upon five million bayonets. These were no theoretical figures but the hardly won knowledge of the Allies' four years of war.

Pondering on these things, I sought out Brigadier General Hurley, commanding the troops aboard. From him I got permission to visit another cabin. Just whose it was I will not mention just now. And then I sought out the captain of the *B-25*.

II.

"I understand Colonel Rob Jones is aboard," I said, after introducing myself, showing him my papers and the tiny gold and silver insignia I wore pinned inside the buttoned pocket of my khaki shirt.

The captain frowned. The gold braid on his sleeves had no R. N. V. R. loop nor were the stripes curly. He was of the regular navy—the "old" navy—and only war time would have permitted so young a man to reach the comparatively lofty rank of lieutenant commander in that most exclusive and competent of services.

"It's bad enough to take a chap from a *pukka* command like the *Arethusa*—the prettiest little U-boat bound that ever kept the scent of a Zeebrugge pelt right to the death—that's bad enough, I say," he reiterated morosely. "And to give him an old salt's job like this—good enough for some superannuated R. N. R. skipper who'd be smoking his pipe outside his cottage at Torquay if there'd been no war. Good for him, fine for him. God bless him for wanting it! But I *didn't* want it, and it's not fair to take a man with my record off active service—"

"This will be 'active' enough, never fear," I insinuated, but he continued meanwhile as if I had not spoken:

"—and put him on a passenger liner."

"A transport—army transport," I corrected gently.

"Dammit! It only needed that—a civilian to tell me the rating of the ship I command!"

"An army officer," I corrected, even more gently.

"New army—same thing," said he offensively, and screwed in his monocle to make sure I saw offense where it was meant. "And

now I'm not to be trusted sufficiently to know the identity of the passenger from whom I'm to 'take my orders, if necessary to—'"

He was quoting from an admiralty code cablegram which he had produced after my introduction of myself. It said something to the effect that Lieutenant Roberts, U. S. A. Intelligence, attached M. I. 5—meaning that section of the British Military Intelligence that has to do with alien espionage—would apprise him of certain strictly secret suspicions shared by the naval and military intelligences of both England and America. Therefore Evett, Acting Captain R. N., was to give Mr. Roberts every assistance in his power; and was to take his orders, if necessary, from Colonel Jones, G. S. of U. S. A., another passenger who might or might not divulge his identity. The cablegram concluded by the statement that Lieutenant Roberts would explain.

I had just begun to do my best when Evett interrupted.

"Who is this Jones person?" he wished to know.

"Unofficially," I said reluctantly, "you might say he occupies a position akin to chief traveling intelligence officer— A sort of foot-loose job."

"Chief intelligence officer of what, then?" Evett was irate. He added something about "pulling his leg."

"Well," I confessed desperately, "of the United States, if you like. He's the president's man. He's a sort of advisory officer to the chiefs of the army and navy intelligence, secret service, and department of justice. His actual official position is just colonel, general staff."

Captain Evett's eyes said the whole proceeding was very irregular. Only one possible fact sustained him. He hastened to hear himself reassured upon it.

"Can this colonel give orders to General Hurley, too?"

Hurley besides being brigadier general commanding the *B-25* troops was senior to the other men with starred shoulder straps who commanded the troops aboard the other six ships. Therefore he was practically the C. O. of the entire convoy, of which the *B-25* was, so to speak, the flagship. If Jones could also command General Hurley, Evett although far from satisfied must, at least, be content.

"He can make suggestions with which the

general will doubtless see fit to comply," I returned cautiously. "He, no doubt, has his orders from the war department to that effect."

"And doesn't he know Jones by sight?"

"No one seems to, captain. That's one of the things greatly in Jones' favor. I myself, have never seen him face to face. Probably he won't make himself known to either of us."

"What is he up to? And you? In what way will the general and myself be able to serve either Jones or yourself?" Evett asked.

I came out with it plumply.

"The orders for the convoy's course will be transmitted by siren signals to the *XI-10* and to this ship from the *XI-12*."

The *XI-12* was the British cruiser that would lead as well as guard the way across the Atlantic; the *XI-10* was the other cruiser that would protect our wake, trailing along ten miles or so behind.

"That will be a royal navy code which only you and the *XI-10* captain will understand. Besides this, I believe you and the captains of each of the transports have a set of envelopes in your safe, one of which you will open each morning and memorize a new siren code into which you will translate the message received from the cruiser in order to transmit it to the troopships. The other troopships, in a word, take their orders from you as you take them from the cruiser. You are therefore the only person who knows both the navy code and the code changed each day."

Evett grunted assent.

"Well, certain branches of both services in the S. W. N. building came to the conclusion that the wily Hun would manage to get some man, or men, aboard this ship either to discover the convoy's course and communicate it to watching periscopes, or else to give false signals to the other ships that would separate them from the main convoy."

Evett grunted again, but this time it was, so to speak, a more emotional sort of grunt.

"Or failing all else," I finished, "the German agent aboard might deliberately use a flash pistol such as aviators use to signal with, or send up rockets, or light some flare. Yes, I know you'd get *him*, but you ought to know a Hun doesn't mind going west if he thinks he's getting a high enough price in enemies' lives to pay for his own. And

we have every reason to believe that some such self-considered martyr to holy kultur—maybe more than one—probably a score is aboard—"

"But gad, man, passports—birth certificates—I thought you were absolutely sure about granting them—"

"Precisely. But there's one gate we can't lock—not possibly. And it's the gate to the biggest, broadest boulevard that leads to Berlin—"

Evett's eyebrows went up and stayed up.

"The army," I explained gently. "Voluntary enlistment. What better way to get to the U. K., and the western front?"

It took Evett a few moments to comprehend. When finally he did, he put the question unwillingly.

"You mean," he said, "you're afraid of your own Tommies turning traitors?"

I paused before answering, significantly:

"Or worse—"

"Officers—good God!"

"There are American army officers of British blood who have worked actively for England, aren't there? Why shouldn't there be those of German blood who—"

"But not *against* America—"

"What *might* those others have done if America was against England?" I asked.

Evett shrugged his shoulders.

"Remember Germans doing this sort of thing do not regard themselves as traitors, but rather as hero-martyrs, just as the submarine commanders do who are ordered to attack a convoy like this. The subs know they cannot hope to get away from the depth charges and the guns of seven ships and two cruisers, and the sea planes besides. But if one out of two can get a single torpedo into a troopship they'll be content to go down—" There was a knock at the door. The captain called: "Come in," and rising to my feet I faked the appearance of having just come in to ask some casual question.

"Thanks very much, captain," I said, as the purser entered, rather flustered in manner. And took my departure.

III.

Less than an hour later we were under way. Once out of New York harbor, all deck lights were extinguished, every one in uniform was ordered below and commanded to wear life preservers while awake,

and to sleep with them close to their berths. The portholes and stateroom windows were clamped tightly so that no light might filter through so much as a single cranny; even the binnacle lamps were extra-hooded.

Smoking was forbidden on deck at night for the remainder of the voyage, and thick curtains were hung behind the few exits to the decks; preventing the escape of a single ray. Having special permission to remain on deck, I watched the glare of New York die behind us; soon we had become a dark shadow gliding over an equally dark sea. Occasionally the hoot of a siren and the flash of a searchlight gave warning of nearby craft. Otherwise it was darker and quieter than one is apt to imagine possible.

It might have been supposed, by those who do not understand the spirit of America, that this would have the effect of solemnizing the voyage. On the contrary, once started, and rid of the intolerable heat, the spirits of my fellow passengers rose. In the cabins forward and those on the boat deck were impromptu ukulele parties; strum, strum, strum, plus fresh young voices announcing out of the darkness:

"If he can fight, like he can love,
Then it's good night, Germany."

Or perhaps it was:

"I don't want to get well, I don't want to get well,
I'm glad they sent me on the firing line——"

I wandered around decks that, once we were out of the harbor, again became crowded with shapes and shadows dimly seen at close quarters or by the light of straggling stars. Down below, the hull and keel churned up phosphorescence. I remained on deck until no lights were visible either on land or sea.

When I got to my corridor, I almost bumped into Lieutenant Commander Evett.

"I've been down here half a dozen times," he announced, releasing his bottled-up exasperation. "You seem to be the only one I can take into my confidence, and I must get advice from some one. Look here!"

He had previously locked the door. I surveyed the identification paper he showed me.

"See anything unusual about it?" he demanded.

I gave it a cursory glance.

"Plenty," I answered laconically.

"What?"

"The written description of the passport

holder has been altered: his age, height and weight. And I shouldn't wonder if another photograph has been substituted for that of the original holder's. Let's see——"

"You noticed all that at a single glance?" asked Evett, with grudging admiration. "Well, I must confess your arm of the service isn't all the bosh I thought it was——"

By this time the use of a very thin-bladed knife had gently loosened the photograph from the document. Beneath it was the torn section of the upper part of another likeness that quite evidently had been pulled off.

Evett watched me, with mingled envy and anger. When he got himself under control again, he asked:

"Did you happen to notice whose passport this is?"

I reassured him.

"Colonel Rob Jones!" he echoed. "The bare effrontery, the brazen cheek! And he reminded me that I was to take my orders from him, if necessary. Almost the exact words of the admiralty. It was all I could do to keep from taking him by the throat. I'm at my wit's end what to do."

"And you did?" I queried anxiously.

"Nothing—until I could get some advice—naturally. He's safe enough; I've got a man relieved from all other duties except watching his every move."

"Quite right," I approved.

Evett surveyed me. "You take it coolly enough. How do you suppose this man got Jones' passport? Where is Jones? He can't be the wonder you seem to think him if he permits a German spy to take his passport and masquerade in his name on board the ship he's been especially detailed to watch. Where is he?"

"On board somewhere, I suspect," I yawned. "I'll bet you even money he's laying his own plans right now not a thousand yards away from us. It's part of Jones' way of working to let the enemy think meanly of him as an antagonist. To me, the very fact that this man presented Jones' passport would be proof enough he wasn't Jones. Didn't that cablegram say he was more apt to be incognito than otherwise?"

"It's one too many for me," said Evett, shaking his head. "I've put a man to watch him and to report any suspicious actions immediately. And when we catch him red-handed, I'll put him in irons. Which lets me out."

"Not entirely," I answered. "Your first duty is to tell a few people, confidentially, that he *is* Jones."

Evett stared.

"Because," I explained, "somehow the news that Jones is to be aboard has leaked out, and a flannel-mouthed idiot named Johnstone—a 'major' if you please; one of the kind that wears spurs to keep his feet from slipping off the desk; and another, a 'Y' person named Reade—have both heard Jones is here. Between them and the 'major's' little stenographer they may have spread the glad news in other parts. Well, let them! Help it along. It gives Jones a better chance to do what he wants to do. But don't, under any circumstances, let the pseudo Jones—or any one else but me—think you suspect him."

Evett shook his head in a dissatisfied manner. All the cocksureness of the monarch-of-all-he-surveys naval commander type had departed from him. He concurred, however, adding:

"And I will let you have the daily report of the man who is watching 'Jones'!"

"Do!" I urged cordially, and he made an unhappy departure.

IV.

Those of us whose war work is done by devious channels have long since learned the value of women when underhand information is needed from men. Any agent looking for an able assistant of this sort, one apparently able to counterfeit with great success an intelligent but unsophisticated appearance need seek no further than the clever yet physically attractive Miss Doris Frontenac, niece to "Colonel Jones" and, incidentally, chauffeur. As I have said before, she was additionally assisted by a becoming uniform like an English officer's, and a Sam Browne belt which intensified her slenderness just as her little Serbian hat called attention to her tiny flowerlike face.

It was not difficult for the man Evett had placed on watch to keep the "colonel" under observation. "Jones" seemed to be endeavoring to make it easy for the fellow, Tatham by name. Whenever he was not in his cabin or in the smoke room, one had only to look where uniforms were the thickest; in other words wherever Miss Frontenac sat. And she always sat next to her uncle. There one would always find the ablest young officers aboard. Older ones, too, except they had

not the same amount of dogged persistency, could not stand tirelessly by the hour to edge some other fellow away from a precarious seat at the foot, or on the edge of the arm, of her steamer chair.

As for the seat on the other side of Miss Frontenac, the original lessee, a taciturn middle-aged artillery officer, yielded in despairing disgust any claim he had imagined himself having by right of purchase. He could not hope ever to reach it except through a chattering mob, and, when he did, it was to make a difficult situation for the girl, himself, and at least three young subalterns who had preempted the place. Every day a group of flying men endangered their lives and limbs fully as much as on the field, all trying at once to tumble into Colonel Jones' chair the moment he quitted it.

Altogether, she was a great social success on board. Even Evett was apt to shake his head in sorrow over the fact of "so nice a flapper" being connected with that "beastly old rotter."

"But I can't believe it's in anything else except kinship—family," he protested to me on the third day out, when the American seaboard submarine zone had been well passed. "Her passport is O. K. you know. Nothing fishy about that, is there?"

He asked this, almost defiantly, as if I were the girl's enemy. I assured him there was not, and he seemed relieved. On the following day, I was not surprised to see him escorting her, and an elderly Red Cross matron, to the bridge to show her those "delightfully thrilling" instruments which make it possible for a captain to navigate his ship.

Evett happened to glance at the deck below and see me at the time, and, as I suspected, brought up the subject that night.

"That poor girl is going to need a friend badly at the end of this voyage," he commented with a lamentable effort at casualness. "And I propose to show her that she will find that friend in me. Nothing will ever convince me that she knows what her uncle is up to. And by the bye: he doesn't seem to be up to anything but eating and sleeping."

He glanced grumpily over the neat file of semi-diurnal reports turned in by his trusty C. P. O., Tatham, of Bootle, one of the regular R. N. men he had brought with him from his destroyer; and the one temporarily promoted to amateur sleuth. The sameness of these documents was depressing to one in

search of mysterious meetings and the planning of cold-blooded crime. Tatham might have got a stencil and spared himself the unaccustomed labor of writing—unaccustomed, that is, if one takes stock in calligraphy as an index of characteristics.

These reports covered the bathing, shaving and breakfasting of the colonel; his presence on deck with his niece and a list, that covered nearly a page, of the officers, chiefly American, English and Canadian, who gathered around their chairs. Followed the chronicling of the withdrawal of the colonel to his cabin in search of peace, and the fact that he lay at full length on the sofa bunk, apparently to read a book and smoke a cigar but possibly to receive or convey information through his porthole. But, if so, it happened in some fashion so secret as to be beyond the ability of the chronicler to understand.

And suchlike instructive information. "Jones" never went on deck at night: held no private conversations with any one. No one visited his cabin openly or otherwise. He had been to no one's else. He retired early and locked his door.

Believing that he might hold converse with persons on the outside of his stateroom, Evett had commanded Tatham to keep a close but inconspicuous watch on the port side of the boat deck after the colonel had retired. But the colonel's stateroom window—like every one's else in these days of submarine attacks when to show lights was fatal—remained securely clamped inside and out, nor could any one who lurked in that vicinity be deterred from Morse-code signalling or the like—tapping it out on the sheet iron outside the colonel's window—because they were aware of Tatham's presence. It was practically impossible for any one to see Tatham who always waited until darkness entirely overspread the deck before stowing himself away in one of the lifeboats exactly opposite the colonel's cabin. Here he spent three chilly uncomfortable hours every night of the trip. After which the deck was regularly patrolled by the military police who went on duty at midnight. And woe betide any one they found out for a nocturnal stroll after the decks had been ordered cleared.

"Lord knows Jones doesn't look like a spy," pursued Lieutenant Commander Evett, in tones of the deepest discouragement, but eying me with something very like eager-

ness. It was plain, he wanted me to agree with him.

I did. The colonel did *not* look like a spy. He seemed just what every one was apt to imagine him: a kind yet stern old regular army officer; one, who, beginning with West Point days, had lived a regular active and useful life; the sort his men respected and admired; a good example to young subalterns whom one could easily imagine him fathering.

It was quite plain that Miss Doris Frontenac adored him. Too decidedly plain to suit Evett.

"I don't suppose there's any possibility of our having made a mistake," he would ask not once but frequently and always in the gloomy manner that had come to be habitual to him except when he was in the company of Miss Frontenac. "Of course, his identification papers were scratched up a bit."

"But the substituted photograph," I remember interrupting at one time.

"But isn't it possible a careless clerk got the details wrong and pasted on the wrong picture?" he defended but in tones of the deepest dejection. "Isn't that *possible*?"

"Not the slightest chance in the world," I answered cruelly, trying to make my cheery tone in the greatest contrast to his.

"Well," said the exasperated Evett, "why don't you *do* something; find out something. You go to the greatest trouble to put on an American Tommy's khaki every night without any one but me knowing, and make me clear every one out of the way until you can slip away without any one seeing you and wander around the steerage, and hang out with the N. C. O.'s, but you haven't brought in a single fact so far. And where's the real Colonel Jones if this is the fake one? You were so confident he'd be on board."

"I'm still confident," I responded meekly.

"Well, I haven't noticed any commands in his handwriting left under my door," he commented in tones he doubtless considered deeply ironical.

"Maybe he hasn't anything to command as yet," I suggested.

But despite my humble tone, the naval autocrat remained dissatisfied, and left me in a huff.

I was rather sorry for him. It was plain to the meanest intelligence that he was taking his affair with Miss Doris very seriously. It was noticeable, too, that she was willing to forego the society of any other admirers

when he was off duty and able to be with her. Nor did she insist on the colonel's presence at such times, as she did with others who wanted to be alone with her. When Evett was about, she seemed content to wander off in unfrequented corners of the ship where the others could not find them.

Finally, one day I found her having tea in Evett's sitting room. It is true the door was wide open so that no conventions were outraged, but I could not forget that in the little safe in that room were the sealed envelopes which contained the code that was changed daily; the code by which he received, and the other by which he transmitted, the sailing orders for the day.

He interpreted rightly the glance I cast toward the safe, and flushed with anger. I beat a hasty retreat. I did not know just how far the authority of a ship's captain extended nowadays, but I knew at one time they had the power to load those they disliked with irons, and hide them away in some noxious hole which the books always called "the brig."

If there was anything to be judged by looks, that scowl of perfect understanding which he directed at me, meant nothing less than the limit as far as penalties were concerned.

But by the time I saw him again, just before dinner, he had ceased to dislike me in that ferocious manner. He was frankly harassed. My sympathies went out to this big mahogany-skinned sailorman with the honest, troubled eyes.

"Look here, Roberts," he said, "if there's any arresting to be done in this case, you or the real Jones must do it. I ask you as a special favor to do so. Miss Frontenac would never forgive me. And it's going to be hard enough on me, anyhow, seeing her suffer, not to mention the trouble I'll get into with the admiralty when they hear I want to marry the niece of a man who's to be, or has been, shot as a spy."

"You mean you've asked her—despite her uncle? Bully for you, old boy!"

I got up and grasped his hand heartily.

"You'll never regret it the longest day you live," I added. "That's what I call really sporting and fine. That's the sort of thing that makes us Anglo-Saxons great."

I was all enthusiasm.

"I haven't asked her, no," he answered. "I was going to when you came in this afternoon. But you threw me off my stride. I

knew what you meant by looking at the safe. Quite right, too. But I wouldn't have brought her there except for one reason——"

His brow creased with fine lines of trouble.

"You don't think, do you, that she's been nice to me because I'm the one person aboard who can give her uncle what he wants? The code signals, I mean. It's damnable even to think such things about the girl you love, and I didn't think them until you looked toward the safe. Then——"

He covered his eyes with his hands.

"Damn this war! It makes people think and do things that weren't possible before. Of course, if she *was* a German, she would consider it highly meritorious to get me to think she cared for me if in that way she could get hold of secrets of military importance. As I tell you, I never thought of *that* until to-day. Then—God forgive me—it did seem a trifle odd that she should be so glad to see me always, so willing to give up all the others to be with me alone. Up to now my confounded conceit made it seem quite natural. Confounded conceited asses, we men are!"

He smiled bitterly. As he was not in the proper psychical condition at that time to be told that the egotism of which he accused himself, was quite justified by his physical attractions, I did not try to undeceive him.

"Well, it's our eighth day," I soothed. "We'll be in the British submarine zone before nightfall, and then some suspicions I have founded on certain discoveries of mine, may bear fruit. To-night I want you to put another man on to help Tatham, and, if possible, to go on watch with them after, say, nine o'clock. To-night may tell the tale."

"I only hope and pray it doesn't write 'finis' to mine, and turn romance into the ugliest kind of realism." He muttered the last hoarsely as he arose. Then, turning on me, he asked sharply: "Can't you tell me what you suspect?"

I shook my head. "Not until after to-night, anyhow."

He paused at the door, hand on the knob.

"Well, dash it all, I'm going to prove to you how much she means to me. I'm going to believe in her, whether or no. I'm going to find her now and ask her to marry me."

"Bully for you!" I responded. "That will be the act of a sportsman, as I said before. Good luck to you. And don't forget to-night."

"Where will you be?"

"Oh—around!" I answered smiling vaguely, and bowed him out.

V.

By this time—thanks to our friends, Major Johnstone and his stenographer—almost everybody aboard—in the first-class cabins anyhow—believed the colonel to be the redoubtable Rob Jones, himself. For days his every move had been followed by the watching eyes of the concerned as well as the merely curious. The fact that he seemed to do nothing at all, and was not in the least like the preconceived notions of any one, only increased the admiration of most of our fellow passengers. It was part of such a Sherlock's job to look entirely unlike the sort of man he was. At which Jones certainly succeeded. The general opinion was that the elderly get-up was but a disguise.

Covertly, many studied it on the lookout for possible flaws.

"He's quite a young man, really," I heard Johnstone's stenographer remark confidentially to a young British flying man. "Quite young and attractive enough for that girl who calls herself Frontenac to be quite crazy about him. She was an actress when she met him and he brought her into the service. And she's a pretty good actress yet. Nobody would ever suspect she wasn't quite the bread-and-butter miss she pretends to be, would they? And I know for a fact that she's over thirty."

I dare say strictly in the interests of chivalry that I should have interfered; but I was not at liberty to do so, as you will presently see. Besides it rather suited our book—the book of the real Jones—that most of the passengers should consider the false colonel the true one. And thanks to this busy little gossip and her employer, most of them did.

As it drew on toward evening, I waited until my cabin corridor was deserted, then with the greatest possible expedition whisked myself off to another cabin than my own or Evett's. Here in the second-class quarters, I changed into an "issue" uniform, made some minor alterations in appearance and descending deep into the bowels of the ship, ascended again and came out among our troops in the waist. It was their dinner hour and I had brought a soldier's rations with me.

I had established myself here as another person altogether. My identification disk and uniform were in perfect order; indeed they were those of a "batman," practically an enlisted valet, named Barrett, down on the muster rolls as orderly to Colonel Jones, and supposed to bunk in the first class so as always to be within call of his master. I need hardly say that there was no such person, and that this impersonation was part of a plan conceived before I came aboard.

The "boys" received me as usual as one of themselves. Especially well this time for by now it was generally known in the steerage that I was better supplied with funds than almost any enlisted man down there. That is, except Mossy Baum and his friends, two young gentlemen who would not have appreciated the private (yet in a way, public) interest with which they inspired me.

Maurice Baum claimed to be the son of a rich Chicago Jew pawnbroker. It was pretty generally known that you could borrow money, plenty of money, from Mossy—that is if he *liked* you. He was on record with a number of my young friends as having promised to show them how he turned the trick of always being in funds.

Particularly a rare card was Mossy's friend, Sydney Shapiro. Some guy with the ladies—thus my informant. Why there was a girl in the first class, he regularly went over to see, every other night or so. At least, he'd "slipped" one man on guard a "ten-spot" to let him pass; never gave any one on guard less than a sawbuck. He was going up to-night, my informant said, that is if he could fix the guard. Which was exactly what I had come to find out.

"I can fix the guard," I commented, casually. "No reason you and me shouldn't have a piece of money, too, hey, Ed?"

Several days before, by roundabout methods that would not make me seem too eager, I had allowed this informant of mine to know that I would like to meet Mossy and his friends. Had they been aware that my visits to the steerage had been brought about purely through the pressing need for more intimate knowledge concerning them, they would have been less flattered than apprehensive. As it was, my casually dropped seed had borne fruit that attracted my wary birds.

My red-haired informant with whom I had made friends chiefly because he was the greatest chatterbox on board, with the pos-

sible exception of Johnstone's stenographer, had mentioned to Mossy my name and the fact that I bunked forward in the first class, and Mossy had expressed a wish to know me.

This was recalled to the mind of my red-haired friend when I mentioned in so off-handed a manner that I could get Messrs. Sydney & Co. past the guards into the first class.

"I'll get hold of Syd," said Redhead, and departed to find him.

As I waited, I scribbled a little note to Evett, which, in the shadow of a bulkhead, I slipped to one of my I. P.'s, a sergeant who had been under my orders long before I came aboard and whom I had previously ordered to be in waiting somewhere near at hand. The fact that the sergeant was an enlisted man, too, wearing no badges except "U. S." on his collar, made him inconspicuous in such a crowd of "issue" khaki.

Presently Redhead returned, accompanied by Baum and Shapiro, two slender, well-set-up men with the unmistakable mark of the professional soldier about them. From my first glance at them, a week before, I knew them for what they were: No accidental results of the draft, nor the sort that the "old" army was able to enlist at thirteen dollars per, either.

We withdrew to a corner. It was growing dark and the N. C. O.'s passed among the men ordering all cigarettes, pipes, and cigars extinguished. The light screens went up behind each door; ship's stewards were going about clamping shut the outside iron shutters to the portholes of the deck cabins. The ship was becoming a dark and hooded thing again.

Orders were shouted for every man to see that his life preserver was properly adjusted, and all were reminded of the penalty attached to the faulty memories of those found not wearing one, asleep or awake. Followed the call for early morning life-preserver drill: five o'clock.

Meanwhile the so-called Sydney Shapiro was telling me that this was his last chance to see this girl of his in the first-class cabins — a nurse it was, he volunteered. He would be on guard himself to-morrow night. There was absolutely no danger of being caught for Mossy had volunteered to accompany him and keep watch. But neither knew the 'tween decks guards on duty that night, and if I could really pass them through, it would

be worth, say, a twenty-dollar gold piece to "split" between myself and Redhead.

"Only too glad," I answered, trying to make my voice tremble with cupidity. And so it was arranged. I was conscious that they were watching me keenly despite the darkness of oncoming night, but I had purposely cultivated a stupid, rather sodden sort of manner. I could see that they were edging away from me to hold converse in asides.

It was quite dark before I took them with me up the ladder that leads up and over to the forward boat deck; at the head of which a sign warns the reader that none other than first-class passengers are permitted to pass. Two guards stopped us, but at a cheery wave of the hand, and: "It's only me and some friends of mine who're going to entertain the first cabin in the captain's concert to-night," they let us pass as they had been previously instructed to do.

At a dark corner on the boat deck, I took leave of my swarthy friends, jingling the twenty-dollar gold piece among other coins in my pocket.

"Be careful," I urged, "and if you get caught don't say I brought you. I'll deny it, mind you, so don't try it on."

With which I swaggered off like any clumsy-shaped goose foot in an ill-fitting uniform, who has been given more power than is good for him.

VI.

One could barely distinguish the great ships that made up the convoy, camouflaged as they were with what in the light of day we knew were stripes and cubes of horizon blue, field gray, and leaden-black. But in the gathering darkness, one vessel seemed sliced in half, converted into two clumsy tubs instead of one graceful crack liner. Another had the appearance of being entirely destitute of upper decks and showed as flat as a great ducking boat along the surface of the sea. Another gave the impression of being tilted on her beam ends, a fourth seemed about to sink hull down. And so forth. Not one presented a fair and accurate mark at which to aim a torpedo.

Verily, Von Tirpitz and his submarines have given a new science to the world: that of color obscuration. And in the vague and inchoate imaginings of the prewar Cubist painters, there has been found a great underlying principle and a useful purpose. They had claimed they could paint three dimen-

sions on a flat surface, and the new science proved that they could: at least well enough to deceive most submarine commanders. For the camouflaged ships in daytime looked like nothing so much as a fleet of the wildest Cubist nightmares for the decoration of which the human eye at anywhere near close quarters could detect no possible utility.

Yet, when darkness or dawn were on the wing—the two most advantageous times for submarine attacks, for then it was that the best glasses could find no trace of periscopes in the welter of grayish-black waves—the weird blocks, cubes, hexagons, and "Z" like stripes, changed the vessels into other shapes than their own, their most vulnerable spots almost invisible.

From the position and the hiding place I had chosen, I watched the darkness obscure the sea for the last time aboard the *B-25*. The next day would find us in the Mersey. So if anything was to be done, it would be done that night.

Again slightly altering my appearance, and waiting for empty corridors, I went swiftly and secretly to a certain cabin which I have mentioned before, and there conferred with one whom it is not at present necessary to name. Regaining my own place, I resumed all that went with my ordinary clothes.

It was not long before Evett burst in upon me, all excitement.

"Jones has had a visitor," he said. "And he has promised to meet him on the top deck in half an hour."

He mopped his forehead. So perturbed was he that he forgot to restore his handkerchief to his sleeve, but put it into his pocket like any ordinary civilian—a grave omission for which he would doubtless have been severely censured at his club.

"I was hoping against hope we might be wrong," he groaned. "But that settles it, I suppose. Well, his niece is not to blame," he added defiantly.

"Did you ask her—you know what I mean—eh?"

Evett nodded.

"Good! She'll appreciate that," I said, cryptically to him for he stared. But I did not give him time to ask what I meant. "Your cabin well guarded as I suggested? Trustworthy men?" I asked alertly.

Again he nodded.

"And you have three of your fellows posted to watch Jones? Good! I'll go with

you. Or, rather, you go by one way, I'll go by the other. We'll meet just abaft in the little alleyway that runs between the funnels and the skylight aft."

Evett was startled at this. "Why that's where Jones was to meet his visitor," he said.

"Naturally, as it's the one absolutely sheltered spot on the ship. Well, we'll get there before him and when he comes we'll scrag him if he detects our presence. If not, we'll listen to what he has to say to Jones. Hurry, captain. Remember this is the last night. And this is about the last opportunity for attacking submarines. Whatever is to be done must be done between now and dawn."

A few moments after, wrapped in trench coats, we crouched in the warm space abaft the *B-25*'s funnels, our backs protected by a ridge above which the ventilators raised their hooded heads. Over us roared the spray-charged wind from the Irish Sea. At intervals and at a great distance we saw the winking of the great Galway Light.

Within the hour, British and American destroyers from the Queenstown base would have taken us in charge. But a short time remained for the enemy agents to pull off their coup. I had no doubt that they were as ready as we were.

Presently we held our breath. A dim figure was making its cautious way toward us. Evett and I edged backward on our bellies to give the newcomer the chance of ingress into the narrow passage. On he came and directly toward us. On reaching the passage, he fell on hands and knees and just in time, too.

For there had been three figures following. And one of these had launched itself at Colonel Jones less than a second before he dropped on hands and knees, and with the result that the would-be assailant went sprawling.

"Head him off there on the other side," I heard a hoarse whisper in a familiar voice. One of the remaining two obeyed, running swiftly to the far side of the passage. The first fellow picked himself up and, obeying the same voice, crouched exactly opposite the man at the other end.

"Come out of it, Jones," I heard the third man say. "Come out of it, and nothing worse will happen to you than being bound and placed in the first boat. But if you give us a fight, we'll scrag you. We're three to one, you know."

What a wonderful cue line! It really hurt my sense of the dramatic not to be able to answer: "Wrong: you're one to three, my man."

But one must forego many of one's pet pleasures in war time. Especially when their indulgence means a speedy shot that may possibly put an end to all future retorts, apt or otherwise.

"Colonel Jones" also refrained from gratifying his sense of the dramatic. He simply continued to lie flat, his heels almost in my face.

"So," said the same voice, sibilantly. "So you are the wonderful Colonel Jones who was going to do so much, are you? The terror of the alien enemy? Well, *you* might as well know that *we* knew you were coming aboard on the very day you got your orders. And *we've* had you under surveillance ever since. We know you thought you'd throw us off our guard by seeming to do nothing, but we understand how you worked it through that niece of yours who isn't your niece at all. I suppose you were counting on doing your first active mixing in to-night, eh? You must have thought us a pack of fools to try anything without getting rid of *you* first. And you conveniently come to the darkest, loneliest part of the ship to make it easy for us. You'd last about a minute in *our* intelligence department; just about a minute, my friend. Well—are you coming out? If you do, you'll be in the first boat launched after the torpedo strikes. If not—"

The voice paused:

"Well?" it wanted to know.

No answer.

"Close in on him, boys," said the voice briskly.

The two shadowy shapes on either side of the passage moved cautiously forward. At that moment, Evett blew his whistle. A second later so did I.

A confused struggling, accompanied by choking, bitter insults and hasty and profane characterizations followed. Evett's men were on the far side, hence had only one antagonist. My I. P.'s, whom I had placed in hiding on the upper deck long before we arrived there, had only two. Consequently affairs were arranged favorably for us in less time than it takes to tell it.

Evett, whom proceedings had thoroughly bewildered, laid hold of "Colonel Jones," then, apologizing, loosened his grip.

"It's quite all right, captain," said Jones, genially. "I don't blame *you*."

Meanwhile, I had flashed my pocket torch on the face of the leader—the man who had spoken. It was the he-gossip, Reade, supposititiously of Montana and the "Y." Needless to say the other two when seen in the light were my enlisted friends, Shapiro and Baum, as they called themselves.

"I don't mind admitting it's one too many for me," complained Evett, unable to make up his mind whether to laugh hysterically—which no *pukka* captain could consider, really—in his great relief or to scowl ferociously at me, whose deception had made relief necessary. For it was apparent to him now that though "Colonel Jones" was not "Colonel Jones" he was some one equally in the secret from which he, Evett, commander of the ship, by gad, had until now been excluded.

"Explanations later," said General Hurley crisply. We were in his office next the guard-room. "Go ahead——" this to me, meaning with what was already planned.

One of the prisoners, the dandy "Syd," whom I had long since selected as the least formidable, was next door in the orderly room manacled and under guard, the others below.

I stepped to the door, returned the guard's salute, and ordered Master Sydney in.

"Now there's no time for nonsense," General Hurley boomed at him in strident tones. He could do this sort of terrorizing much better than any others of us; besides he was backed by his supreme power of life and death over all aboard while at sea. "You were going to signal a submarine that would have sent us all to kingdom come, so don't expect us to be easy on you. We intend to give you just one chance for your wretched life. You will be taken on the top deck again and given your materials for signaling. And you are going to do it, just as you planned to do."

Sydney's sullen face denied this.

"I'm as good an American as you, general," he began, plaintively. "Just because we had a grudge against the colonel and wanted to scare him, is no reason to——"

"Come," I cut him short. "Get any idea out of your head that we don't know exactly what you are. Now you will either signal as we tell you, or——"

"Or we will toss you overboard," said the general grimly. "Don't think we won't. But

my report will read that you jumped to escape the sure fate of a spy——”

“You wouldn’t dare,” gasped the swarthy Sydney.

But one look at the grimly set faces of his judges assured him that he was wrong.

I snapped back my sleeve and saw from my watch that it neared eleven.

“Doubtless the submarine expects your signal on the hour,” I said. “We can’t waste time. Take hold of him there, you two. I will assume all responsibility. Neither the general nor Captain Evett will know how you died—officially.”

I had in my hands the materials for signaling taken from his pockets: two magnesium flares, three calcium rockets. These I showed him. I made sure my silver whistle worked. Then I faced the guards:

“One of you keep your Colt pressed in the small of his back. Take him on deck.”

Master Sydney squirmed. “But if I do signal, the U-boat will torpedo you,” he affirmed, eying us uneasily.

“Nonsense, my man,” I cut him short. “Your first signal is to let them know approximately where we are, to give them warning to get ready so that when the second signal comes it will give them a sure target.”

“But wouldn’t I know I would be grabbed before I could give a second signal?” he demanded desperately. The man was clever enough with the diabolical cunning of all Huns, nowadays.

“You would: yes. But not the second man. Take him out.”

As the door closed behind him and his guards, with me in their wake, I heard General Hurley instructing Evett first to warn the other ships in convoy by siren to steer off as far as possible; then to see that the gunners prepared the depth charges; the ships warned when my whistle first sounded, the bombs loosed when it shrilled again.

It required little more persuasion in the darkness of the top deck to convince Master Sydney that, unless he obeyed orders, he really went overboard. Whereas, if he did what was desired, he would have no worse fate than internment during the war, and in addition a handsome bonus. For although such “State-evidence rats” are too despicable to live, they are too useful to die.

“If you refuse, one of your friends won’t,” I assured him. “You have another minute. Then one—two—three and over with him,

boys. And we’ll see how well you swim with your wrists in irons.”

The guards had laid hands upon him, when suddenly he acceded. His hands were unmanacled. I passed over the first flare and shielded a trench lighter for its ignition.

“Duck, you men,” I ordered.

We fell flat. Out of the darkness appeared a ragged splotch of bright white light; in which the double traitor’s figure was sharply silhouetted; shadow elongated in the shadow of a skinny scarecrow with an arm flapping loosely in the wind, flapping right, left, up, down, backward, forward, until the flare died down.

Ensued instantly the sinister shrilling of the *B-25*’s siren; its echoes scarcely dying down before single hoots of confirmation began to come from the convoyed ships. Followed instructions to the cruisers, *XY-10* and *12*, in case of any slip-up in our plans. The submarine would naturally expect such demonstrations, but would misread their intentions into instructions for frightened flight.

Followed what for me was the most anxious quarter hour of my life; the time being spent mostly in threats of the direst sort directed to Sydney should he attempt to mislead us as to the time for the second signal; holding the radium dial of my wrist watch shaded for him to see.

But, as we had believed, the fear of the black waters beneath had done their work, and soon “Syd” stiffened and reached instinctively for the second flare.

“Now,” I said, harshly, and blew my second blast.

Immediately the ship’s timbers shook from stem to stern as the depth charges were loosed below. Then silence until, out of the dark void beyond, came a sudden roar, a sheet of flame, and by its incinerating rays we saw what I can only describe as an undersea Vesuvius in eruption, black blotches against its glaring reds and yellows telling the tale of all that remained of one wolf of the sea that had looked to find a lamb and been caught by a lion.

VII.

It was long after dawn before we dared forgather again; for we could not be sure whether or not other wolves were prowling about on “their own,” undeterred, or rather the more fiercely determined to make us pay for, the fate of what we afterward knew

for undersea boat 273-X; and each one of us had particular methods of ship defense for which he was responsible.

So it was nearly seven before we were grouped about the breakfast table in General Hurley's private suite, and Evett began again.

"I don't understand this affair at all," he said sulkily.

Everything had happened as per schedule, so we could afford to sympathize with, and smile at, Evett.

"Why, it's perfectly simple," I explained. "When the real Jones found out that his presence aboard was known, he happened to be without a coat—it was that last hot night in New York harbor and he had just come aboard, had taken off his tunic, and had forgotten to pin his eagle to his shirt. As the information that he was aboard had been pretty generally disseminated by a pair of chatterboxes, he knew that the very enemies he had come to watch and circumvent, would, instead, be watching and circumventing him. So when Colonel Jackson here came aboard, Jones hurried to General Hurley and got him to order Colonel Jackson to pretend to be Colonel Jones. Jones' identification papers were altered to suit Jackson's description.

"Thus it was known to just three persons who Jones really was. And each one promised to tell no one else. It really resulted for the best, for while our enemies watched the false Jones, the real one had his chance

to watch them. To-day, the real Jones saw that they were alarmed at the seeming non-activity of the false Jones, and realized that they would reveal their identity by attacking him and putting him out of the way before beginning their coup. That is if we gave them the chance.

"So an appointment was made on the upper deck which would place Colonel Jackson-Jones unreservedly in their hands. We realized they would not neglect such an opportunity. Also, if they attacked him, that would be proof enough against them without waiting for them to reveal the exact character of their schemes. Jones knew who two of them were, but not the leader, whom he knew was somewhere in the first class. By giving them their chance at his understudy, he discovered who the leader was.

"As they said, they meant to signal the submarine but the quietude of Jones made them too uneasy for them to dare do it until he was disposed of. The rest you know."

Again we smiled—Hurley, Jackson, and myself.

"So you see why it was that Miss Doris would appreciate your asking her before you *did* know," I suggested to Evett.

He looked around bewildered. Finally he exploded:

"But Jones—the real Jones!"

"I told you he'd be aboard and working all the time, didn't I?" I grinned. "And that you'd take orders from him. Well, didn't you? I am Jones."

A series by Bronson-Howard will begin in an early issue of the POPULAR.



HE GOT THE BEST OF IT

IN spite of war conditions, the leading citizens of a mid-Western town got up what they called a Chautauqua assembly. Jenkins Hull, with a canny eye for business, applied to them for leave to set up a merry-go-round, "five cents a ride, five rides free if you catch the rings!" on a location between the town and the cottages and assembly tent used for the Chautauqua.

"All right, Jenkins," said the banker of the city; "that's all right. It doesn't hurt to provide a little amusement for those who also improve their minds."

The second day after the inspired, oratorical, earnest, salaried speakers had begun to launch upon the heads of the audiences frequent broadsides of information, culture and wisdom, the banker met George Green trailing his whiskers in the dust on his way home.

"Hello, George!" he called out. "Getting everything there is to get out of the Chautauqua?"

"You bet I am!" responded George with pleasing enthusiasm. "I rode it five times—free!"

The House on the Moor

By J. B. Harris-Burland

Author of "The Eighth Man," Etc.

Why he hated that house was a puzzle to him until events proved his instinctive antagonism well founded

IT was not the loneliness of the place that I hated. Nor was it the moaning of the sea, that was rarely still on that rock-bound coast, nor the excessive rainfall that is one of the features of the district. It was not, indeed, anything that one could put one's finger on, and say: "But for this, Pant-y-dwn would not be such a bad place, after all."

The wild beauties of that part of the world were undeniable. Picture to yourself an old farmhouse set on a lonely moor that stretched from the sea to the tall barrier of the mountains. Nothing beautiful about the house—just one of those sturdy, businesslike buildings that one finds in Wales. But the views! I only wish I could give you some faint idea of the varied coloring of land and sea and sky. Desolation was the keynote of it, and save for the heather in the late summer and the glory of sunsets, everything had been painted in deep hazy blues and dull browns and soft grays and yellows. The sea itself, beating at the foot of the cliffs three hundred feet in height, never seemed quite like other seas. Calm or lashed with storm, it was very rarely without the shadow of great clouds. And then the rain, falling like a curtain across the hills, and the mists, that made wider all the great spaces, wider because, though one saw less, one pictured so much more than was really hidden.

I think an artist would have loved Pant-y-dwn, but I hated it, and yet I have always flattered myself that I am very susceptible to beauty. Of course it was really the house itself that I hated, and the house, like a drop of virulent poison in a bowl of clear water, must have spread its influence to the very rim of the horizon. I know that now, but at the time I did not know it, and I looked upon myself as rather a fool for disliking the place.

Apart from the beauty of the scenery, the

farm itself was a monument of tremendous energy, and should have appealed to a man like myself, who has had to fight his way upward from very humble beginnings. It was the only farm in all that desolate waste of moorland. About the middle of the eighteenth century Emrys Morgan, a respectable London merchant, who had made his money by trading in the East, had chosen this site for his home, and had spent half his fortune in turning two hundred acres of moorland into a fertile farm. The little harbor he made, where a small stream has cut its way down through the rock and formed a valley between two slopes of cliff, is there to this day. That alone must have cost the old fellow many thousands of dollars. But he had a longing for the sea and loved to be on it, and kept a small sailing vessel in the harbor, and it is believed that innumerable ship-loads of fertile soil were landed at that very place and carted up the long, winding road to the moor, and that this soil accounts for the fact that it was possible to grow corn and feed cattle at Pant-y-dwn.

Hugh Morgan told me all this, and it was Hugh Morgan who asked me over to Pant-y-dwn and kept me there, though I had a dozen better places in which to spend the long period of my convalescence after a severe accident. I had met him at the house of a mutual friend in Tal-y-bont, a small, quiet seaside place twenty miles from his house. He had taken shelter there one day in a strong southerly gale, and had brought his little yacht, the *Cariad*, into the harbor. The Prices introduced me to him, and I took a fancy to him from the first. I have a liking for people who are just a little out of the ordinary, and when I saw this bronzed young fellow, in his sea boots and torn blue jersey and blue trousers stained almost gray with salt water, and learned that his farm was making no profits because of his love

of the sea, I recognized that he was an uncommon type in a part of the world where men think of little but the making of money. I am a yachtsman myself, and we were drawn together from the very start. A trip in his boat, which he handled by himself, put the seal on our friendship. And then he asked me to stay with him, and we sailed to Pant-y-dwn. And there he kept me. And I hated the place—from the very moment I crossed the threshold I hated it. And yet I could not go. You see, it was Hugh Morgan who kept me there. He was the sort of man that attracted me. And when one has been ill and is not inclined to travel—well, I think you can understand. But I want to make it clear to you that he did not persuade me to stay. He was glad to have me, and I—well, I just stayed on. For I was glad to be with him.

There would, I think, have been a further bond of sympathy between us if he had hated the house. But he loved it. He had just enough money to keep a man to look after the farm, and his life, free from all conventions, was a very pleasant one. And he asked for no better home than the bare old house that had scarcely a sound chair or table in it, and certainly not a bed that any one could sleep on in comfort. Morgan himself slept in a hammock slung from the oak beams of his bedroom ceiling, and the condition of pillows and mattress did not trouble him. An old farm laborer and his wife lived in the house, and the woman did the cooking and part of such cleaning and tidying up as Morgan required. But life at Pant-y-dwn was a very simple affair. And I had the good manners to fall into the ways of the household—fetch my hot shaving water from the kitchen, clean my own boots, tidy up my bedroom, and do all the little jobs that are usually done by servants. I looked on it as a sort of picnic. And, after all, it was a new experience. And I do not think a man has got the best out of life until he has sampled a good many different ways of living.

I should have been quite happy if it had not been for the curious and unreasoning hatred I had for the place—a hatred which I know now was really a hatred of the house. At sea—and we spent nearly every day on the water—I was completely happy. It was a joy to see that strapping young fellow handle a six-ton boat by himself. Of course, I was always willing to help him. But he

hardly ever let me lay a finger on a sheet or a halyard.

"I mustn't get into the way of *that*," he would say, "I might rely on it one of these days, and you wouldn't be there."

All nonsense, of course. But it shows you, I think, how seriously Morgan took everything that in any way touched on the sea. It was the element in which he lived. From his boyhood—at this time he was twenty-seven—he had given all his mind to this one subject. He had quite a library of books dealing with it—serious works on navigation, Lloyd's Registers, tide tables, and volumes on seamanship, and, for light reading, tales of all the voyagers from Hakluyt to Nordenskiold. He held a master's certificate, and could tell you about every shoal and bay and channel round the British Isles. Yet once when I asked him why he remained at Pant-y-dwn, and was not, by this time, the captain of a big ship, he answered:

"The sea is like wine, Dennick. I have to be careful."

I remembered that I did not press him for an explanation of this rather fantastic remark. And, two days later, old Mrs. Evans told me something that I could not fit in with what I knew of Morgan at all. I think I had gone into the kitchen to get a coat that had been drying by the fire, and, as she handed it to me, she said:

"I hope to goodness, Mr. Dennick, that one day it won't be taken from the dead body of you, whatever."

I laughed, and felt the coat to see if it were quite dry. Then I glanced at the old woman's face—the yellow parchment of it, and the blackened teeth in her mouth, and the straggling locks of gray hair. She was staring at me, and there was something curious about the expression of her red-rimmed eyes.

"Look you, his father," she said, "a grand man whatever and great preacher at the chapel. And his grandfather—great rider, look you, and so strong as possibly he can. And the sea took them—indeed, it's the truth I'm telling you. And never did they go on the sea."

I asked the old woman how they had met their deaths, and she told me that Morgan's father had been swept off a rock and drowned, and that the grandfather—her own father had told her this—had been riding one day across the moor, and his horse had got

the bit in its teeth and had carried him over the edge of the cliff. And she went on to tell me that so long as history had any account of the family the sea had claimed every owner of Pant-y-dwn. I think she said it was from the days of Adam.

"And, look you," she moaned, "the young master plays about with death."

Well, this, of course, was very interesting, and that same evening I spoke of it to Hugh Morgan. He admitted the truth of the old woman's statements. So far as he knew, all the owners of Pant-y-dwn had been drowned—all, that is to say, but one.

"That old fellow," he said, pointing to the portrait of Emrys Morgan that hung over the mantelpiece in the dining room, "died in his bed."

And it was then that he told me all about Emrys Morgan, and I gazed at the portrait as he talked to me. A very respectable old fellow that ancestor must have been from the look of him—grave of feature and with a full wig, and no trace of foppery in his sober clothing.

"The only one of us that has ever made money," Morgan continued. "But he spent it royally."

Then he told me all about the making of the farm and the harbor. And it pleased him to talk of these things. And when I turned the conversation to the sea again and asked him if he were not, to some extent, tempting Providence, he laughed.

"They hated the sea," he answered, "and it destroyed them. I love it. The sea and I are friends. That old fellow there," and he pointed at the picture, "loved it, too. He died in his bed."

The argument, so far as reasoning can be applied to matters that are not quite within the scope of reason, seemed sound enough.

"Good friends," he repeated, and then he raised his glass and, turning toward the picture, bowed.

"To your good health, sir," he said. Then he drank, and went to an open window and faced seaward. But he did not drink again from the glass that he raised to his mouth. He just touched the rim of it with his lips, and flung the remainder of his whisky and soda into the darkness.

"A libation to the sea gods," he said.

And it was then, in the silence that followed, that I first heard the beating of the drum.

II.

I thought at first that it was a very faint roll of thunder in the distance. It started with nothing louder than a mere tremor of the air, then it swelled into something quite distinct, and finally died away again into silence. So far as I remember, it lasted, from the beginning to the end of it, for about a minute.

"There is going to be a storm," I said. Then I walked to the glass and tapped it. The needle moved forward perhaps a quarter of an inch. Morgan still stood by the window, and as I looked at him I could see that he was listening.

"It's been very close all day," I continued. Morgan did not answer. He turned away from the window, walked to the fireplace, and stood with his back to it. His eyes were aglow, and there was something curious about the expression on his handsome face. I cannot describe to you exactly what the change was, but it was quite certain that he had changed. He was still, on the surface, the fine, good-looking fellow that I had known for three weeks. But something was stirring under that surface. One could only see the movement of it in his eyes as yet.

"That was thunder," I said, but before he could answer me I heard the sound again. This time it was louder, and there was a kind of rhythm in it—no change of note, but a rising and falling of volume, crescendo and diminuendo musicians would call it, I suppose.

"What is it?" I exclaimed.

Morgan smiled. Then he began to fill his pipe, and I saw that his hands were shaking. But there was no sign of fear about the man. He merely vibrated like some taut string touched by a player's hand.

"Don't worry about it," he said after a pause. "It comes from the sea." Then he began to explain: "certain states of the tide," "a kind of funnel in the cliff," "pressure of the air." I pick the words from his rambling explanation. It was evident that he did not understand the precise cause of the phenomenon.

"Sounds like a drum, doesn't it?" he concluded. And then he yawned and said it was bedtime.

I did not go to sleep for two hours, and during that time the sound rolled out on the loneliness and stillness four more times.

Once I fancied that it was very much louder, but I think that must have been due to a slight breeze that had got up and was blowing in from the sea.

The next morning I spoke to old Mrs. Evans, and she told me that folk might say what they liked about the sea and the cliffs, but that she wasn't fool enough to believe them.

"Who should it be but the Drummer?" she said.

And that seemed to be the superstition of the countryside—a ghostly drummer beating his drum, warning some one of the nearness of death. It was rarely heard. Yes, she admitted that learned folk had come down and explained the noise. But they didn't know everything.

"And, look you," she concluded, "I heard it the night before Master Hugh's father died. In chapel we heard it, when he had finished with his preaching, and we thinking of our sins."

Morgan, who had not a single fiber of superstition woven into his character, laughed at the idea.

"These old crones," he said, "they gloat like witches over that sort of thing."

I suggested that it was a mournful and depressing sound, and that no doubt that fact was at the root of the superstition. But Morgan would not admit that the sound was depressing.

"Not to me, at any rate," he insisted. "There is something fine about it to me; it stirs my blood—I like it—it is almost like a call to arms."

He spoke rather fiercely and defiantly, and it was not at all like him to speak in that fashion. In spite of his rough strength and manners he was a gentle fellow.

"The summoning of the tribe," I said. "The old Welsh warriors pouring down the hills to repel the invaders."

"Something like that," he said shyly. "One can picture it."

The next time we heard the sound again, and I told Morgan that I would like to investigate the cause of it. He was willing enough to take me to the place.

"These old wives' tales," he said. "Still, there is something pretty about them; one could not do without them altogether."

We set out in the moonlight for a place two miles north of Pant-y-dwn. He walked so quickly—so eagerly, it seemed to me—

that I could hardly keep pace with him. The sound had ceased, and it was not until we were near the edge of the cliffs that we heard it again. And you may not believe me, but I tell you that it was just like the roll of drums, beating a tattoo within a few yards of where we were standing. I looked down into the deep, narrow cleft in the cliff, sharp as though it had been cut with a knife. Morgan began to explain.

"Only at very big tides," he said; "the water flows over into a kind of well. It drives the air out, but not in a regular flow. That would produce a single note. There is a constant check that produces a vibration—almost like the sharp beat of drumsticks, is it not?"

It was all very uncanny—very strange. But stranger than the sound itself was the effect it seemed to produce on Hugh Morgan. I saw him standing there by the edge of the chasm, and—of course, that may have been due to the curious effect of moonlight—he seemed to have changed. There was a kind of darkness on his face, and deep lines, and an almost savage look of joy in his eyes. And I noticed for the first time that there was a certain cruelty about the curve of his mouth.

And then he suddenly said: "One could fight to the sound of that music—one could kill. I suppose that is why the drum is part of the soldier's life."

The sound died away into silence, and Morgan became practical again. "The well fills up," he said. "And then—very slowly—it empties itself. They've never quite explained that."

We waited for another half hour, but there was no sound except the beating of the waves on the rocks three hundred feet below. Then we returned to Pant-y-dwn, and Morgan was in high spirits. He sang something in Welsh—something not at all like the mournful and beautiful songs of his native land. I could not understand a word of it, but the music stirred my blood, and not, mind you, in the way a "march" would quicken one's pulse. It was no "march" to battle; I was certain of that. It was the battle itself—the tumult and the glory of it, the fierce energy and the tempestuous pain.

I never heard the sound of the drums again. And two weeks later I left Pant-

y-dwn and Hugh Morgan passed out of my life. I wrote to him four times after I returned to Cardiff, but he never answered my letters. I suppose I am foolishly sensitive—rather too particular about the duties of friendship. But, at any rate, it was quite clear to me that Morgan had no desire to keep up the acquaintance with a man for whom he had taken a sudden liking. The bond was broken as easily as it had been forged. It is useless to deny that I was hurt. And often during the year I pictured to myself the farm at Pant-y-dwn—Morgan sitting in the dining room with a pipe in his mouth, the very respectable ancestor looking down at him from over the mantelpiece, and—but this was by no means a necessary part of the picture—Morgan listening to the sound of a drum.

A gap of a year makes a serious break in the telling of any story. But I should like to insist on the difference between a story told for the sake of producing an effect and a story that is just a plain narrative of facts. Anyhow, the fact is that, for a whole year, Hugh Morgan passed out of my life. And then he came back into it again through one of those accidents—one calls them accidents—that enter so largely into the piecing together of this puzzle we call life. I learned, through the merest chance, that Pant-y-dwn was for sale. The farm was too far away from Cardiff for any advertisement of the sale to appear in the local papers. But it so happened that I picked up the auctioneer's catalogue, which some one had left on the seat of a railway carriage. I think even then I should have laid it down again, or have thrown it under the seat, if a gust of wind had not turned over the leaves and shown me the name of Pant-y-dwn on the cover. Well, then, of course I read the pamphlet with interest. All the contents of the house were to be sold, and then the agricultural implements, and finally the farm itself. Everything was described in glowing language, and even the portrait of Emrys Morgan was attributed to Gainsborough, though it is quite certain that the old man had died when the great artist was ten years old.

There are two accidents for you—the finding of the catalogue and the draft that had turned over the leaves. The third was the fact that I was just about to take a holiday and that I had not yet decided where to spend it. And behind these mere chances

something that was greater than chance seemed to be moving toward me. I remember quite well that as I turned over the pages of the dirty catalogue I felt a curious longing to return to Pant-y-dwn. And this was all the more odd as I had always hated the place, and Hugh Morgan, the only attraction during my visit, had behaved very badly to me. I had no particular desire to see him again, but I felt—it is difficult to precisely describe the feeling to you—that I would like to see Pant-y-dwn again. It was almost as though something were drawing me back to the place against my will.

Well, I went down to Tal-y-bont, called on the Prices, who told me that Hugh Morgan had left the neighborhood about six months previously, and drove over to Pant-y-dwn with them in their car. I bought two or three shabby pieces of fine old furniture, and the portrait of Emrys Morgan, which, for a "Gainsborough," fetched the very small sum of five guineas. And I had a chat with old Mrs. Evans, who was very pleased to see me, and wept bitterly when she spoke of Hugh Morgan.

"He was never rightly himself," she sobbed, "when you had gone. Indeed, it wasn't him at all, striding about the house and speaking sharply, and looking so fierce as possibly he could."

And I learned that he had thrashed the bailiff, and the man had left, and that no one had taken his place. And the farm had just gone to rack and ruin. And every day—in all weathers—the *Cariad* had put out to sea, and then one day she had missed stays and a gale had driven her on the rocks, and Morgan had had to fight for his life.

"And he laughing," she cried, "and no harm done to him whatever. The curse have passed him by—sure and for certain."

And then I gathered that the Drummer had come again—one night in midwinter—and Morgan had gone down to listen to the music, and the morning after he had been terrible—in such high spirits, and yet brutally savage in spite of his mirth. And a week later he had gone abroad. She had never heard from him since. A solicitor had looked after the estate.

And then, quite recently, had come the letter from the solicitor saying that the farm was to be sold. "And no doubt it is the Lord's will," she said; "but it is an evil day when there is no Morgan at Pant-y-dwn."

III.

Last winter I was very ill, and the doctors ordered me a long sea voyage and sunshine and complete rest. And my friend Pardoe, who has nothing to do but cruise about in his eight-hundred-ton steam yacht, asked me to accompany him on an aimless wandering through the Malay Archipelago. It was about the only part of the world that he had not visited, and he said he would be really glad of my company. It was easy enough to get friends for a Mediterranean trip, but few people cared to go so far afield as the East Indies.

I should like to tell you the full story of those splendid days, if only out of gratitude to Pardoe. But I am, for the moment, concerned with a single incident—just one day that will always stand out in my memory, a day when the canvas of smooth, blue seas, and sunshine, and green islands glittering like jewels, was for a little while torn apart, and death and ugliness peeped through the ragged gap, and one saw, almost as if in a dream, far back into days when only a strong man armed managed to keep his goods.

We had the warning at Batavia, where we spent Christmas Day. Pardoe was hugely delighted. I remember his coming into the saloon, rubbing his hands and shouting:

"Pirates, my boy! What do you think of that? Real pirates! And the Dutch gun-boats can't get in touch with 'em. And we've a four-inch gun for'ard, under a canvas screen."

I knew that gun well enough. It was a toy of Pardoe's and had never been fired in anger. It had been the dream of his life to train it on a crowd of savages and blow their canoes out of the water. In the Cardiff yacht club we joked about Pardoe's gun. Never, so far as I knew, had it killed anything. But Pardoe was always talking of what it would do one of these days. You see, Pardoe was the sort of adventurous chap who always liked to picture himself in a tight corner—a slim, harmless yacht attacked by those who knew nothing of the teeth she hid under that square structure of gray canvas. And then—swiftly and suddenly—the avenging gun. And now it seemed that Pardoe's chance had come. The very paint and brasswork of the yacht breathed of wealth. What a prize for those pirates the consul at Batavia had talked about!

"They'd expect rifles," he said gleefully, "in these days; but a four-inch gun!" And then, remembering that I was an invalid, he added: "I say, it's jolly bad luck on you, old chap. You were ordered perfect rest."

I told him that, thanks to the gun, I felt as safe as if I were at home in Cardiff. And I asked him if he had any one on board who could shoot straight with it, and he told me that he himself could hit any decent-sized sort of vessel at two miles.

Well, after the Christmas festivities we left Batavia and steamed northward into the China Sea. And five days later a rusty old tramp passed within half a mile of us, and then turned and opened her mouth and showed her teeth and spat at us. The shell struck our funnel and passed clean through it, and you must picture Pardoe looking up at the hole and laughing at the smallness of it.

"A popgun!" he shouted, and we swung round, and there was a good deal of activity on the foredeck. And as we swung round the old tramp, guessing that we were not afraid of her, steamed away from us. And, by Jove, she could move—like a racer.

"Fifteen knots to our twelve," said Pardoe. And then the gun got to work, and Pardoe, stripped to the waist, as if he were handling guns on the old *Victory*, plastered her with four-inch shells. For every time he hit he missed twice; but he hit often enough. He smashed her funnel, one of her boats and her rudder, and finally planted one clean in the engine room. She came to a standstill, and we slowed down our engines.

And then she died gloriously—in the brave old style. Pardoe likes to think that we set fire to her magazine, and that he had had some hand in her final destruction. But I fancy that some one on board blew her up. Anyway, it was a more desirable death than hanging.

The explosion split her in half, and the two pieces of her tilted and sank. We put out a boat and picked up three Chinamen and an evil-faced, tall, dark-skinned fellow, with a bloodstained handkerchief bound round his head and a pair of heavy gold rings in his ears. His right hand had been shot away and there was a splinter of steel in his chest. I did not recognize him until he said:

"The drums, Dennick—the drums."

Then I asked him whether he was mad, and he smiled.

"The drums," he whispered, "the drums." And then, after a long interval, in which we fought to save him from death, he gasped: "The old man called me—I had to come."

He never spoke again. He looked out across the sea and seemed to be listening for something. And a few minutes later he died.

A case of atavism, I suppose. There were stories of an "Amrash" Morgan in Batavia, a famous buccaneer of the eighteenth century. It was the English consul who told us about him when we returned with our three prisoners. No doubt Amrash was as near as the Dutch could get to his real name. But that very respectable old gentleman!

It was hard to believe that Pant-y-dwn had been bought with the proceeds of abominable crimes. Yet why had I hated the place? And why had a long line of Morgans perished in the grip of the sea? And

We have given our readers a number of Harris-Burland's best yarns, and expect to continue giving them in the POPULAR regularly.



PERKINS—THE SORTER

GEORGE W. PERKINS put in the better part of a day recently in a critical examination of men who were candidates for important work in a foreign field.

A friend who called upon him late in the afternoon remarked that he must have found the work rather trying.

"Trying?" replied Mr. Perkins. "Not at all. I've been doing it all my life. The first job I ever had was in this same line. I did it as a boy and got two dollars a week for it."

"What!" exclaimed the caller. "You are joking, are you not?"

"I am not joking at all," replied Perkins. "The first job I had was in sorting fruit in a grocery store picking out the lemons from the oranges and arranging the two in proper style. That is what you call sorting. You get expert in that line after a while. I've been a sorter all my life. I found when I got in the insurance business that my experience and judgment in the grocery trade was of value. It was the same in the banking business. I was a sorter there—a sorter of men. It was the same to-day in examining these men for overseas duty. I merely was deciding as to lemons and oranges."

"And what did you find?"

"Mostly lemons," was the answer.

How did you like this number of the magazine? Write us what you liked best in it. We want to give you what you want.

why had the Drummer—feared by all the countryside as a warning of death—only stirred some strange, savage delight beneath the surface of Hugh Morgan's boyish love of the sea? And why had Morgan gone a-roving?

These are questions that have to be answered by even the keenest opponent of the atavistic theory.

And I think the portrait itself has to be explained. I sold the picture, and the dealer who bought it discovered—nosing about, as dealers will—that the canvas had been stretched over another portrait. And this was a very ugly thing indeed—a portrait of the real Emrys Morgan before he had settled down to a life of respectability in London. And, do you know, it was remarkably like Hugh Morgan, as I saw him lying on the deck of the steam yacht, even to the gold earrings and the bloodstained handkerchief round his head.

A Chat With You

NOT so very many years ago it was not unusual for the college professor to look upon magazine fiction as "drivel." They taught English literature in the colleges, of course, but they never got much further than Thackeray in England and Hawthorne in this country. Edgar Allan Poe had a hard time breaking into select scholastic society. Robert Louis Stevenson was the first of the great moderns to smash the traditions. He showed people that literature could be modern and interesting and up to date, and that there was a new and great style of modern writing coming to take the place of the amiable cheerfulness of Charles Lamb and the tenuous mysticism of Hawthorne. He was the first disciple of the modern school of action and quick life as opposed to meditation. Kipling, Jack London—a lot of the people writing for this magazine—are building up a new school of English literature that is more American and colonial, more of the spirit of the pioneers of civilization, than the culture and learning of the ancient cities. We cannot see our own times yet in full proportion, but we know that when these years are numbered among the past and classified, the book of the period that will be remembered will be the tale of adventure—whether of pirates, or business men, or

shopgirls, the tale of keen strife and swift action.

And now Columbia University has further recognized the kind of fiction we publish by opening a course in short-story and magazine writing.

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THIS would come with a shock to the black-clothed educators of an earlier day, who believed that theology and the dead languages were about the only things worth serious study. It also comes as a surprise to a good many who think that story writing is a "gift" and not to be learned at all.

Inasmuch as we have to read at least a hundred manuscripts before we accept one, we might be expected to think that enough people were trying to write as it is without the universities turning loose upon us new flocks of budding authors every year.

And then, too, we might be expected to think that the writer ought to learn in the school of experience in actual life rather than in a college classroom.

¤ ¤

WE believe, on the contrary, that a good course in story writing may be a blessing. It cannot teach a man what to say, but it can teach him what not to say. It cannot give him a punch if nature hasn't, but it can teach him to hit straight. It can help him to estab-

A CHAT WITH YOU—Continued.

lish real standards of what is good and bad writing. Strictly speaking, you cannot ever teach a man how to *do* anything. You can, however, make it easier for him to learn for himself. And this, if the professors are practical and commercial, not theoretical and academic experts on writing, is what the universities can do.



HOW a genius learned to write has little bearing on the average man, for the genius will accomplish, often unconsciously, and always in some original way, the thing that nature has meant him to do in this world. Let's forget, for the moment, Shakespeare and Cervantes and Flaubert and De Maupassant, and get to the men who are living here, with us, and writing now, to-day.

Roy Norton, whose big novel of a Caribbean republic, of adventure and politics, "The Liberator," appears complete in the next issue of the magazine, was educated as a civil engineer. He traveled the far frontiers, discovered gold mines, made and lost two fortunes, before he learned to write for **THE POPULAR**.

W. A. Fraser, whose story of the Northwest Mounted Police follows Norton's, was also a civil engineer, both in India and northern Canada, before he commenced to write for us.

J. Frank Davis, who has a political story in the next issue, learned to write while city editor of a Boston newspaper.

H. C. Rowland, also represented in

the next issue, was a doctor before he ever became a writer. Dane Coolidge was a naturalist and an authority on Western animals, and B. M. Bower learned to write on a ranch.



ON the other hand, H. H. Knibbs, one of the newest of the really great writers of adventure fiction, waited till he had lived through years of adventure till he had something to write about, and then spent years at Harvard working hard learning how to write it. His next serial, which is the biggest thing he has ever done, and which is coming soon in **THE POPULAR**, will prove to you that real literature can be thrilling, direct, stirring, and *easy to read*, and that a man need not be a bloodless highbrow just because he is a student of the subject to which he is giving his life.



DO we advise the man who thinks he can write to take a course in college?

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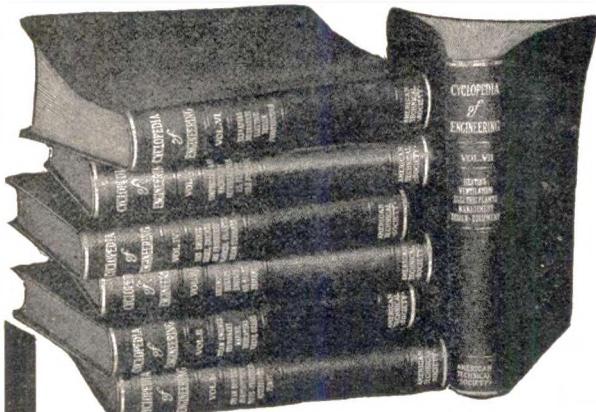
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