

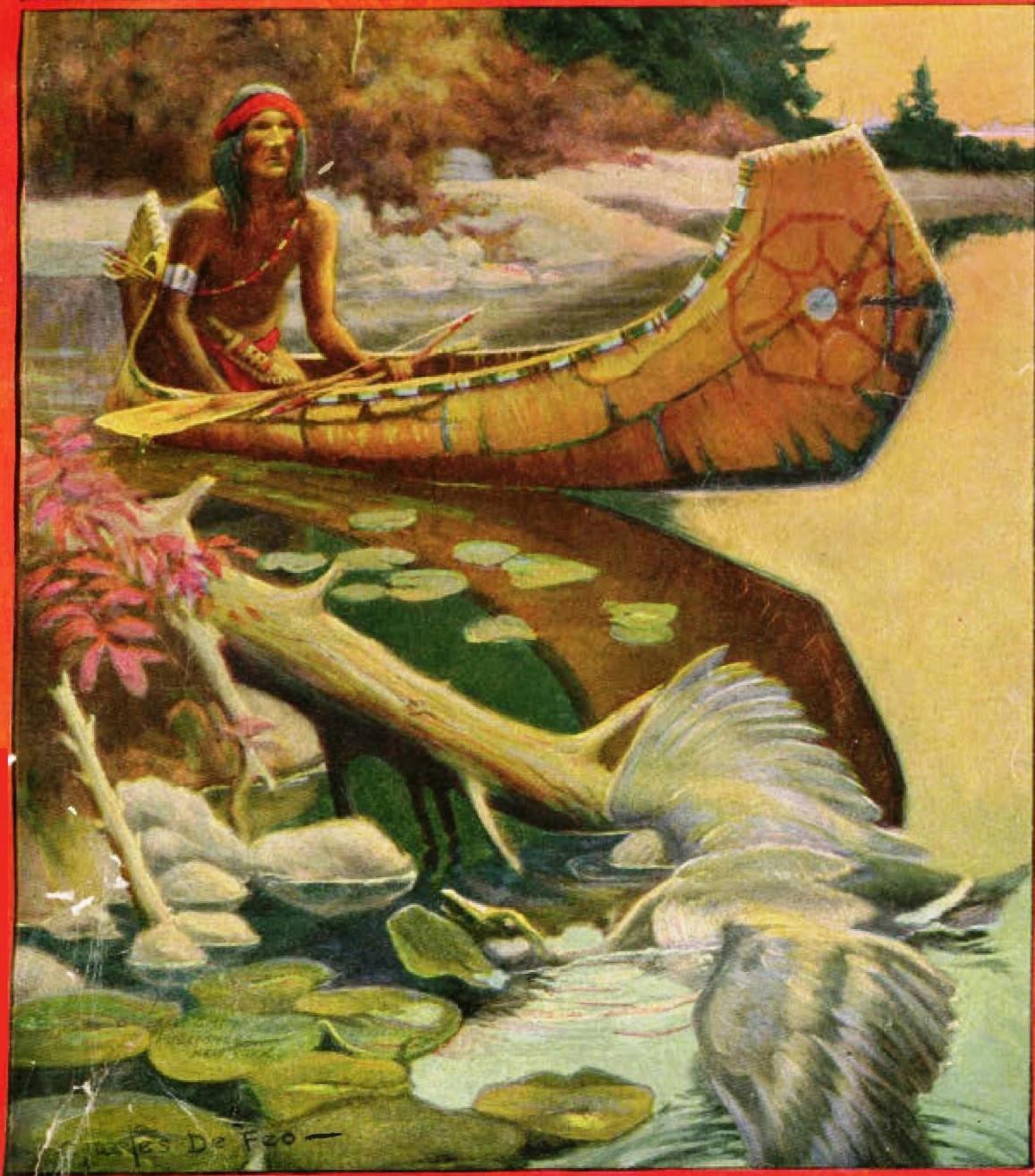
BASEBALL STORY BY BURT L. STANDISH 10 CENTS

TOP-NOTCH

TWICE-A-MONTH MAGAZINE

VOL. 9, No. 4

AUGUST MID-MONTH ISSUE



ON A DARK STAGE

NEW STORY OF THE THEATRE
BY ROLAND ASHFORD PHILLIPS

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Lucky in Lincoln

A Complete Novel

By JAMES FRENCH DORRANCE

*Author of "Hatched in Seattle," and
"Olaf's Olympiad"*

Nebraska
Story
of
Baseball
and
Politics



One of the actual place tales that have
been such a success in this magazine.

Story that will make you crack a smile or two

In the September TOP-NOTCH. Out
August the First. Ten cents per copy.

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Talks With Top-Notch Readers

By BURT L. STANDISH

THROUGH THE HOOP

 **H**AT a writer of fiction should bother his head about fact does not occur to many who offer the products of their typewriter to magazines. Yet the yarn spinners, who make a success of it, know that the story which fails to ring true is in danger—quite likely to frost the reader, instead of entertaining and delighting him.

It follows that wage workers of the pen, and typewriter, cultivate a sense of reality; otherwise they might not be able to meet gasoline and chauffeur bills, and be obliged, in summer, to write in a garret instead of at sea on their private yachts.

To please the public of to-day, it is not enough for the fictionist to have a vivid fancy; he must—up his sleeve, perhaps—have a high respect for fact.

He must remember, now and then, that life has laws, and that the breaking of them is apt to spoil the story.



WE receive letters complimenting **Top-Notch** authors on the fidelity of their stories to the particular phases of life or endeavor which they picture.

I can't say that compliments of this sort would be merited in the case of every story we publish. Letting fancy rove, unreined by fact, makes an enjoyable bit of reading occasionally.

Readers who take the pains to write that this or that author has given a true ring to his tale, sometimes have an idea that the narrator must have passed through experiences similar to those set forth.

While this is gratifying to the author—because it tells him he has done his work well—it is not always in accord with the facts.

Following is a letter, from England, of the sort I have in mind:

Editor of Top-Notch Magazine.

DEAR SIR: Your April 1st issue is now being sold in London, and I have been tempted to sample it. I have at the moment of writing only read Roland Ashford Phillips' yarn "Beyond the Stage Door," and

after such a rollicking story, I am convinced that the remainder of the issue will be "extra."

It is positively certain that Mr. Phillips is one of the few who can write as well about the stage as he can write fiction. He is undoubtedly an old-school actor. He is thoroughly well versed in the theatrical routine in every form. I am myself at present rehearsing in a big dramatic production, and can thoroughly appreciate his moods as displayed by "Jerry." Only those who have been *through the hoop* can be instilled with the real nervousness and excitement before the rise of the curtain on the "first night" as Mr. Phillips portrays.

I say, in conclusion, that I hope to see some more from either Mr. Phillips' pen, or some more theatrical yarns in your issues. It is a pity we do not get more of them! Good luck to you. Yours in enthusiasm,

HORACE DOUGLAS,
126 Drummond Road, Southwark Park,
London, S. E.

We have had several letters from professional folk about this theatrical story, and each correspondent has noted that the author evidently knew his way about behind the curtain. And this is so; yet Mr. Douglas is mistaken in thinking the author an "old-school" actor. Mr. Phillips is not even an old-school writer. He is a worker in the newest school of fiction:

The kind that does not let its love of romance and color blind it to the laws of life and art.



IN a way Mr. Phillips has been *through the hoop* of theatrical experience. He has studied his subject, and to that study he has brought sympathy and understanding. He has been about the theater much, has written for the stage, and many of his friends are actors.

In other words, he is rightly equipped for this branch of his work—the production of theatrical tales. He goes *through the hoop* as every writer of stories ought to go through it, if he would hit the mark.

It is the same with other **Top-Notch** writers—Mr. Lebhar, Mr. Terhune, Mr. Dorrance, for examples. And many are the hoops they go through to give you the stories

MONTH TEN-CENT MAGAZINE

that impart such rich entertainment and delight.

IT occurs, of course, that some setting for a tale, while inviting to the author who lives in New York, is too far from Broadway to permit of his being on the spot; and there are experiences which, enticing as they may be to the story builder, are utterly beyond his personal range. So he is obliged to enlist the aid of others.

Instead of going through the hoop himself, he does the next best thing: He consults somebody who has been through.

I don't say this is always a safe course—that it yields the best effects. Yet it is remarkable what splendid stories the author, who knows his art, sometimes evolves from scenes that he has not visited.

As honorary editors of **Top-Notch**, I feel that you will be interested in this somewhat shoppy talk. The making of a story, of course, is not so interesting to most people, as the reading of it; and yet, from your letters, I know that you are keenly alert to all that concerns the quality of the magazine you read.

The following letter from D. E. Stout, of Philadelphia, is a specimen of the attention some readers give to the details of editing:

As an honorary editor of **Top-Notch**, I have the following criticisms to make: Give us less yellow margins and more of the painting and drawing on the cover page. If the publishers care to spend the money, covers by Lyendecker, Stitt, De Foe, Kline, et cetera, would be appreciated more by the readers of **Top-Notch** than any other magazine.

The table of contents can be improved by listing the stories in the order they appear in the magazine and reversing the order of the serials, having the new appear first, and the one closing last.

The "Dreams and Their Sequels" department lacks interest to a majority of the readers. Dreams—daydreams at that—have no place in a magazine printing red-blooded action stories. Ask the honorary staff.

The **Top-Notch**—and all Street & Smith magazines—advertisements can be improved. This is something that the publishers should look into.

Every reader of **Top-Notch** gets his money's worth. The stories have been steadily improving for a long time; keep it up. I will not discuss them, but will say I am satisfied, but will not be contented until you reach the notch at the top.

In the May number talk, you speak of Baker winning the pennant by a home-run drive. It was the world's championship you will remember, if you stop and think.

Mr. Standish, your "Lefty, of the Big League" is the poorest story you ever turned out. It is not true to life. I will not go into detail unless you call on me as honorary editor to do so.

I would be pleased to know whether or not my suggestions meet with your approval. I have made no mention of "Mechanics" and "Shop," but it is my opinion that the space could be used to better advantage for stories.

I have one more suggestion to make. It is that you start a letter department in **Top-Notch**. Readers like to know what other readers have to say about the magazine. They also like to know a little about the authors, whether Jones is an explorer and intends going to Alaska for story material; or whether Brown is writing a series of stories about bobos for the magazine, and other little personalities and intimacies. The chat could be combined with this department, and placed in the body of the magazine. Will you let me know your opinion about this? You have my best wishes for the success of yourself and the magazine.

I STAND corrected about the "pennant." It should have been "world's championship," of course.

The "Mechanics" and "Shop" departments have been modified. The eight pages hitherto divided equally between the two departments are now given to one under the head of "How to Make Things." And that head, I think, tells you just what the modified department is going to be, if you have not seen for yourself; the change was made in the July mid-month number.

"Dreams and Their Sequels" have been dropped for a time.

Mr. Stout suggests that we start a letter department, "that readers like to know what other readers have to say about the magazine, and like to know a little about the authors."

This suggestion, an excellent one, has been anticipated, we think, for some time, by these talks with you and the printing of your letters.

NOW and then we get a letter that contains no criticism—just a plain expression of approval or admiration. This declaration of "love at first sight" is made by a reader in Salt Lake City:

Editor of Top-Notch MAGAZINE.

I had never read a **Top-Notch** until the March 15th issue, and I can say it was "love at first sight." It is my style from cover

to cover. There were two things that attracted my attention on the cover of that issue, and they were "Planted in Salt Lake" and a new serial by Bert L. Standish, my favorite writer. It is not full of advertisements, like most magazines, and I would walk to and from work in order to get a *Top-Notch*. Yours very truly,

John Hyde

(Not the John Hyde in "The Garden of Adventure")

From John McDermott, of Denver, Colo., we have this:

Editor of Top-Notch Magazine.

DEAR SIR: I have just finished your splendid serial, "Lefty o' the Big League," and as I have never seen a letter from Denver in your columns, I take the liberty to tell you it is without doubt the best baseball story I have ever read, and I have read some good ones from your pen. I do not like serials where the story is about baseball, as I am too impatient; the others I let run on until I have all the copies, then I start and read them. I am waiting eagerly for the next baseball story, by you, in *Top-Notch*.

BY working overtime, I have managed to write a sequel to "Lefty o' the Big League" in season for the present number. It is a serial, and, from the present estimate of its length, will run through five issues—four more after this.

Besides the second installment of my serial, you will have, in the next issue, a story of strange baseball interest, by James French Dorrance. It is called "Lucky in Lincoln," and the scene of it is that pleasant Nebraska city.

This is one of the actual-place stories we have been publishing, and, I think, a particularly good one. Certainly it gives you the local air of Lincoln.

There is politics in that air, you may be sure. How could it be otherwise?

The Presidential Candidate is there, and in this story, yet it never could have happened but for the great national game.

A REFRESHING summer story, by Albert Payson Terhune, is one of the many agreeable features of the next *Top-Notch*. It is a tale of tilting on Lake Michigan, off Mackinac Island. You will see the knights of the muffled lance, mounted on spirited canoes, charge each other in fierce yet sportful combat. A unique tale which you all will enjoy.

Another complete novelette for the next number is a railroad story, by J. Aubrey Tyson—an odd tale in many respects, and

clever. It is called "On the Rail at Nowhere."

THIS letter, which speaks of some stories published many months ago, as well as some of the recent ones, is from Ferdinand Davis, of Newark, N. J.:

And as for the writers that contribute to *Top-Notch*'s large store of stories, Garnet Warren, Barry Wolcott, Albert Payson Terhune, and Bertram Lebhar are the four "stars," and my favorites. And "The Dice of Destiny," "The Tricolored Sins," "Beyond the Stage Door," and the "Camera Chap" tales are all prize stories.

When I read "Beyond the Stage Door," I could fairly imagine I was back on dear old Broadway amid the bright lights. Keep up the good work. A story from your pen is welcome? Well, more than that; it is a bonanza.

We are glad to be able, in this issue, to give you the opening chapters of a serial by the author of "Beyond the Stage Door."

It is a tale of the theater—the longest one on that theme Mr. Phillips has written.

I think you will find it the equal of his last theatrical story. It is broader in its scope than "Beyond the Stage Door," for it takes you not only into the vicissitudes of Rialto life and the terrors of the rehearsal, but along with the actors into the life of a stock-company town.

This is one of the longer serial novels for which there has been such a demand; it will run through four issues.

FROM Mr. Sinclair Snyder, author, of South Kortright, N. Y., we have this:

Editor of Top-Notch Magazine.

I wish to say a word in appreciation of *Top-Notch*. I think it is all to the good. I see some of your readers want you to cut out the continued stories; I say no. Keep on with the serial novels, but make them longer.

The serials are not in danger. That question was settled by *Top-Notch* readers long ago. Since it was decided by an overwhelming majority that the serial novels are among our most popular features, a question bobbed up as to the length they ought to be. It looks as if most readers would like to see them somewhat longer than in the past; and, acting upon this belief, we shall give you some serials long enough to run through five and six numbers.

TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE

VOL. IX

AUGUST 15, 1912

No. 4



Burns, the News Trapper

By Albert Payson Terhune

(A COMPLETE NOVEL)

CHAPTER I.

THE TIP FROM ENGLAND.

THE big city room of the New York *Buzzard* was fast filling. Reporters were drifting in for their afternoon assignments.

The paper-littered floor, the paper-strewn desks, the noise of many voices, the pur of ticker and telegraph instruments, the jangle of phone bells, the occasional yells of "Copy!"—all denoted to the outsider an atmosphere of disorder.

As a matter of fact, these elements were details in the best organized and most carefully ordered institution on earth—an up-to-date metropolitan newspaper office.

A president might be shot, a railroad

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train or a steamboat might smash out a hundred lives, Wall Street might turn upside down—the facts in each casualty would cause no dismay or confusion here. The story's multiple "ends" would be untangled swiftly; it would be whipped into shape, and, in an unbelievably short time, ready for the waiting public.

But just at present there was no such "big story" to gladden the city editor's soul, or to rouse to fever heat the dormant spirit of work frenzy in the crowd of seemingly lazy men who were lounging about the great room.

It was what is known as a "dull day." News of a sort there always is, in New York. But news for whose collection or elaboration a man may gladly toil with every atom of his energy for

twenty-four hours on a stretch was woefully absent.

Schenck, the city editor, was glancing disgustedly over the list his assistant had so laboriously laid out for his consideration.

"Nothing in sight?" he asked.

"Like a rainy day in Frog Hollow," replied the assistant gloomily. "On a day like this, on the 'Rube' paper where I used to work, the editor used to print 'News are Scarce' at the head of the local column."

"And a dozen high-salary men loafing about, and the space men glaring at me like dogs at the butcher wagon," sighed the city editor.

Sidney Burns, the *Buzzard's* Wall Street man, strolled in, and crossed to the city editor's desk. Now Burns, by all precedent and routine duty, should not have been north of Wall Street for another two hours at the very least, and at sight of him the city editor stared in displeased wonder.

Burns, impervious to the glare at which a cub reporter's knees would have knocked together like castanets, continued his advance, and dropped unceremoniously into a chair at Schenck's side.

"I've left Ellis on the job down there," he observed, nodding vaguely in the general direction of Wall Street. "Nothing's going to break loose. If it does he has orders to phone you, and hold it down till you can send some one."

"But what's—"

"I've got a tip on something that looks big, if we can land it. I didn't like to phone, for the central down at that exchange has been known to give away good stories; and this will look good, as a beat, if it pans out."

"What is it?"

"I got a letter from my kid brother half an hour ago. He's doing a walking tour of England. He says he was at the Pink Line offices last week, and saw Porter Rinehart's valet go in there and engage the state suite on the *Atlanta* for her next westward trip."

Now, to the ordinary hearer there was absolutely nothing in this commonplace information to cause Joe

Schenck's relaxed body to stiffen into sudden and keen attention. But to any man who had kept his fingers on the pulse of the world's news, the statement carried an infinite amount of significance:

Porter Rinehart—big, grim, sphinx-like—was known through Wall Street, and through the world at large as "The Steel Czar." At his whim—and he had many—financiers danced like manikins. At a nod he could boom or smash promising stocks.

Mighty was Czar Rinehart, and much to be feared. He and his mortal financial foe, Hiram Kay, had in their frequent strife crushed small investors and lesser financial magnates as two charging bulls might trample the denizens of an ant hill.

So when, six weeks earlier, Porter Rinehart had suddenly thrown over all business cares, and, at his physician's positive orders, gone abroad for a whole year to recruit his supposedly shattered nerves, Wall Street had drawn a long breath of relief.

For a solid year the capricious czar would keep his fingers out of the financial pie. This meant many a night's sound sleep for insomniac speculators. For word had gone forth that Rinehart was not only to be away for at least a year, but that during that space he would not take so much as passing interest in the Wall Street game.

If Sidney Burns' news that the czar was returning homeward were true, the situation became, to say the least, startling.

It was quite natural that so capricious a man as Rinehart should change his plans, but his every movement at home or abroad was the subject of extensive press notoriety. And no whisper of his proposed return to America had reached the newspapers on either side of the Atlantic.

Hence, if he were returning, he was doing so in the profoundest secrecy. And that, with such a man, could mean but one thing—a sudden and tremendous coup of some sort in Wall Street.

Wherefore, the city editor—whose news instinct told him all these things,

without the trouble of reasoning any of them out—sat up straight, as though he had been all at once galvanized. He stared open-eyed at Burns.

"You're sure that your brother—" he began.

"Yes. He's a level-headed chap, even if he's only just out of college. He traveled for a couple of days on the same train on the Continent with the Rinehart party, and he saw the valet talking in a whisper to the agent afterward—probably telling him to keep mum about the trip."

"That could be arranged easily enough," said Schenck. "Rinehart's the heaviest stockholder in the Pink Line. The Pink Line people would obey him as implicitly as his own servants. Hold on!"

He pulled a sheaf of papers from a pigeonhole of his desk, selected one, and glanced over it. It was the passenger list of the *Atlanta*.

"No use," said Burns. "His name's not on the list; I've looked. The *Atlanta*'s due to-morrow morning."

"We'll find out then; and so will every other paper in town," grumbled the city editor.

"I think," said Burns quietly, "we could find out sooner."

"How do you mean?"

"When I got the letter I figured things out. I guessed that if he's really coming home secretly he won't want every ship-news reporter to see him at Quarantine, and publish the fact that he's at home. Whatever surprise he may mean to spring, he'll want to get on land and consult with his lieutenants first."

"But—"

"I think that's why he chose the *Atlanta* instead of one of the faster boats on the other lines. His word will be law on the *Atlanta*. He'll be allowed to leave the vessel at any point he wants to—"

"A tug?"

"No; his yacht, the *Gazelle*. He left her over here, you remember. I telephoned to one or two chaps I know, who are in touch with such matters. I found out the *Gazelle* has been hurriedly put

into commission, and is to leave port today some time."

"What!"

"Ostensibly bound for Charleston to pick up a Southern relative of Rinehart's for a health cruise."

"She's going down to meet the *Atlanta*, and—"

"And take Rinehart off, run him up to New York, land him quietly, and let a waiting auto whisk him off to some house that he'll use as his headquarters till he's ready to spring his mine."

A pile of "flimsy" was laid on the city editor's desk by a copy boy, who had just opened and pasted it. The city editor, as he listened to Burns, was mechanically glancing over the yellow sheets.

"Here," he grunted to the waiting boy, singling out a page from the rest, "this is telegraph copy. Take it right over to—"

He paused. His eyes were riveted on the damp yellow sheet.

"I guess you're barking up the wrong tree, Burns," he said disgustedly. "Here's an A. P. cable report from Cap Martin of an interview given out, from his villa there, to an Italian reporter, by Porter Rinehart. Given this morning, too. *This morning!* Doesn't look much as if he would be within a day's journey of New York, eh? That was a grand tip of yours, all right, Burns. The only trouble with it was that it wasn't true. That's the trouble with all best stories that float in here. All they lack is facts."

CHAPTER II.

THE HUNT.

THE city editor swung his swivel chair around to face his desk again. That action, in every newspaper and business office, has but one meaning: "The interview is ended." And it was Burns' place to submit meekly to the wordless decree.

But Burns at best was not submissive. And just now his worst enemy could not have applied the term to him. Instead of moving away, he stood his ground.

"I'll back my brother's tip," he said, "against all the 'flimsy' dispatches ever coined. That's just the trick old Rinehart would play to throw Wall Street off the track. To-morrow morning, while they were reading his cabled interview from Cap Martin, he'd be reading it himself—in New York City; and laughing to think how he'd gulled the public into believing he was four thousand miles away."

"Too thin," commented Schenck.

"Yes? Well, I've a hunch it isn't, and I want to play that hunch."

"I've no men to spare on a wild-goose chase. That cable settles it."

"To-morrow's my day off. Will you let me begin it now?"

"Going to swim out to meet the *Atlanta*?"

"Perhaps. If I don't make good it'll cost the paper nothing. If I land what I go for, you won't kick at my expense bill, and I think I can see my name on the bulletin board with the old man's compliments and the notice that I've snaked a one-hundred-dollar prize. Can I play my hunch—at my own risk?"

"Oh, chase along!" growled the city editor testily. "I've wasted too much time already on this cock-and-bull story."

Choosing to take this ungracious farewell as a form of assent to his application, Sidney Burns walked briskly out of the city room and out of the building.

He hurried to his rooms, where he speedily changed from the well-fitting business suit he was wearing into a set of old tweeds. The tweeds formed a disreputable outfit; the more so because, since Burns' last fishing trip, they had been wrapped around a lot of wireless-telegraphy paraphernalia which Sidney had long ago bought and on which he had often practiced at odd moments until another fad had driven "wireless" from his brain.

Clad in the rumpled garments he made his way to a wrecking company's office, and there chartered a tug for twenty-four hours.

He was well known at the company's

office, for more than once when he had been on "general work" he had used one of their tugs on business for his paper.

"Is McPherson's tug busy?" he asked. "If not, I'd like that. Mac and I are old friends. He's about the only captain you've got who knows how to obey a newspaper man's crazy orders without arguing."

Luckily McPherson and his tug were both disengaged. And at dusk—after several hours of telephoning, questioning, planning, and giving an outline of his instructions to McPherson—Burns boarded the tug *John Q. Bartholf* at South Ferry, and set out upon his "wild-goose chase."

Now, to the average man, the upper and lower bay are merely two large and boat-strewn bodies of water connected by the Narrows. But to a tug-boat captain they are as Main Street in his home town.

He not only knows their channels and currents, but he knows their denizens. He has as many gossips, friends and enemies, and sources of information there as he has on his own block.

And it was in this capacity now that McPherson proceeded to make himself decidedly useful. His tug took erratic courses. First she would run alongside an incoming tug from the lower bay, or a tramp steamer that was lumbering up from beyond Sandy Hook.

Again she would put in casually at Quarantine and at other points along the eastern and southern shores of Staten Island.

And everywhere McPherson would ask questions; questions that meant little to his hearers, and not very much more to himself. But when he reported the replies to Sidney Burns, who was lounging on the leather cushions of the pilot house in front of the red center stove, that young man ever nodded in pleased approval.

The gist of all the replies, in brief, condensed itself into the following news:

The steam yacht *Gazelle* had passed through the Narrows at five that afternoon. On passing Sandy Hook, she had

stood offshore, and had begun a somewhat senseless series of maneuvers.

She had first gone out to sea for a few miles, then had steamed back and forth as though patrolling the mouth of the lower bay.

"It's simple," said Burns. "The *Atlanta*'s due at her dock at seven tomorrow morning. But she's liable to be several hours ahead of her schedule. And the *Gazelle* dare not go far out to sea, for fear of missing her in the dark. So she's moving back and forth on the line the *Atlanta*'s got to cross. She will keep that up probably till the liner appears. I think we'd better move on, Mac."

The tug drove her brown nose into the dirty, ice-cold March waters, and puffed merrily southward.

As she passed the hook, McPherson, according to orders, rang for half speed. But at Burns' next command he balked.

"Douse my lights?" gasped the captain, with a river sailor's true horror of such a breach of law. "D'you want me to lose my license, and get fired, and have the company soaked for a fine, besides?"

"Mac," was Burns' calm reply, "I don't want any of those things to happen to you. In fact, such a triple tragedy, combined with the death of some dear friend, would come close to spoiling the whole day for me. Just the same, I want those lights out."

"But s'posin'—"

"I'm not supposing; and you mustn't, either. It's bad for the nerves. And maybe we'll both need all the nerves we've got before daybreak. So cut out the supposition, and do as I say."

"But—"

"Listen, Mac. You've been temporarily promoted. For the moment you are no longer a mere employee of the Sutherland Wrecking Company. You are in the honorable employ of the New York *Buzzard*—morning, evening, and Sunday editions; sworn circulation approximately the same as actual circulation; the finest advertising medium and cleanest news sheet in America. If you doubt it is all that, I refer you to our own ads. Now, don't you see how this

alters your status! You're under the *Buzzard's* orders, and I am the *Buzzard's* mouthpiece. If you get into trouble with the harbor police, or whoever it is that acts as bogeyman for disobedient tugboat captains, the *Buzzard* will see you through. And the line of trouble that a New York newspaper can't get a man out of, or into, has yet to be invented. The *Buzzard's* paying for this tea party, and all you've got to do is to mind orders. Out with the lights."

"Oh, all right!" grumbled McPherson. "If you put it that way. I s'pose if I don't, you'll write me up in the paper. And I'd as soon be fired as guyed by all my crowd. But it's a rank thing to do!"

"No one will know. There's nobody snooping around out here to see if you're keeping the lights going. At worst, any passing vessel can only report that a tug with no lights was cruising around."

"But what's the use?"

"On a black night like this, a craft carrying no lights, and lying as close to the water as we are, is invisible a few rods away."

"But what's the fun of being invisible?"

"The fun? Do you think we're a floating comic supplement? I'm looking for the *Gazelle*, as I told you. When once we pick her up I want to keep her in sight till she meets the *Atlanta*; that may be hours. And if, during all that time, her skipper sees a solitary tug dogging her, he'll be suspicious, and try to throw us off. The *Gazelle's* got the speed to do it, too, for all the swiftness your tugboat boasts. So I don't want us to be seen."

Still complaining, McPherson transmitted the unusual command to his scandalized crew. And, with not a light showing, the *John Q. Bartholf* took up her search for the yacht. For an hour the tug cast about on the trail of black water like a hunting dog. Then, not a mile away, the lighted counter of the *Gazelle* flashed into view.

With a hurried yank of the wheel, McPherson sheered off. Then the game of cross-purposes began in sober earnest.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHASE.

THE yacht—white, trim, beautiful in her clean, low lines—ranged at half speed along her chosen beat. And the unseen tug—dingy, squat, asthmatic—paralleled at a safe distance the *Gazelle's* every move.

The March night was black, and, out there at sea, bitterly cold. Burns, young and strong as he was, could hardly keep his teeth from chattering. In the stuffy little pilot house his knees were almost roasted by the overhot stove; and his back, against the warped window casing, was well-nigh frozen. There are, taken all in all, far pleasanter refuges on a blizzardsly night than the pilot house of a river tug.

At last, from high above the yacht, a shower of blue-white sparks flared and sputtered in a haltingly rhythmic succession.

"Gee!" exclaimed McPherson, at the wheel. "What's that?"

"Her wireless, of course. I didn't know she carried an outfit. But I might have guessed it. Financiers are always wild to keep in touch with their offices, even when they're on a pleasure cruise."

"But what's she signaling, I wonder?"

"She isn't signaling. She's evidently just picked up a message, and she's answering it. A message, most likely, from the *Atlanta*; the most natural thing in the world. The man on board the *Atlanta* is telegraphing to find if his yacht's ready for him to make his getaway. I wish I could read that message the yacht's operator is sending."

"Why can't you?" asked McPherson. "Last time you took a cruise with me you were all worked up about wireless. Said you'd bought a practice outfit, and were studying it all out."

"I was, but I'm not now. It took up too much time, so I dropped it. I learned to 'send' fairly well. That's the easiest part of telegraphy, you know. Any one can learn to send a message, after a fashion, in a few months' study. But when it comes to 'receiving'—that means reading a message—it's ten times

as hard. I never could get the hang of it, somehow. Full speed ahead, old man!" he broke off abruptly.

The *Gazelle* had wheeled, and was making off at a goodly pace, straight southeastward. McPherson rang for full speed, and, guided by the yacht's stern lights, gave chase.

"She knows where the *Atlanta* is," hazarded Burns, "and she's off to meet her. Lucky she isn't hitting a hotter pace! Can't you feed a speed ball to this old hulk of yours, Mac? She'll be out of sight pretty soon."

"What if she is? We've got her direction, and we'll pick her up when she slackens. See? She's easing down already."

The yacht had indeed slowed perceptibly. A few minutes later she rode motionless, save for the swell of the ocean.

The tug edged up closer and closer, until McPherson dared risk no nearer approach.

"We're almost stumbling over her now," he declared, in answer to a remonstrance from Burns. "If they had eyes in their heads, or a decent pair of ears among 'em, they'd know we were here. I s'pose, though, they aren't expecting any evening visits from tugs, so far out to sea as this. *Look!*"

Out of the inky blackness far in front of them leaped a blur of light. And at the same instant a rocket roared upward into the black sky from the yacht, showering the night with a trail of golden sparks.

"The *Atlanta*!" cried McPherson. "And the *Gazelle's* signaling her."

The oncoming blur of light resolved itself speedily into something that looked like a partially illuminated skyscraper.

On dashed the great liner, bearing down upon the two lesser craft like some gleaming, shapeless phantom of the darkness.

"She is slowing," reported McPherson. "She's going to lay to in a minute. From her direction she'll stop about a hundred yards to starboard of the *Gazelle*."

"Good!" exclaimed Burns, jumping

up; his discomfort forgotten in the glow of excitement that all at once possessed him. "Bring us around to the other side of the *Atlanta*—the side farthest from the *Gazelle*. Run us up close alongside. Close, mind you!"

"She's liable to swamp us!" complained McPherson, as he prepared to obey.

"She'll do nothing of the sort. Get as near as you dare before she stops. Then the instant she slows down and stops, run in close to her. I want to get aboard. When I do, you can back away to a safe distance, and wait till I sing out for you to come in again and take me off."

"Take you off? How in thunder could I do that?"

"I don't know yet. It'll be time enough to think about that when I'm ready to get off. Just now I've got to get aboard."

"Aboard? But—"

"Did you think I came all this way just to look at the *Atlanta* from a distance? I believe there's a man on board her who is going to be transferred by boat to that yacht. It's too dark for me to see him unless I get aboard the *Atlanta*. It will take several minutes for the boat to row to the *Gazelle*, and to come back again—longer if she has to make another trip with his luggage. And those minutes mean my chance. It's more leeway than Fortune gives to many a man in this queer game we call life."

The tug was well under way. Moving forward unseen in the darkness, and unheard above the churning of the water around the liner's keel, she came close alongside, just as the *Atlanta* came to a ponderous rolling halt.

Under the liner's stern ran the tug. The watch and all others who chanced to be awake on board the liner were evidently on the other side, forward, watching the yacht. It was practically certain that all of the passengers were in their staterooms. Six bells sounded, rhythmic and loud.

"Three o'clock!" murmured Burns, as he clambered to the roof of the pilot

house and crouched there. The buffers swished against the liner's side, and the tug came to a standstill.

The task of reaching the lowest deck of the great ship from the pilot house of the little tug was no easy one, you may be sure; but Burns had considered his difficulties well. There were no ports open, and the reporter could think of but one way to get aboard.

Under his whispered directions, a man of the tug's crew climbed to the top of the pilot house with a coil of rope in his hand. Fortunately there was but a slight roll to the ship as she lay; and with his eyes fixed on the flagstaff at the stern, which was canted backward at a slight angle, the sailor poised himself and gauged the distance.

"Mustn't miss it, old man," cautioned Burns. "The first throw may attract some one's attention."

Presently, as the big vessel steadied for an instant, the sailor drew back his shoulder and arm and hurled the rope coil high over the stern rail, athwart the inclined flagstaff.

Burns caught his breath anxiously, and gave the man's shoulder a congratulatory whack as the coil spun out in the air and fell back, with the rope safely over the strongly braced foot of the staff.

In a moment the sailor was holding the two ends of the rope steady, and the reporter was swarming up, hand over hand, thanking his lucky stars that he had not neglected athletic training. It was a tedious pull; but soon he was at the level of the deck; and with a gasp of relief he let go the harsh rope and caught the rail. No one was in sight on the deck as he climbed over; and he turned and waved a signal to the man below, who promptly gathered in the rope, leaving no evidence of the secret boarding of the vessel.

As he did so a roll of the liner sent the tug sheering off a full dozen yards from the *Atlanta*'s side.

"I'm in for it now!" mused Burns, scrambling to his feet. "There's no way out."

CHAPTER IV.

TRACKED DOWN.

AROUND the narrow lower deck Sidney raced at top speed, seeking the first opening that would take him to the farther side. Unnoticed, unobstructed, he hurried on. And, in an incredibly short time, considering his lack of familiarity with his surroundings, he gained the starboard deck of the *Atlanta*.

There he stopped short in his tracks at sight of a tableau directly in front of him. There was nothing very thrilling in what he saw, yet at the sight he glowed as might a runner at sight of the coveted goal.

There, under a bunch of electric lights, stood a little group of men beside a "gate gap" in the rail. One thin, wiry personage in gorgeous uniform was evidently Captain Hardenburg, of the *Atlanta*.

A little behind the captain several seamen were working over a pile of luggage that strewed a portion of the narrow floor space; and, directing these workers, was a solemn-faced functionary whom Burns recognized as Kramer, Porter Rinehart's valet, major-domo, and general handy man.

But to these people and these details Burns gave scarcely a glance or a thought. He instinctively noted and tabulated their presence with a trained newspaper man's subconscious faculty of observation.

His eyes were fixed on a big man, muffled in an ulster, who stood by the rail, in conversation with the captain.

Disguising as were the bulky great-coat and the low-pulled tweed cap, Burns knew the big man. There could be no mistaking that rugged face and the booming, rough voice.

It was Porter Rinehart—the magnate who was at that hour supposedly slumbering peacefully in his villa in the distant Riviera.

Porter Rinehart, whose secret return to his native land meant a coup of some sort that would send Wall Street into wild, hysterical commotion, and might spread disaster to thousands of specu-

lators and investors, stood there before the eyes of the man who sought him.

The first impression that flashed into Sidney Burns' mind was one of triumph. He had "played his hunch" to the limit, and he had won. He had backed his judgment against that of his superior in office, and he had proved himself in the right.

Then came a rush of the keen joy so familiar to every working journalist, and so inexplicable to an outsider—the delight of knowing he was going to score for his paper a tremendous "beat."

An accommodation ladder had been run over the side. At its foot lay a boat, her crew waiting for the descent of their master. Captain Hardenburg, usually a monarch aboard his own ship, was listening to Rinehart's parting words with the deference an office boy might show to the dreaded "boss."

But Burns did not stop to dwell on these things. His mission was accomplished. It now remained for him only to get back to his tug unobserved; and for that tug to carry him at full speed to New York with his precious "beat."

He was too late, of course, to catch even the latest edition of the morning *Buzzard*, but his story would be in ample time for a spread in the first edition of the evening issue. And, as the evening *Buzzard*'s first edition was always on the street by nine-thirty a. m., the news would be in ample time for the opening of the stock exchange.

Grimly Burns smiled at thoughts of the flurry the story would create. Even as lesser beasts of the jungle scatter to cover at sound of the approaching lion's roar, so would Wall Street scurry to protect itself against its returning tyrant's onslaught. And for once not only Wall Street, but the small investors as well, would be on time. For once the lion's mighty paw swishing down upon its prey would find that prey safely out of reach. A fifty-dollar-a-week reporter would have outwitted a man worth more than fifty million dollars, and saved his fellow men from the loss of millions upon millions of dollars.

The adventure had been almost tame; there had not been one break in its suc-

cessful achievement; but Burns knew he would feel safer aboard the tug, so he silently stepped backward, preparatory to retracing the way he had come.

One stealthy backward step he took, and—his heel struck against a heavy portmanteau that formed part of Rinehart's luggage.

Burns lost his balance, and sprawled headlong on the deck.

CHAPTER V.

A TIGHT SQUEEZE.

AT the clatter of Burns' fall, and the overturning of the big portmanteau, Rinehart and Captain Hardenburg whirled about like guilty boys caught robbing a candy counter.

"You told me you'd fixed it so no passengers could get down to this deck tonight!" snarled the financier, as he caught sight of Burns' tweed-clad figure scrambling up from the planks.

"I did, sir," quavered Hardenburg. "I gave strict orders to—"

A wordless, bull-like roar from Rinehart cut short the reply. Burns was on his feet once more, and the electric light clearly revealed every feature of his face.

He had interviewed—or tried to interview—Rinehart a dozen times in his Wall Street career. And the Czar had an almost uncanny memory for faces. The sight of a reporter at that time and place was to Rinehart what the sight of a charging cordon of police would be to a housebreaker.

No one knew better than the financier the enormous power of the press. At a glance he divined the cause of Burns' presence. Without at all knowing how the reporter had chanced to board the *Atlanta*, Rinehart understood that Burns' recognition of him meant a deathblow to his greatest financial plot.

But Porter Rinehart had risen to his height in the financial world by his power to think and act with unbelievably quickness. Before his lips had closed from the involuntary cry of chagrined fury he had turned upon Captain Hardenburg, and in an undertone had rattled out a swift order.

The captain, with true seamanlike promptness, shouted at once to the men who were crowding up:

"Catch hold of him! He's a stowaway!"

Burns had already turned to bolt. As he did so he ran into the arms of a stalwart deck hand.

Then several interesting things happened at the same time. Rinehart, followed by his valet, bolted clumsily down the accommodation ladder into the waiting boat. Burns, with a skill born of old days on the football field, wriggled free from the deck hand's grip. Captain Hardenburg, with three men at his back, flung himself upon the reporter.

Burns jumped back against the wall.

"Hands off!" he cried. "What do you mean by treating a passenger like this?"

"You're no passenger," retorted the captain, pausing in his onslaught. "You're a stowaway."

"I'm not, and you know I'm not! If I were, I've money enough to pay my passage. If you lay a hand on me—"

"Don't bluff!" broke in Hardenburg. "I know your game, and you can't work it aboard my ship. Will you give up quietly, or must I have you overpowered and put in irons?"

"There is no need for that," said Burns. "I'll go with you to New York, and when you dock in the morning you can have me arrested and sent to a magistrate's court. That will settle any question of my guilt in boarding your ship."

"You're not going to land in New York in the morning, young man," returned Hardenburg. "You'll stay aboard my ship until—"

"Until Mr. Rinehart gets a chance to spring his Wall Street trap? I get the idea. I'm to be locked up here and forgotten till it's too late to publish the story of Rinehart's secret return. Then I'm to be released with apologies. And if I bring suit against you and your steamship line, Mr. Rinehart will cheerfully pay the bill. It'll be well worth it to him. Is that the idea?"

From the blank look on the captain's tanned face, Sidney knew he had de-

scribed the situation with absolute accuracy

It would be easy to overpower him, lock him into a stateroom, and keep him there under guard for days; indeed, until such time as Rinehart was willing to appear in public. Then, with specious explanations and a comfortable sum of damage money, they would let him go.

There would be no redress of a sort that could harm Rinehart. The financier was chief stockholder in the Pink Line Steamship Company. Aboard the company's boats his word was law.

"Well," resumed Burns disconsolately, "you've got me where you want me. I take it you don't want a row that will wake the passengers and set them to asking inconvenient questions. That's why you haven't tackled me yet; and why you won't, except as a last resort. There are too many of you for me to fight. You'd have me down and in irons before I could strike a blow. I may as well yield gracefully."

Hardenburg's face showed his pleasure at this philosophic attitude of his prisoner.

"That's better," approved the captain. "If you'll come along quietly you won't be harmed, and we'll make you as comfortable as we can."

"Thanks!" meekly responded Burns, stepping forward from his position against the wall. "I don't relish the chance of a beating when there's nothing to be gained by it. But of course you understand I'll bring suit against your company?"

As he talked he walked forward toward the captain, an ingratiating smile on his lips. Hardenburg made a sign to the sailors who stood near. One on each side they quietly closed in on the reporter.

As the nearer of the two reached out to seize his shoulder, Burns darted forward, and his fist caught the unprepared captain full on the point of the jaw, felling him to the deck.

Before any of the rest could grasp the situation, or could reach him, Burns had leaped upon the rail.

"McPherson!" he yelled, with all the

power of his lungs, "around *this* side! Stand by to pick me up!"

A sailor grabbed for his ankles. With a backward kick that sent the man staggering, Sidney Burns sprang clear of the rail, and outward into the blackness of the night.

He heard confused shouts from the deck behind him. He heard the splash of a boat's oars somewhere in the dark. He saw, far ahead, the gleam of the motionless yacht's lights.

Then, with an icy shock that bit clear to his brain, the waters closed over him.

Down he went—down, down—through the freezing cold of the black ocean. The chill struck him numb and helpless. And down he sank into the depths of the Atlantic.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE FACE OF THE WATERS.

AFTER what seemed an interminable plunge, Burns felt his numbed body rising. Striking out with all his force, he shot upward. While rising from a dive in very cold water, on a dark night, it is no easy thing for a swimmer to know the exact moment when his head rises above the surface. And Burns miscalculated. He drew in his breath an instant too soon. The icy, sickeningly salt water gushed into his throat and nostrils, causing him to suffer the agony of strangling.

Involuntarily he opened his mouth, and drew in a great, gasping breath; and, by great luck, his mouth by this time was above the water. He shook his eyes clear of the stinging brine, and, treading water, looked about him.

Just behind him rose the high bulk of the liner. His water-deadened ears could even now catch the sounds of commotion on her lower deck.

"They'll send the boat after me," he thought dully. "My only hope is to give them the slip, and get back to the tug."

Swimming silently and swiftly, he sought to round the stern of the *Atlanta*, and through the dense gloom to catch sight of the tug.

McPherson, he was certain, must

have heard his shout. In that case the tug would doubtless be already upon her way around the liner. And for Burns to continue his effort to reach the *Atlanta*'s farther side would be merely a suicidal game of blindman's buff, which must lead to his missing the tug entirely.

So he made haste to alter his course, and swim outward toward the point where, in his detour of the liner, McPherson would probably appear.

Burns was still wearing the thick winter suit and heavy shoes he had donned for the trip. The inhaling of the water into the windpipe and lungs had caused so much pain and coughing that he was well-nigh exhausted. Moreover, in diving, his head had come in contact with some fragment of floating wreckage which made him see stars, and left his head dizzy and throbbing.

Burns summoned all his will power and his trained muscular strength to offset these drawbacks. Blinely, instinctively, he swam onward, his sense of direction half lost in his mad effort to keep afloat and in motion.

Swimming on his side, low in the water, with the long "Australian" stroke, his face was awash more than half the time. And the big, oily rollers broke again and again over his head, buffeting, blinding, dazing him. Yet he kept on, with hopeless, grim determination. His every faculty now was centered on fighting off the numb drowsiness that crept ever closer and closer to his aching brain.

This struggle kept him far too much occupied to allow him to plan new directions of search for the tug. Vaguely he believed he was probably somewhere in the general radius of the semicircle McPherson must make in rounding the liner. He dared not stop swimming, and try to float or tread water in an effort to locate the tug. Such cessation of violent movement would, he knew, give the cold and weakness too good a chance to cramp his muscles or attack his brain.

And now his wiry strength was gone. As each roller swept over him he rose more and more feebly to the surface. A glaze filmed his eyes. He could not

distinguish between the blackness of the water and the lesser gloom of the clouded skies above.

"It can't last more than a minute longer," he told himself dazedly. And mind and body were too far gone to take more than dull mental note of the fact.

Then, as his left arm pushed weakly outward for another stroke, his fingers struck some lumpy, rough, swinging object. And, with the instinct of the drowning, he brought forward his other hand, grasping and clinging to the object. Even in his bewilderment and fatigue, he knew what he had found, before his tired eyes penetrated the darkness and told him his whereabouts. The swinging object he had accidentally touched, and which he was now gripping, was a "buffer," such as is suspended from the sides and bow quarter of a tugboat, to fend off the shock and grinding of contact with docks and other craft.

"The tug," he muttered to himself; "I ran into it through pure luck. Another half minute and I'd have been too late."

He tried to rise from the water and bring himself up, hand over hand to the tug's deck, but he might as well have attempted, in his weakened state, to scale the front of the Singer Building. At best, he could barely retain his grip on the rough rope buffer, with the pitching of the tug and the roll of the sea.

Burns cleared his throat, and tried to shout. "Mac!" he wheezed faintly. And again, little louder, yet with all his waning strength, he croaked: "Mac!"

He heard steps just above him. A man was passing along the low deck. Burns raised his lost voice into a rasping, weak cry. Twice, three times he called.

Then the steps slowed down. "Hello!" called some one just above him.

"Throw me a rope!" panted Burns.

The steps receded. The voice spoke, and another voice replied. Then there were two sets of footsteps, that drew near and halted above Burns' head.

"Now!" called one of them.

Something struck Sidney on the shoulder with a force that nearly

knocked loose his weak hold on the buffer.

He knew it was a rope, but he could not catch it. The voices above spoke impatiently, and a moment later the rope fell again. It was a noose. This time it dropped over Sidney Burns' head, and fell slack about his shoulder.

Loosing one hand from the buffer, Burns thrust his arm through the slack of the noose.

"Haul away!" he panted.

The noose grew taut, about his neck and on one side, and his left armpit on the other.

There was a hauling and grunting. He felt himself slowly rising out of the water. Burns was too weak to help in his own rescue, and by sheer strength the two above hauled him up like a sack of grain; up out of the water, bumpingly along the hull and to the rail.

Even in his daze, Sidney wondered that the side of the tug should be so high, from deck to water line.

Then, as they reached for him with their hands, and hauled him up onto the rail, something cleared his dizzy brain with a shock that sent his feeble heart to hammering quickly again.

The incident that caused this shock was seemingly trivial. Yet to Burns it meant everything, and it had the startling effect of a dash of ice water in the face of a fainting man.

As his two rescuers pulled him upward toward the rail top, Burns' limp hand had chanced to brush along the side of the rail. Now, as every one knows, a tugboat is built for utility, not for useless beauty. And her sides, pieced by scupper holes, go straight upward to the top of the low guard rail that incloses her narrow little deck or "runway."

But Burns had felt beneath his half-numb fingers an ornamental rope or metal lattice work that ran from deck to rail top. No tug that he knew of—certainly not the *John Q. Bartholif*—carried such ornamentation.

And that passing touch told him everything. It was not the tug against which he had blundered. It was the yacht, *Gazelle*, her buffers out, to guard

against any chance contact with the liner's sides, in that choppy sea.

"I might have known it!" he muttered. "I might have known when I caught the buffer. For she's standing still, and the tug would be moving. It's all day with me now, I guess. Talk about 'out of the frying pan and into the fire'!"

He could have laughed aloud in sheer hysterical chagrin at what he had inadvertently done. By his perilous leap into the sea he had hoped to gain the tug, and thence to be rushed to New York or to the nearest long-distance telephone. Now, on board Porter Rinehart's own yacht, his last chance was gone. He was as the woodsmen who, flying from the lion, rushes blindly into the brute's very den.

"Well, I played it for all it was worth!" he told himself.

But the thought gave him scant comfort. To a man of his caliber, the word "failure" is too harsh to be softened by even the best excuses. Meantime, he had been lifted from the rail down onto the deck. And he leaned against the rail, gasping, two white-clad yachting sailors supporting him and staring down in frank amazement. The men did not ply him with questions or raise an alarm. They saw he was fighting for breath and strength, and they were content to hold him in this fashion until they could determine whether he could walk or must be carried. Sailors, in moments of stress, are not overtalkative.

Burns' eyes swept the dim-lit deck. Then they focused themselves on a scene that made them bulge with sudden incredulous dismay. A short distance to the left, the main saloon was situated, and one of its paneless corner windows was obliquely facing Burns.

The saloon was brilliantly lighted, and showed an apartment furnished with a mingled simplicity and richness that is impossible save in the somewhat rare instances where taste and great wealth are combined. But it was not the appointments of the big, low-ceiled room itself that caught Burns' quick attention, and held him spellbound. The tall, narrow window revealed but a slice of the

room, like a black-framed and too-brilliantly illumined picture.

In the center of the "picture" were two figures—men. Evidently one of them had just entered the salon. The other was rising from the table to greet him. Each man's face wore a smile of cordial welcome. As Burns looked, their hands met in a hearty clasp.

That was quite enough for Burns. He dared look no longer, lest the new fixity of his seemingly aimless gaze might draw the notice of the sailors who held him. But the one glance had told him everything.

The man who had entered the salon was Porter Rinehart, newly arrived upon his own yacht. And the guest who had risen to greet him in so friendly a fashion was Hiram Kay, reputed to be Rinehart's bitterest Wall Street foe.

The two men meeting here, by appointment—out at sea, privately, at dead of night—the two who were reputed such deadly enemies that they had not spoken to one another for years! In financial circles each of them was forever fiercely seeking the other's ruin. Yet now—

"When thieves fall out," mentally quoted the amazed Burns, "honest men get their due. But," he added to himself, "when two such men as Rinehart and Kay shake hands, Heaven help honest men and lesser crooks alike in the financial world. It meant a tremendous slaughter—the biggest in the history of Wall Street!"

CHAPTER VII.

A NEW FIGHT.

A MOMENT earlier Sidney Burns had believed that his fight was hopeless. He knew his last card was played—that he was in the hands of the enemy, and that his chances of freedom or for communicating his news, during the next week or so, were hopelessly slim. He had played for high journalistic stakes. And he had lost, through no fault of his own.

But now, at the sight he had seen through the saloon window, all his fight-

ing spirit came back to him with a rush. He knew what that sinister tableau meant. For years, the mighty Rinehart and Kay interests had been at war with each other. That war had been the saving of many an investor. And the competition engendered by it had meant a livelihood to thousands of workers all over the land.

There could be but one meaning to the scene in the saloon—Rinehart and Kay had secretly patched up their differences, and were merging or allying their interests.

To prevent the public and Wall Street from learning of this alliance early enough to protect themselves from the ensuing crash, the financiers had met by stealth, and were doubtless even now perfecting their plans to reap boundless wealth and power from the ruin they were about to cause.

The whole plot had been splendidly worthy of both men's cunning. Rinehart had gone to Europe, presumably broken down in health, leaving the field to his foe. Then, privately returning, he was now meeting that friend-foe to outline with him the last details of their campaign.

In no less private place could a personal meeting of the two supreme financial powers have been arranged without being ferreted out by the press or by Wall Street agents. The mere rumor of such a meeting would have gone through the world like lightning, and would have spoiled the plunder plan. Rinehart and Kay had devised this absolutely private method of getting together. They would doubtless perfect their arrangements, land in New York separately, at dawn, and, under cover, spring their coup.

And Sidney Burns, newspaper man, alone held the key to the huge, menacing situation. He held it. And the yacht held him. As soon as Rinehart should learn of his presence on board, the reporter was certain to be locked somewhere safe out of reach, until the crisis should be past. He might even consider himself lucky if he were not tossed overboard.

But fear was farther from Burns'

heart just then than was any other emotion. Even his journalistic instinct for the "beat" of the year was not uppermost in his brain. He found himself, oddly enough, conjuring up the picture of a countless army of men, women, and children—from the Wall Street operator to the wife of a railroad section hand—who must face hunger and the dread of a indefinite poverty in order that this scheme of two magnates might be consummated.

The thought infuriated him. The helpless thousands were like sheep before the butcher. And he, Burns, whose story could have forewarned and saved them, he was bottled up, a prisoner aboard this yacht—at the mercy of men who, when their financial interests were at stake, had no mercy.

In time of stress the trained brain does its thinking—and its planning—with incalculable speed. The fighting rage had scarce begun to tingle in Burns' chilled veins before he had mapped out the next step in his seemingly hopeless fight. He could plan no farther ahead than that single "next step." After that, chance must direct.

He had scanned the dark face of the nearer waters for a glimpse of the tug. Were it within sight he intended to attract McPherson's attention, then tumble overboard again, and trust to luck to keep afloat until McPherson should pick him up. But the tug was nowhere to be seen. Even the bulk of the liner loomed up very dimly; and the boat returning to the yacht with Rinehart's piled-up luggage was a scarce-visible blot on the ocean. Burns was forced to fall back on diplomacy.

"Who are you?" one of the sailors was asking him for the second time. "Did you tumble off the *Atlanta*?"

"Yes," panted Burns. "I did. But I got here."

"What? You were swimming for the yacht *Gazelle*?"

"I didn't fly here, did I?" asked Burns, in cross weariness. "I was with Mr. Rinehart, and—"

He paused as if for breath. Thus far he had told the exact truth, though with full "intent to deceive." But he was

doubtful just what next to say. The sailor who had questioned him saved him the trouble.

"H'm!" chuckled the man. "Tumbled overboard trying to get aboard the boat with him, and then swam over in this bitter cold weather, instead of waiting for the next trip?"

"I didn't want him to know I'd fallen into the water. I don't like to be laughed at."

"Rather take a chance at drowning, hey? Queer tastes you've got. You're one of his new foreign secretaries, I suppose?"

"I'll be fired or made a laughingstock if he finds out," chattered Burns, in the throes of a chill. "Don't tell him."

"Won't he miss you and ask?"

"By that time my clothes will be dry, and he'll think I came in the second boat trip, along with the luggage. Listen: I'll give each of you men five dollars if you'll smuggle me to some warm place where I can dry my clothes and get the chill out of my bones; and if you'll keep your mouth shut."

As he spoke he fished from his trousers pocket, with shaky fingers, a small and very wet wad of bills. He peeled two fives from the slender, soaked roll, and handed them to the quite willing sailors.

"It's easy money," said one of the two, catching the question in the other's eye. "Who's to know? We'll take him to the galley. He won't give us away. And no one else is going to."

Half supporting, half guiding the chilled reporter, they piloted him forward. A minute later they were in an overheated little room that smelled heavily of food.

"It's the old man's secretary," the first sailor remarked to a man who was fussing over something on an electric range. "Fell overboard on the way from the *Atlanta*, and doesn't want the old man to guy him about it."

"And," continued Burns, again drawing out the depleted, soggy wad of money, and separating another five-dollar bill from it, which he tendered to the man at the range, "I'll give you this for

something warm to drink, and the privilege of staying here till I'm dry."

The man proved even more amenable to reason than had the two sailors. He made Burns discard his soaked clothes, hunted out for him a white linen steward suit, which he helped him put on; then hung the wet clothes in the heat, and hustled about, preparing a pot of hot coffee and a hasty lunch.

The warmth of the room sent new life into the tired reporter. The hot coffee braced him, and cleared his brain. The hot food seemed to take the fatigue and numbness from his sore muscles.

At length, warm, his hunger satisfied, deliciously comfortable, he leaned back in a big deck chair. Clad in his ill-fitting white garb, he realized that he was once more something like his usual agile, resourceful self. His youth, his trained strength, the clean, busy life he had led, all aided in his swift recovery.

For fifteen dollars—most of the money, by the way, that was left in his pocket—he had averted pneumonia, and, in the damp cold before dawn, had found snug quarters. Yes, and he had done more. Much more. For now that the first step was safely taken, the next lay plain before him.

The yacht had got under way, and was on her journey to New York. By sunrise probably she would be at her dock. All that remained for Sidney Burns to do was to remain quietly and comfortably where he was until she should dock. Then, unnoticed, he could stroll ashore, get to the nearest telephone, call up the city editor of the *Buzzard's* evening paper, tell his story, and go home to bed. The story would be in time for the first edition. It would be for sale on the streets by half past nine. The news would be all over America before noon. Long before the Rinehart-Kay bomb would be ready for its poverty-dealing explosion.

And, for the second time that night, Burns was aware of a feeling of snug satisfaction that his labors were so comfortably and satisfactorily ended. That he had risked death and imprisonment for the sake of a "story" no longer impressed him. He was not the first, nor

the thousandth, newspaper man to take similar risks.

It was all in the day's work. And the day's work was done. Already he could hear the congratulations of his fellow reporters. He could hear the tale of his exploit told in future years to cub reporters and outsiders. In his relief and ease he half dozed. A sharp, crackling sound above his head made him sit up with a start.

"What's that?" he demanded of the man at the range, who seemed in no way interested or excited by the sound.

"The wireless," was the reply. "The wireless coop's right on top of the galley. Operator's in there sending some message for the old man, I s'pose. Or else getting one."

Burns sank back into his former pleasant drowsiness, lulled by the smooth, swift motion of the yacht. But he was not to enjoy his ease much longer. The galley door flew open. Burns glanced over his shoulder. At sight of the man whose figure blocked the threshold, the reporter spun around again, his back to the door, his head bent forward, to avoid recognition.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE UNMASKING.

IN that quick, unnoticed turn of the head, Burns had seen that the man at the galley door was Kramer, Rinehart's valet and factotum. Also that Kramer was in no very good humor. He held a slip of paper in his hand, and he was scowling.

"Mr. Rinehart wants these messages sent aft to him as fast as they are received," said he. "There's another one coming now, and I have to wait for it. Here, you steward!" he went on, and shaking the apparently sleeping Burns by the shoulder of his white duck coat. "Take this message aft to Mr. Rinehart. He's in the saloon."

The mistake was natural. Burns, in his borrowed steward uniform, had been mistaken by the valet for the real article. Apparently in cold weather, the warm galley was a favorite lounging place for the *Gazelle's* stewards.

To refuse to carry the message, or to seek to hide would at once arouse Kramer to look more closely at the pseudo steward. So Burns, getting slowly to his feet, with one arm across his face, as if rubbing the sleep from his eyes, took the slip of paper surlily enough, stumbled awkwardly past the valet, his raised arm still shielding most of his face, and gained the outer deck.

As he passed out he noted a grin on the face of the man at the electric range, and he understood it. The man doubtless thought Rinehart's own secretary was going dressed as a steward, at a mere valet's command, to deliver a wireless to their employer. And he supposed the joke was on Kramer.

"Know who that chap is that you just treated like a messenger boy?" he heard the man ask Kramer.

Burns waited to hear no more. He was not eager to have the valet follow him out to investigate. Along the deck, toward the stern, he sped with the slip of paper. He would deliver it, and then seek some hiding place, where he might remain until the yacht should dock.

He had no especial fear that Rinehart or Kay—both of whom knew him well by sight—would recognize him as he entered the saloon. Both would be deeply immersed in business. And neither would stop to scan the features of a white-clad steward who chanced to come in with a message. Indeed, his servile uniform rendered him practically as safe as the famous "Invisible Man."

He stepped into the saloon with no show of hesitation. Rinehart and Kay were seated side by side at a small table, facing the door by which he entered. The table was littered with papers; over these they were bending, lost to all the outside world.

The battered canvas deck shoes with which Burns had replaced his own water-logged boots made no noise on the rug-strewn hardwood flooring. He walked directly to the table, and laid down the telegram in front of Rinehart. The financier glanced carelessly up from the document he was reading, grunted, took the telegram, and, together with

Kay, became absorbed in its contents. Burns turned noiselessly to leave the room. He had gained the door when Rinehart called him back.

"Here!" said the financier, scribbling something on a pad, tearing off the sheet, and handing it to Burns. "Tell the operator to rush that."

Burns took the telegram from him, and again started for the door. He reached it, a second too late.

In the threshold appeared Kramer, strangely excited.

"Mr. Rinehart!" exclaimed the valet, "I learn there is a man on board who pretends to be your secretary, and—" He broke off, in alarm, as Burns came face to face with him under the strong glare of the arc lights. Burns leaped forward toward the door whose threshold Kramer filled. But the valet instinctively slammed it behind him. Momentarily trapped, the reporter wheeled about.

Rinehart and Kay had risen to their feet, attracted by the valet's cry. Without knowing it, they were blocking with their bodies the exit on the far side of the saloon.

"Kramer," thundered Rinehart, "what do you mean by breaking in upon us like this? I—"

He stopped short. Burns had tried to slip past the valet, to gain the deck. Kramer had seized him. Before Burns could shake the fellow off, Rinehart had seen his face—seen and recognized it.

With a wordless growl of wonder and wrath, the big financier flung himself forward, and gripped Burns by the shoulders just as the latter was tearing free from Kramer.

"Kay!" yelled Rinehart. "Look, man! Look! Do you know who this is?"

The other financier, who had in wondering disgust beheld his great colleague demean himself by mixing into what seemed a servant's squabble, let his glance fall on Burns. For a second Kay looked carelessly at the tall young fellow whom Rinehart and the valet had grasped, one on each side. Then a light of amazed recognition spread across the onlooker's leathery and seamed face.

"Good Lord!" he gasped. "It's—it

can't be—it's that reporter fellow from the *Buzzard*! It's Burns! And in that get-up! What will these reporters do next?"

His tone was one of amused contempt. And it stung Porter Rinehart to fresh rage.

"You don't seem to realize," snarled the latter, "what his presence here means. He has come to get his paper an account of our meeting."

Then the truth dawned upon Kay. "What are we going to do?" he howled. "Oh, throw him overboard, can't you?"

And now, even in the excitement of the moment, a long-vexed question was forever settled to Burns' satisfaction. For years, newspapers and Wall Street gossips had mooted the question as to which was the greater man—Porter Rinehart or Hiram Kay—the lion or the fox. Now the problem was forever solved for Burns. For, while Kay was trembling and yellow with fear at the chance of their mighty plot's exposure, Rinehart was his usual savage, resourceful, controlled self. No whit more confused, in spite of his rage, than if a fly had buzzed past his ear.

"Well, young man!" he remarked, turning on Burns, who wasted no strength or energy in useless struggle, but who stood calmly facing the situation.

"Well, Mr. Rinehart," coolly replied Burns.

"Done a pretty smart trick, haven't you?" pursued Rinehart, his anger merging into a grin of approval of the reporter's fearless attitude.

"I think so, sir," modestly answered Burns. "The luck's been against me twice. But perhaps the third time—"

"Perhaps," assented Rinehart. "And perhaps there'll be no third time. Could you swim from here to shore? The nearest land is a matter of some miles, I believe?"

"No," admitted Burns. "I couldn't."

"That complicates matters for you."

"Really, Mr. Rinehart," protested Burns, with an air of easy confidence he was very far from feeling, "don't you think a bluff like that is a bit insulting

to my intelligence? You're not going to throw me overboard."

"No?" queried Rinehart.

"No," quietly asserted Burns. "Too many witnesses."

"Witnesses?"

"Aboard your yacht—aboard the *Atlanta*—aboard the tug that brought me here; in my own office, too. Try something else."

"You've got pluck," grudgingly admitted the financier.

"I've nothing on you in that," pleasantly countered Burns; "though," with a glance at the trembling Kay, "I can't say so much for your new ally."

"Ally?" quavered Hiram Kay. "Ally? You're all wrong, young man. Mr. Rinehart and I are at cross-purposes in every business relation. Our meeting here to-night is by the merest chance, and has absolutely no financial significance. I—"

"Oh, shut up, Kay!" growled Rinehart, in disgust. "The man's not a born fool. He's smelled the whole thing out. I don't know how, but he's done it. And we can't sidetrack him. All we can do now is to keep him where he can't blab until it's too late for blabbing to do any good."

"If an honorarium—merely a present to offset his expenses—" suggested Kay.

Rinehart glanced at Burns, then shook his head.

"No use," he commented. "If he'd scowled at you, or tried heroics, there'd be some hope that he'd accept. But he just grinned when you offered the bribe. We can't get him that way. That's the trouble with the newspaper boys. Not one in a hundred of them has sense enough to take easy graft that comes his way."

"Perhaps," suggested Burns easily, "we may prefer self-respect to what you call 'sense.' You see, we're workers, not financiers."

"We're not here to discuss scribbler ethics," said Rinehart impatiently. "The point is, you're on my yacht. And we've got to find some way of shutting your mouth. As you say, we can't very well throw you overboard, though there are

worse solutions to the problem. You won't be wise and accept cash to be quiet. I suppose, if we let you go, you won't give your parole to keep your mouth shut?"

"His parole!" broke in Kay, aghast. "Are you going to risk—"

"No," grunted Rinehart, with another keen glance at Burns, "I'm not. I don't have to. He won't give it. If he would, I'm enough of a judge of men to take the chance. Well, there's one thing left. We'll have to lock him up."

"May I remind you," suavely interposed Burns, "that we're living in the twentieth century—not in the twelfth?"

"We are just now at sea, and the sea, knows no difference in centuries. I'm going to have you locked in the strong room, Mr. Burns. When we land, in an hour or so, I'll send the yacht to sea again for a week's cruise, and you will still be aboard. It'll be a nice little outing for you."

"And a nice little damage suit for you."

"I'm willing to pay the freight. The heaviest damages any court would grant you wouldn't be one per cent of what I'd lose if I let you go ashore to-day with the secret you've got hold of. I think that's all. We've work to do before we reach the dock, and I've already wasted more time on you than you could pay for with a year's salary. Kramer, phone for the skipper."

"One minute!" broke in Burns, showing his first sign of emotion. "I know I'm a lunatic to try to talk to you people of mercy. But—"

"Son," drawled Rinehart, in heavy disgust, "I'm disappointed in you. And my confidence in my own power to size up men has had a setback. I didn't think you were the whining sort."

"You don't suppose it's mercy for myself I'm asking, do you?" flashed Burns. "But perhaps I'm asking something even more useless and foolish. You two men have framed up a deal that is going to stagger Wall Street, and shake the finances of the whole country. Am I right?"

"Well," drawled Rinehart, "since you can't make any use of the knowledge, I

don't mind telling you that you aren't overestimating the deal. But—"

"That's what I want mercy for."

"What business of yours—"

"It's as much my business as it was the business of the man who saw the Johnstown dam breaking, to gallop and warn the people below. This deal of yours will wreck good men's fortunes. It will make beggars of men who have toiled a lifetime to lay up a little for their old age. It will throw people out of work from New York to San Francisco. It means poverty, misery, crime. It means the crying of a thousand hungry children, the starving of weak women, the turning of honest toilers into suicides or vagrants. It is for this army of innocent people that I'm begging mercy. It's for these people I've gladly risked my life to-night, in the hope I might warn them in time. You may not have thought of that side of the case before. To you this is just a Napoleonic coup that will make you world-famous. But to them—"

"Son," interrupted Rinehart gravely, "this is finance, not ping-pong. A grown man can't stop breathing just because every breath kills a lot of innocent microbes. And it's the same in finance. We—"

"With one difference. If there's justice on earth or in heaven, I believe these human 'microbes' you are planning to crush will hang about your necks like millstones, for all eternity! Oh, I'm a fool to talk this way. I know it. And I was doubly a fool to try to find a spark of humanity in granite."

"You surely were. Now that you've said your little piece, we'll get back to work. Kramer, phone for—"

The valet, at his employer's first word, stepped to the wall telephone. The same instant Burns had sprung forward. Catching the unprepared Rinehart about the body, the reporter flung him bodily away from the threshold, and tore open the closed door. But Rinehart, with Kramer and Kay, leaped at him. Burns was too quick for them. Slamming shut the door in their faces, he gained the deck. He heard shouts from the salon. An answering cry and

the padding of feet came from somewhere behind him.

Blindly the reporter raced forward along the white deck. And, as he ran, the flash and spitting of the wireless overhead brought to his whirling brain a desperate plan.

CHAPTER IX.

"WIRELESS."

SIDNEY BURNS ran at full speed toward the bow of the *Gazelle*. Behind, he heard the saloon door open. He heard the cry of Kramer, and, mingling with it, the bull-like roar of Porter Rinehart. From all sides, men were scurrying in response to that double call. In another minute at most the reporter must be cornered and caught.

Then it was that his desperate, seemingly insane idea occurred to him. Dashing past the galley, he reached the ladder leading up to the wireless coop above it. Up this short ladder he scrambled. At the top he stopped just long enough to uncouple it and draw it up after him as the foremost of his pursuers stretched out a hand to seize it.

With a mighty effort, Burns lifted the ladder, and laid it athwart the low, flat roof of the coop. None below could see what he had done with it, as an angle of the galley roof cut him off momentarily from view. Then he stepped noiselessly into the coop itself. Amid his paraphernalia, like a spider at its web, a young man was seated at the table, manipulating, with one hand, the "key"; while with the other he held a telegram he was sending.

Sidney Burns did not wait for the operator to glance up. He caught the man by both shoulders, jerked him up from his chair, whirled him about, thrust him through the doorway, then closed and bolted the door behind him. The whole maneuver of evicting the operator had consumed less than two seconds. And, as the operator, a slender, smallish man, was wholly unprepared, it was a feat that called for no particular strength or cleverness. Burns wasted none of his tense faculties in listening to the yells of the astounded

operator, who was banging frantically at the heavy, locked door, nor to the confused clamor from below.

He slipped into the operator's chair, and seized the "key." He blessed now his partial knowledge of wireless, and blamed himself that he had not perfected himself in it. Still he hammered away at the key; he flashed forth his call. Over and over again with inexpert fingers that shook with excitement he sent out the summons.

"Sea Gate is the nearest station," he thought. "That's probably where the call will be picked up."

The ousted operator had stopped banging at the door. Above the crackling of the electricity, Burns could hear him in talk with the men below. He could not get down. And they could not yet get up.

For the moment Burns was safe. He pounded out his signal frantically. Again and again he sent the call. At last he felt he had established his connection. Then slowly, painstakingly, his inexpert fingers began to spell out the message that had subconsciously formed itself in his brain. So eager was he, so concentrated upon the work in hand, that he was oblivious of all about him. As he worked he did not even hear another ladder strike against the galley roof, the climbing of feet upon its rungs, the renewed beating upon the door that shook the whole coop.

Laboriously, Sidney Burns was sending this message:

*Buzzard, New York: Rinehart and Kay aboard *Gazelle* on way to New York. Secret alliance.*

BURNS.

Having thus dispatched his bulletin, he prepared to follow it up with as much of the story itself as he might be permitted to send before the coop should be stormed.

The initial strain of sending the message that should warn the public was past. And, the load off his shoulders, Burns' concentration slackened. Then, as externals once more commanded his interest, he noted several things: First, the assault on the door had ceased. Second, there had been no attempt to smash

the porthole glass, nor did any faces appear there. Third, most important and incomprehensible of all, he now observed that the key he was pounding gave forth a flat, dead note in response.

And in a moment he understood why. Yes, and he understood why the assault had ceased. The operator, or some one else, from outside had disconnected the wireless apparatus, and thrown it out of gear.

Burns was now playing upon a "dummy" key. How long had he been doing so? Had all the precious bulletin been dispatched before the apparatus was tampered with? When had the crackling, crisp note of the key changed to that flat tone? Had he been too utterly absorbed in his task of sending to observe the change the moment it had occurred? Or had the outfit been merely thrown out of gear at the instant he began to send the story that was to follow the bulletin?

In any case, he could do no more. The apparatus was "out." For telegraphic purposes it was now so much scrap metal. No wonder the attack on the door had ceased! They had him penned up safely enough. He would do no more harm to their plans. He was powerless.

But had he failed? Or, in spite of his present helplessness, had he succeeded in flashing forth the all-important warning that should set the world on its guard?

CHAPTER X.

THE FIGHT.

BURNS, wondering, hoping, fearing, rose to his feet, and stepped toward the door. As though his move was a signal, a resounding crash reverberated through the coop. The door burst open, its lock flying off and clashing to the floor.

Outside, Burns had caught a momentary view of four seamen on the narrow space between the coop and the eaves of the galley roof. Two on a side, they were still gripping the piece of timber that had served as a battering-ram to burst in the door.

They dropped the beam, and, leaping in through the threshold, flung themselves upon the reporter. His first impulse was to offer no useless resistance. He could stand no possible chance of victory in that cramped space against four stalwart men. Nor could any one mortal. Even should he by a miracle hold the coop against them there were plenty of men below to reinforce their rush.

So Burns, as he saw them drop the timber, and make for the doorway, was minded to surrender and to save his strength for such future emergencies as were sure to arise ere the adventure should be finished. But, with instant swiftness, came a thought that revolutionized his peaceful program, and sent the blood dancing jubilantly through his veins.

He understood all at once why Rinehart had sent these men to seize him. Had the wireless been thrown out of gear before the bulletin was sent, then Burns' continued presence in the coop could have done no harm. It would have been as good a place as any to incarcerate him. And Rinehart would not have wasted men on a struggle that could achieve no purpose. That was not Rinehart's way. He would simply have barricaded the coop door from the outside, and left Burns in there until the *Gazelle* should have docked at New York, and put out to sea again with the captive on board.

Why, then, was Rinehart ordering this spectacular assault? There could be but one logical reason. The bulletin had been flashed forth before it had occurred to any one to silence the wireless. The bulletin had been sent in safety. Even now it was perhaps being telegraphed from the Sea Gate station to New York. In a few minutes it would be in the *Buzzard* office.

And Rinehart wanted to get at the wireless apparatus in time to send a second and false message in Burns' name that should offset the first. In that case every minute of delay was worth a fortune. And Burns resolved to prolong that delay as far as one man possibly could.

He sprang to the open, narrow threshold, resolved to hold it against his foes as long as he might. The first seaman was met by a left-hand blow on the jaw that sent him spinning back against the nearest of his fellows. The man against whom he was flung lost his balance under the impact, seized the first man in an instinctive idea of saving himself, and, together with him, sprawled headlong on the galley roof, barely averting a double fall over the edge to the deck below.

But Burns had no time to observe the effect of his blow. The two others were already upon him. The narrowness of the threshold was his momentary salvation. Standing just within it, free to move at will while the action of his two foes was ludicrously hampered by the cramped space, he hit out viciously and cleanly.

The fusillade of his blows held the others in check. Fiercely they rushed the doorway, only to be met and hammered by those ever-present fists. On face and bodies fell the thud of his blows. Once, twice, he cleared the doorway; but always before he could pause for breath, his opponents were back again, slugging, smashing, reaching for him with furious clutches in the hope of dragging him forth from his place of vantage, or of landing on him some mighty, unskilled blow, that would knock the fight out of him.

Defended as was Burns' position, and strong and agile as he was, and gifted with the deft prowess of a veteran boxer, he could not wholly escape harm. A glancing swing on the forehead jerked his head backward and broke the skin. It landed too high to daze or weaken him, but the blood from the abrasion began to trickle down into one of his eyes, annoying him, and marring the accuracy of his vision.

A clutching, hairy hand had caught the left shoulder of his duck coat. Before he could shake off the hold, it had torn away a handful of the white cloth. A chance blow landed just over the heart, sickening him. Another he had caught on his right forearm in so unfortunate a fashion as to numb his arm mo-

mentarily from wrist to shoulder. Yet he was giving two smashes for every one that reached him.

The joy of battle was upon him. Not only for himself and his paper was he fighting, but for the thousands for whom he had made so vain an appeal to Porter Rinehart. If he could hold off these men long enough for his message to—

The two fallen sailors were on their feet again, and had joined their two comrades. For an instant more the fight waged, the assailants by their very force of numbers hampering each other. On the deck below, a line of highly excited men were standing far out against the rail, and leaning backward to watch the progress of the battle. Advice, encouragement, and ridicule were heaped upon the luckless attacking party.

Burns, his lungs bursting, his breath coming in irregular gasps, his muscles sore and unresponsive, continued by terrific effort to hold his own. These sailors were rough-and-tumble fighters, not boxers. The rough-and-tumble water-side fighter has, as a rule, only one really effective blow. And that is what is known as a "swing."

Now, a swing is a tremendously effective blow when successfully delivered. But, not only does it leave its striker's body wide open to attack, but it cannot possibly be delivered when its object's body is protected by the sides of a narrow doorway. Thus, Burns, standing just within the coop, profited vastly by the protection of the wooden threshold sides. And he thanked his stars that none of these men against him was a clean, straight hitter.

Still, at best, he knew he could avoid their wild blows and their efforts to drag him forth but a minute or so longer at best. Once let them push past the threshold, and into the room, and he would be as helpless in their hands as a new-born child. In the coop they would simply fall on him, bear him down, and overpower him. The confined space that now was his ally would then become his ruin.

Vaguely he wondered why no reënforcements were sent from below. Then

he realized that not more than four men at most could operate with any ease in so small a place. More would simply be an added handicap. Now Rinehart's deep, booming voice called up from the deck:

"Give back there!"

The assailants ceased their attack, and withdrew a pace, leaving Burns panting and weak.

"Don't try to beat him down!" shouted Rinehart. "It'll take you a year. Bunch together, and *rush* the doorway. Don't hit. Don't let his blows stop you. Form a wedge and push in. He can't stop four of you. There'll be a few smashes, and then he'll have to give back. Get in there, now!"

It was sane advice. It was horribly practical. It was, in fact, what any one with better sense than a yacht sailor would have planned from the start. Indeed, Burns had wondered why the men had not done it. So long as they merely struck and clawed at him, and gave him scope to strike, he had been able to hold his own; but if, in compact wedge, the four should drive forward against the doorway, and through it, his utmost strength could not stem the onset of four bodies. As easily stop a motor car's onrush.

The sailors, who stood in mortal fear of their employer—a fear that easily overbalanced their aversion to Burns' fist blows—did as they were bidden. The largest of the quartet stood in front. A second man stood close behind; both hands on the leader's shoulders. The remaining two brought up the rear, each clutching one of the shoulders of the men in front of them.

It was a formidable array. No one man could block such a rush. Yet Burns braced himself to do his best. And, as he did so, an idea came to him—belated, and, indeed, too late for use—that turned him cold with self-contempt at his own stupidity. It was, indeed, the first blunder he had made that night. Being merely an alert and sorely overtaxed newspaper reporter, he was not all-wise.

He realized now that he had not been saving time, but wasting it. The sud-

denness of the first attack on the door had left him but one plan—to hold off the foe as long as possible, and to give his message full chance to reach its destination before it could be countermanded or contradicted. It had been an impulse. And Burns saw now how foolish it had been.

If, instead of holding the door, he had had sense enough and presence of mind enough to wreck the wireless machine on the table behind him—to wreck it past repair—no countermanding message could have been sent forth. His warning would have gone out, and nothing could recall it.

Burns could have wept at his own stupidity. But this was no time for senseless repining. Like a catapult the human wedge hurled itself in through the battered doorway. But Burns did not stay to meet its attack. Turning, as his foes rushed, he snatched up the stool at the operator's table, swung it above his head, and, with all his remaining strength, crashed it down toward the wireless machine. But the blow never reached its destination. As Burns was delivering it, strong arms seized him from behind, pinioning his arms. The chair flew from his grasp. He tumbled, fighting, to the floor, buried under a weight of struggling bodies.

CHAPTER XI. THE LAST HOPE.

THERE was a chance for a highly dramatic and equally useless struggle, there on the littered floor of the coop. But Burns was not a fool. He did not risk injury for the sheer joy of a fight. Like D'Artagnan, he fought only when fighting would forward his plans.

And just now he could see no possible good that could arise from his continuing to battle, prostrate on the floor, against four husky sailors who were above him. So he lay quite still. He had done what he could. And he had failed. Except for that one lapse in forgetting to put the apparatus out of order, he felt he could not justly blame himself for any of the night's mishaps.

He had striven to rectify his blunder by wrecking the wireless, and his chair-blow had missed its mark. Nothing remained but surrender. And he did not care to add a useless beating to the ignominy of that surrender.

Finding he did not resist, the sailors dragged him to his feet, pinioned his arms behind him, and ran him out onto the roof of the galley. Gray dawn was visible above the Long Island shore, and in front the irregular sky line of lower Manhattan stood against the paling heavens like a monstrous and hideously uneven set of teeth.

Unresistingly, Burns let his captors shove and haul him down the new ladder that had been found and placed against the side of the galley in place of the one the reporter had lifted away. Burns at last stood on the deck, weary, sick, miserable; a strong sailor gripping him on either side, a ring of men about him. In the center of that human ring Porter Rinehart faced his captive.

Burns, at sight of the man who had conquered him, straightened up, and grinned cheerfully at the financier.

"Well, Mr. Rinehart," he observed, "you said there'd be no third time. But there was. And a decidedly lively time, at that. Now for the fourth, eh?"

Rinehart's grim face lines melted into an answering grin.

"I said you had pluck," he vouchsafed, "and you have. Enough to stock a whole office. I said there'd be no third time. It was one of my few prophecies that go wrong. But how was I to know you understood wireless?"

A new hope leaped into Burns' heart. So long as he could engage Rinehart in talk, just that long could he postpone the order to countermand his wireless message. And, despite pain, utter fatigue, and dizziness, he bent all his tired energies to this new species of fight.

"You made a great mistake, Mr. Rinehart," he said, with a glib insolence; "a mistake no man who calls himself a leader of men can afford to make. You left something to chance. And in doing that you also underestimated an opponent. The men who have made good

in any line, from pugilism to empire building, have done so by never underestimating an enemy's power, and by never leaving one tiny detail of their plans to the mercy of chance."

He was talking almost at random; anything to gain time; and it thrilled his worn-out mind and body thus to be pitting his powers against those of America's foremost financial magnates. It was a unique and entralling form of warfare.

"Thanks!" rejoined the financier dryly. "After sixty years of studying my fellow man, it is a real privilege to be corrected by a cub of a scribbler. But you are quite right in your double rebuke, Solomon the Wise. I *did* leave something to chance. And I did underestimate you. I won't do either in future. Take one or two long breaths of this good sea air, for it's the last outdoor atmosphere you'll breathe for the next week or so."

"Please translate."

"I am going to have you locked into a very comfortable but very strong cabin. Your meals will be served to you, and you can send to the library for any books you need. And there, in that same cabin you are going to stay while we land, and while the yacht puts out to sea with you again. I—"

Crack—crack—crack—crack! Siss!

Overhead sounded the sputter and hiss of the wireless. For all his self-control, Burns for the moment could not keep the look of chagrin out of his face. Rinehart noted the look, and smiled.

"It was well thought out," approved the financier. "It might not have occurred to the average young man to keep me chatting here in order to gain time, and perhaps to make me forget in the alluring charm of his conversation the fact that a fifty-million-dollar deal hangs on my correcting a certain wireless message. But perhaps you have also made the blunder of underestimating an opponent."

Burns stared upward. Dimly, through the coop's open door, the wireless operator could be seen bending over his keys. And now the reporter understood. The moment the coop had been

emptied of the combatants, the apparatus had been put in shape, and the operator had resumed his duties.

"And you actually thought I was so taken up with listening to your gabble that I forgot *real* things?" snorted Rinehart. "Why, when you were holding the door in that Porthoslike fashion, I was writing the message that operator's sending now. He was in the coop by the time you were out of it. You're listening and trying to catch what message he's sending, eh? I'll save you the trouble. Here's the copy of it."

The financier handed Burns an old envelope. Scrawled on its back were the words:

Bussard, New York: I was fooled. Two men on passing yacht looked like Rinehart and Kay. So I sent word. Later I ran alongside and found they were strangers. Sorry for mistake. No sign of Rinehart on Atlanta.

BURNS.

"Forgery!" gasped Burns.

"Anything you choose to call it. It's forgery, just as self-defense is assault and battery. But you can put it in the bill as forgery, if you like. I'll pay."

"This is where you score, I suppose," muttered Burns.

"Yes. You dared to pit your brain against mine. You did only what thousands of cleverer men have done," rejoined the financier, "and you haven't failed any more lamentably than they did."

"I haven't failed yet!" declared Burns. "A game isn't over till the last card is played. And the last card in this sorry game won't be played till your yacht puts out to sea with me aboard. Perhaps not then."

"Still matching your wits against mine. A featherweight against a heavyweight."

"Not quite. For this time the featherweight's got right on his side."

"You read that in a book. If you'd read further you'd have come across Napoleon's maxim that 'Providence is on the side of the heaviest artillery.'"

"I wonder if he thought of that at Waterloo?"

"Well," answered Rinehart, catching the purport of the seemingly simple

question, "I haven't had my Waterloo yet. And I'm not going to. Though you came near to giving it to me. Look here, Burns, you've eaten up nearly an hour of the time of two men whose time is worth more than you'll ever earn. Chase!"

He beckoned to several sailors, who, under the skipper's direction, were evidently awaiting Rinehart's signal. They stepped up to Burns. The latter offered no resistance. It would have been more than needless. Escorted by the skipper, and preceded and followed by three or four sailors, Burns made his way through sundry short passages to a small deck cabin.

"Sorry to keep you shifting about," said the skipper, civilly enough, "but the strong-room lock's out of kilter. It's being fixed now, and an extra bolt screwed on the outside of it. As soon as it's ready—in five minutes or so—we'll take you there. Meantime I think this cubby's strong enough to hold you. The porthole's clamped shut, and I'll have two men on guard outside the door."

CHAPTER XII.

A TERRIBLE WORD.

WITH this comforting reflection, the skipper left Burns in the little cabin, closing the door behind him, fastening it securely from the outside, and posting a couple of seamen in the narrow passageway.

Burns looked drearily about him. But for an iron cot, the cabin was unfurnished. The porthole was of thick glass, and was screwed shut in such a way as to defy the efforts of a novice like himself.

Even should he be able to open it, the aperture was barely large enough for his face to peer through. It offered absolutely no chance for even a child to wriggle out of it.

Burns nevertheless crossed to the porthole, and stared gloomily out through the thick glass. Dawn was reddening the whole sky. The slopes of Staten Island rose to the left. Thus Burns knew his temporary prison was on the

port side of the yacht, and that the *Gazelle* was rapidly approaching the upper bay.

In a pitifully short time New York would be reached. Rinehart and Kay would quietly debar at the yacht's dock, and, unnoticed at that early hour, would be spirited away in their automobiles. The *Gazelle*, as soon as she could be coaled and provisioned, would put out for Bermuda or elsewhere, with himself aboard; a helpless, ridiculous prisoner.

And this was the twentieth century—the era of law and order and of the rights of the plain people. Rinehart was riding over all these rights. And, at most, the penalty the financier must eventually pay would not affect him as deeply as a five-dollar fine would affect the average man.

Across Burns' wretched reflections crept an outside influence. His staring, half-unseeing eyes were gazing absent-mindedly at some object that struck them as vaguely familiar. Then he brought his senses back from introspection, and concentrated them on the object at which he had been unconsciously looking.

It was a tugboat, chugging along, northward, through the Narrows. The yacht was still a little behind the tug, but was forging rapidly ahead. The tug was in the main channel; and, with the obstinacy of his class, her captain was not turning out one inch for the oncoming pleasure craft. Consequently, the *Gazelle*, after almost running down the impudent little plebeian of the waterways, was beginning to sheer off slightly to starboard.

Nevertheless, the two vessels were far closer together, because of the tug captain's obstinacy, than is regarded as customary or even safe by those who traverse the waters. It was not the fact of the tug's mere presence or nearness that had brought Burns back to everyday thought. It was something familiar about the stoop-shouldered figure at her pilot-house wheel. The reporter stared open-mouthed for an instant. Then his jaded faculties sprang all at once into mad action.

He sprang to the iron cot. It was

screwed to the floor. But, as he seized it, he felt the white-painted "headrail" turn in his hand. The worm of its screw was evidently worn smooth. A half-dozen frantic revolutions uncoupled it at one end. A mighty wrench tore the short, thick bar wholly free of the rest of the cot frame.

Whirling the bar aloft, Burns struck with all his force at the thick glass of the porthole. A jagged "star" appeared in the porthole's center. Under the second arm-jarring blow, the glass shattered, and splintered.

Thrusting his face to the irregular opening through which the stinging, fresh-drawn wind was already rushing, Burns shouted at the top of his voice:

"Mac! McPherson!"

The stooping figure at the tug's wheel turned. The door of the wheelhouse was open, and the distance between tug and yacht was short.

"Mac!" screamed Burns frantically, sticking his hand through the opening, with a suddenness that cut his wrist cruelly against the broken glass edge, and waving his white-sleeved arm.

McPherson's eye caught the gleam of white. He flung open the window beside the wheel. Once more Burns' face was at the porthole.

"Mac!" he yelled. "Run ashore at Quarantine, and phone the *Buzzard* office in my name that Rinehart and Kay are aboard here."

"What?" bawled McPherson.

Burns repeated his words in a voice that strained his lungs and vocal cords to the breaking point. The wind was stiff, and while the voice clearly reached McPherson, the words were blurred and meaningless by the time they struck his ears.

The yacht was creeping forward. In another minute or so she would have left the tug behind. Burns saw the futility of getting his meaning to McPherson. The tugboat man recognized him. That was plain. Also he was evidently thunderstruck at sight of his temporary employer in such a place.

Having cruised around the incoming *Atlanta* for an hour, in the hope of getting a word from Burns, the tug's cap-

tain had decided that the reporter was going to stay aboard the liner, and he had started back for New York without him.

Burns abandoned the useless attempt to make himself understood. Bar in hand, he turned toward the door. The two men on guard outside must, he knew, have heard his yells. But as his face had been at the porthole opening, they probably had not caught his words any more clearly than had McPherson. He was resolved they should hear him now. His lips almost against the not overthick door panel, he shouted:

"Fire!"

Again and again he shrieked the monosyllable that to every sailor, whether on yacht, merchantman, or warship, is the most terrible word in all the language:

"Fire!"

The two men on guard outside the door had heard the sound of smashing glass. They had heard unintelligible cries, as though of fright. And now that those same frantic cries resolved themselves into the word of dread, they completely lost all presence of mind. One of them raced off to tell the skipper. The other, with fingers that fumbled with fear, unbarred the door of the cabin, where the blaze was supposed to be raging.

The knob was scarce turned when Burns had jerked open the door, and had sprung out into the passage, upsetting the panic-stricken sailor in his headlong dash. Along the passageway Burns raced. He came to a passage that crossed the first transversely. Wheeling into this he collided with the running skipper. A tap of the iron bar on his stiff yachting cap laid the skipper sprawling, uninjured, but knocked clean off his balance.

Over the fallen body leaped the reporter. In another bound he had reached the port deck.

"Mac!" he yelled again.

And once more McPherson saw him.

"Stand by to pick me up!" cried Burns.

Whether or not his words could be heard by the tug captain, this time, he

did not know. Neither did he care. He had gained the deck. A shout from a sailor told him his presence was discovered. Rinehart gave a quick order. There was a concerted rush toward him. His back to the rail Sidney Burns whirled like a wild cat at bay.

Above his head he brandished the formidable iron bar. At sight of it, the men instinctively checked their rush. Rinehart drew from his pocket a revolver and leveled it.

"Bluff!" sang out Burns. "Once more, there are too many witnesses."

And as the men, recovering from their momentary hesitation, pressed forward toward him, he dropped the bar, vaulted the rail, and dropped into the water.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE VORTEX.

BURNS, as he dropped overboard, drove one foot sharply against the side of the yacht, to give himself an outward impetus; for the *Gazelle* was moving fast, and he had no desire to be drawn into her vortex and be slashed to death by the whizzing propeller.

The instant he touched the water he struck out with all his strength. With awkward, powerful, quick-beating strokes he thrashed his way forward.

Strong as he was, and skillfully as he had forestalled the power of the boat's suction through the bay, he was caught in the vortex, drawn beneath the surface, and then whirled over and over twice in the foaming, bubbling wake.

Even in that breathless, blinding buffeting turmoil he still fought. And in a moment the suction slackened. Burns rose to the surface, and shook the water from his eyes. He had calculated on two things to aid him. And those two things had happened. The yacht had been under high speed; and for a space no order to reverse the engine had been given.

Thus the *Gazelle* was already a hundred yards ahead. Through his water-filled ears Burns could hear dully the jangling of the bell that ordered the engine to a standstill.

The second thing on which Burns had reckoned was that McPherson, on seeing him jump, would instinctively bring the tug to a halt. That is riverman impulse. And a tug stops quickly—far more quickly than a high-power yacht.

As he fought his way forward through the wake, Burns saw the tug stop, turn slowly, and start toward him, before the *Gazelle* could shut off her speed. He swam feebly but joyously toward the tug.

The water was cold to the point of numbness. And he was exhausted by his strenuous night. Yet, unlike the ordeal of his earlier swim, he had now no horror of darkness and of uncertainty to drag him back.

The tug was near. He need only keep afloat to be picked up by her. And keep afloat he did. But as he saw the *Gazelle* swing about, beyond the tug, he took fresh strokes with all his remaining strength to reach his goal as quickly as possible.

The tug came up. McPherson had left the mate at the wheel, and with another man was waiting to haul Burns aboard. As the reporter was lifted over the low rail, McPherson burst into a volley of excited, wondering questions. But Burns cut him short.

"Quick!" cried Sidney. "Run us in to Quarantine dock as fast as you can. Don't stop for anything."

Accustomed to the vagaries of his dripping and chattering passenger, McPherson rasped out the necessary order to the mate, and the *John Q. Bartholf* chugged merrily shoreward toward the near-by group of Staten Island buildings.

"You left your watch on the bench in the deck house," said McPherson. "It must have tumbled out of your pocket; but let me keep it for you till your clothes dry," he added, as Burns abstractedly took the proffered timepiece, and thrust it into the pocket of his torn duck coat.

"And now," went on McPherson, as the reporter evidently did not heed or hear the suggestion, "even if you don't mind spoiling a good watch by getting

it wet, maybe you won't spoil my brain by keeping me guessing about what's been happening to you? What in blazes have you—"

"Afterward, old man," interrupted Burns. "I've got too much else to do now, to waste time telling stories. Run me ashore at the Quarantine pier, and wait for me."

"But that hobo outfit of clothes—"

"Here we are!" exclaimed Burns.

The tug had rounded alongside the pier. Before she came to a stop Burns had leaped to the dock, and was running shoreward as fast as his legs would carry him. He must reach a telephone at once.

He dared not try the Quarantine phone, or any near it, for the *Gazelle* was already warping in to the pier, and her master had influence enough and money enough to checkmate him even now, or to pull him away from the instrument by main force.

In newspaper work he had visited Quarantine, and he knew the lay of the land. Up the hill, behind the government station, lies the village of Rosebank. There, he was certain, he could find a telephone. So, nerving himself to his utmost flagging power he ran, groggily but fast, up toward the village. He did not turn to look behind him. His business lay ahead. And he would gain nothing, he knew, by turning to see if he were pursued.

Up the hill and into a street of the village he staggered. There, a few yards ahead, hung the sign for which his eyes and mind had been straining. In front of a little barber shop it hung—a dark blue-and-white sign, with a lettered bell on it.

A yawning man was pulling the covers off the barber chairs as Burns lurched into the shop. He saw the booth at the rear, and, without a word, made for it.

The telephone was of the automatic sort, in which a coin must be dropped. Burns reached into his pockets—and turned faint. Here, at the very goal, he must fail, it seemed, for, in the borrowed white duck suit, there was of

course not one penny. Burns could have cried aloud in his stark desperation.

He left the booth, and turned toward the barber with some vague idea of making a harrowing personal appeal to the man for enough money to telephone. The barber was eying the unkempt, water-soaked figure in open alarm. And Burns did not size him up or his present state of mind as conducive to generosity. Then, with the ever-shifting alertness of the born reporter's mind, an idea came to Burns. Drawing from his pocket the watch McPherson had returned to him, he advanced upon the barber.

The latter backed away, and glanced furtively at his razor case.

"This watch is gold," said Burns. "I want to hock it with you. Take it. Give me a dollar in small change."

The barber, more than ever certain that he had to do with a lunatic, made a dash for the door. But Burns had anticipated, from the fellow's face, some such move. In an instant he had the terrorized barber by the collar. He plunged his free hand in the barber's right trousers pocket, drew out several silver coins, stuck his watch in the pocket, then propelled the squealing barber through the doorway into the street, locked the door behind him, and ran back to the telephone booth.

Probably every reporter, after eating Welsh rabbit or lobster, has at some time dreamed that he was calling up his office with an important story, and that he could not get the telephone connection. And now, with Sidney Burns this nightmare seemed about to come true. To his overstrained nerves it seemed an eternity before the *Buzzard* telephone operator replied to his summons, and put him in touch with the city editor of that paper's evening edition.

"Hello, Mr. Stoddart!" hailed the reporter. "This is Burns—Sidney Burns, of the 'morning.'"

"Burns!" came the indignant reply. "We received two wireless messages from you a half hour ago, contradicting each other, and—"

The reporter in a few quick sentences explained the situation. The city edi-

tor shouted an order. In another minute Burns was dictating notes of his story to Ulman, the *Buzzard's* star rewrite man.

Tensely, quickly, marshaling his facts as a skilled general might marshal his army, Burns shot into the transmitter the chief points of his strange narrative. When the main facts were related, he paused to interject:

"By the way, Ulman, if any one phones or telegraphs or calls in person, in my name, to correct or deny this yarn, remember to pay no attention to him. I—"

Smash!

The flimsy glass of the barber-shop door broke. A hand, thrust in, turned the key, and flung open the door. Attracted by the noise, Burns turned to behold what seemed a million men rushing into the shop. In the van was the gesticulating, gaping little barber, a sleepy policeman at his side. Just behind were several yacht sailors, Porter Rinehart with them.

"Rinehart's here to choke me off!" he called, through the transmitter, "and a cop is here to arrest me for assault and battery. Phone down to some one to get me clear."

He hung up the receiver just as the policeman's hand fell on his shoulder.

Paying no heed to the officer, Burns glanced at Rinehart, who was making a dash for the booth.

"No use, Mr. Rinehart," he laughed, staggering a little on his shaky legs as he spoke, "I've rung off. And I've told them not to take any denial, no matter if—"

Burns paused. The look on the great financier's face sobered and momentarily silenced him. The "Steel Czar" stood for an instant, struggling for self-mastery. And to Burns, who now read the usually inscrutable granite mask like a printed page, never had Porter Rinehart seemed so great a man as at that moment when he was fighting a winning battle for control over his own brute self.

This mighty deal was to be the climax of his Napoleonic career. It had involved many millions of dollars, and

such power as few men may hope to wield. And a mere newspaper reporter had ruined it all! Yet he was recovering, almost in a breath, from the shock.

Slowly the heavy, grim, unreadable mask settled down again on Porter Rinehart's stone visage. And slowly he turned from the booth and looked Burns in the eye. He seemed about to speak to the reporter. Then evidently he changed his mind. Beckoning the policeman, he asked curtly:

"You know who I am?"

"Yes, sir. Yes, indeed, Mr. Rinehart!" prattled the obsequious officer.

"You are about to arrest this young man?"

"Yes, sir."

"Let him go."

Despite the barber's protest, the policeman stepped away from Burns.

"Heavyweight and featherweight," muttered Rinehart, half to himself. "The featherweight wins, for the first time since the David-Goliath mill. It's been an interesting duel, Mr. Burns, and you've fought well. But never try it again. Miracles don't happen twice, when Porter Rinehart is on the other side."

What Did Patsy Get?

PATSY, me boy," said Farmer O'Reilly sternly, "where's the donkey and cart?" Patsy had just returned from market minus the said vehicle and its steed, and it was plain by his distressful countenance that a tale of woe was to be unfolded.

"She's been at her thricks again," he said, "and about halfway home she stood still as a prison wall, and rayfused to budge an inch."

"Didn't ye coax her?"

"That I did, wid a thick stick; but 'twas no use at all, at all, and—at last——"

"Well, what did ye do?"

"Lit a fire under her."

"Ah, well, 'twas the only way. 'Tis an obstinate baste she is."

"Aye, and an artful. For what she did was to move on a couple of steps and then stop again, and niver budge till the cart was burned up. An' she's there yet, laughin' at the joke, begorra!"

Just in Time

NOW," said the fussy old gentleman, putting one of the biggest strawberries in his mouth, and picking up another, "what is the sense of having that sign read: 'Fresh strawberries for sale'? Don't you see that 'Fresh strawberries' would be enough? Don't you suppose that everybody knows they are for sale?"

"I dunno," answered the fruiterer's assistant sarcastically; "some people seem 'o think we're giving them away."

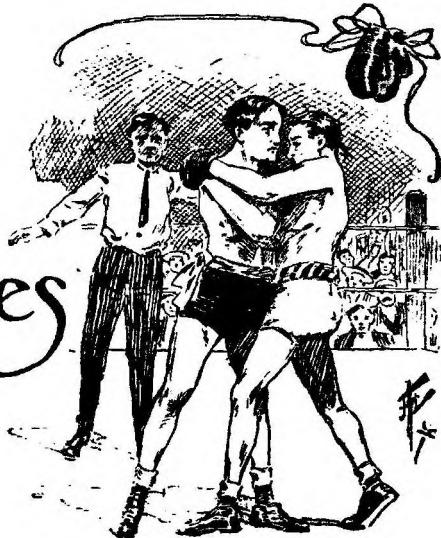
And the old gentleman put the berry back in the basket.

Chickens of Royalty

IT was the Dowager Queen Alexandra who started the vogue in England for chicken farming. At Sandringham, her majesty has some of the best fowls in the world, and there is still a keen rivalry between Queen Alexandra and her brother, the king of Greece, in regard to white "silkies." Lady Derby is another great fancier whose name is well known at the shows. So is Mrs. Paderewski, wife of the famous pianist. Lady Derby has the finest collection of Orpingtons in England. The young American Countess of Craven, daughter of Mrs. Bradley Martin, has expended a fortune on her chicken farms. There is scarcely an aristocratic chicken family in the world of which she has not a specimen.

In One of the Clinches

By
Harold C. Burr



(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

THE SECRET.

MANAGER TIM DOLAN was giving his final instructions in the dressing room before sending his charge upstairs to meet Jimmy Jones in the ring. "Watch him in the clinches," he counseled anxiously. "This Jones man is more or less of a fox. There is a bit of a mystery about him, too; he wins all his fights by the knock-out route. But that isn't all—he always slips the haymaker over as he's breaking out of a clinch. It's almost uncanny. Watch him the second he gets an arm free!"

Earl Renshaw, the thumbs of his clumsy gloves thrust into the drawing string at his waist, listened attentively. "I'll be careful not to get caught on a sleeper," he said.

"But I haven't explained the funniest part of it yet," Dolan added, hesitating. "Well, I've heard some ugly, insinuating stories about this same Jones. They allege that sometimes the other boy drops without even being hit. And that means he quits cold. The faking generally starts right after Jimmy Jones has whispered something in his ear. Nobody has ever overheard what he

says. Oh, he's a cute one! But as long as you keep away from him you'll be safe."

Earl colored slowly, thoughtfully teetering on his heels. "You mean that he'll try to buy me off?" he asked suddenly, looking up.

"Something of the sort," confessed his manager bluntly; "he's been suspected of that."

Young Renshaw silently swathed himself in his maroon bath robe with the drab sunflowers on it. "Glad you've warned me, Tim," he said shortly, not without a veiled grimness. "Let's go up."

At a nod from the manager, the seconds came clustering around. About their beloved fighting machine they formed in solid phalanx, escorting him, a sweatered bodyguard that would protect him from the stares of the public. Renshaw walked quietly in the midst of them, the hood of his dressing gown about his ears. His raven hair, rakishly mussed, bobbed like a black plume of battle. Tim Dolan brought up the rear, industriously puffing a vile cigar.

Thus the little procession crawled up the winding stairs. Up above, the main floor of the Stadium Athletic Club was packed to suffocation. Everybody was

either talking or smoking. Earl saw bodies stretch and necks crane, and saw himself being pointed out. He listened in disappointment, then his ears turned pink, and a glow suffused him down to his canvas fighting shoes. Yes, they were cheering him belatedly as he threaded his way down the aisle. After all, Renshaw was a novice still. He would get used to the cheers by and by.

But he gave no further sign that he was immoderately pleased at the homage. He kept his eye intently on the ring. It should hold no terrors for him. It had never yet been the scene of the death of any of his hopes. For let it be understood that Earl Renshaw was a rising young boxer, who had his eye on the lightweight title—nothing less. This Jimmy Jones, despite all his adroit little tricks, he simply considered as a stepping-stone, and that was all the respect he held him in.

He had his choice of corners—not that it mattered materially. Jones was right behind him, climbing through the ropes with a secret smile that Earl thought he could fathom. Renshaw rested his elbows on his knees, and leaned far forward on his stool curiously. Diagonally across the ring from him Jones was moving laboredly about, like an invalid. But Renshaw wasn't deceived. He knew that with the shedding of his bath robe his opponent's apparent weakness would fall from him like the dressing gown itself. Jimmy Jones was evidently one of those fighters who believed in conserving his energy.

When the bell rang Earl remembered what his manager had told him. He kept warily off, circling like a crouching wolf, one arm stiffened before him, head lowered, eye trained along that arm like a sharpshooter's along his rifle. Jones opened his arms invitingly, but Earl only shook his head tantalizingly and backed off. His adversary's face was innocently blank as he began to chase Renshaw along the ropes, pawing and lunging for a hold.

Renshaw, however, kept his guard unceasingly active, and through that round and the next Jimmy Jones

couldn't once get inside it. Between bells he stared indignantly over at Earl while his seconds sponged him and sent him, reeking with water, back into the fray. He seemed positively hurt that Renshaw wouldn't let him fall upon his neck.

But sooner or later a clinch was inevitable. Renshaw was backed into a corner, and Manager Dolan jumped to his feet, and yelled a warning up through the ropes a fraction of a second too late. Jimmy Jones' arms were winding themselves affectionately through Earl's armpits in such a manner that Renshaw was helpless to loosen the grip with a punch. The boxers struggled around the ring, giving the impression that they were dancing, and the crowd began to whistle waltz music derisively.

Jimmy Jones' head hung limply, contentedly over the other's wet shoulder. Earl yanked and heaved and wrestled to no purpose. The referee would step between them at any second now, and pry them apart. It was then that Renshaw must bring all his vigilance to bear. That was the moment that Tim had been at great pains to warn him about. Well, he was primed for any rough business that Jimmy might attempt. He decided to husband all his strength for that second, and hung on, too. The crowd rose and hooted.

And when the catcalls were at their height, Earl Renshaw distinctly heard a whisper.

"Twenty dollars if you topple over for the count the next time I put a glove on you!" he heard, as clearly as he expected to hear the crack of doom. "Quick! Squeeze my left arm if it's all right! Here comes Mac to break us out of this."

Instantly Earl Renshaw's relaxed muscles stiffened. So this was the species of boxer Jimmy Jones was! He didn't have any deadly punch, after all. He liked to make a sure thing of it, and thought that every man had his price. Tim had been unerring in his suspicions. No wonder Jones wanted to clinch as soon as possible. The secret of his long list of lightninglike knock-

outs was out. It all flashed through Renshaw's head chaotically. Then a vast rage welled up within him at the gross insult he had been offered. This crooked young fighter would smudge his clean record. He would, would he?

By a superhuman effort he tore his arms free, and shoved Jimmy Jones bodily from him. His expression was one of revulsion. It was as if he could no longer bear the contamination of such close quarters with a fellow of his type.

Jones partially lost his balance, staggering wildly on his heels. Earl was after him ferociously. Then his glove, taking aim, swished.

Jimmy Jones' head turned sideways with the terrible impact, and it seemed as if his neck must snap. He sprawled to the canvas and lay there, white and still, under the glare of the arc lights. Those lights blinked once as if at the sudden termination of it all. Next time Jimmy Jones would be more careful whom he attempted to bribe.

CHAPTER II.

JIMMY JONES' SISTER.

WHILE Renshaw was taking his shower and rubdown Jones, none the worse for the obliterating blow he had taken squarely on the point of the chin, came over in undershirt and trousers. The dressing rooms at the Stadium Athletic Club were not exclusive. In fact, they were nothing more or less than one big room with little doorless alcoves built against the walls. The shower was over in a secluded corner. The cold spray had cooled the angry Renshaw off considerably. He nodded impersonally at Jimmy Jones, and glanced curiously at the outstretched hand, palm open.

"What are you doing that for?" he asked slowly, not quite understanding.

The crooked young boxer laughed awkwardly, self-consciously.

"No reason," he said, in a not unpleasant voice, "except as a token of apology—if you'll accept it. I made a

mistake up there in the ring. Sometimes I pick out the wrong fellow. Then I always apologize."

Earl stared at him, thunderstruck.

"That's very nice of you!" he commented sarcastically, at the same time marveling at the fellow's brazen nerve.

"Look here, Renshaw, you don't want to judge me too hastily!" Jones threw out his tape-wound hands in a gesture of appeal. "This is a serious business with me—mighty serious. I'm taking the shortest cut I know of to the title."

"You ought to be proud of your business ability, then," observed Renshaw scathingly. "That was a very cute trick you tried to pull on me."

Jimmy Jones flushed painfully. "I'm not through explaining yet," he declared patiently. "In justice to myself, you've got to hear my excuses. I'm after that title hot-foot. I've admitted that already. Well, if I can afford to remove opposition by paying the other fellow to step aside, where's the harm? If I can buy that belt it's just like investing so much money in bonds, isn't it?"

"Very logical, Jones, but a rotten method of getting there!"

"And I've got the best little sister in the world, Renshaw," Jimmy went on impulsively, at a tangent. "She's got a beautiful voice, but our folks are poor, and it costs money to have that sort of thing put in shape. I've heard that study abroad is the proper caper. Why, I'd do anything for Arabella! I want to save enough to be able to send her over to Paris. It's going to break her heart if she can't go, just about. I'm the hope of the family—my boxing, I mean. But—she's getting older every year, and the longer the delay the harder it's going to be for her to learn. I've got to get a quick reputation, and I'm not hesitating about taking long and desperate chances."

Earl was silent, generously endeavoring to put himself in the other's place.

"It isn't fair to the rest of us," he finally announced, shaking his head regretfully. "It's taking a low, underhand advantage. No, Jones, no matter

what the provocation, you can't make black white, and every time you attempt it you're kidding your conscience—that's all. Jones, it's chaps like you who make the respectable portion of the community look askance at our profession. You ought to be boycotted by all the clubs, from the Stadium right down the line!"

Jones seemed more disappointed than ashamed.

"All right, Renshaw," he said, somewhat stiffly; "if you want to preach, don't let me stop you. But I'm thinking of the end, not the means. I'm satisfied that it'll all work out for good."

"You're easily satisfied, then," Earl returned, starting back for his dressing cubby-hole. But halfway there he halted irresolutely. "Oh, Jones," he called, over his shoulder, "I hope Arabella gets her Paris trip, at that! She's a mighty nice girl."

And thereby hangs another part of this tale. Earl Renshaw wasn't sure, but he felt fairly certain he knew this same Arabella, for whom her brother was sacrificing his self-respect to bring her dearest ambition to fruition. But her last name happened to be Titus, not Jones. Still, Renshaw knew that Jimmy Jones was only a ring name. It rolled off the tongue nicely, and perhaps Jimmy's family didn't exactly relish the notoriety of letting all the world know that a professional pugilist was a member of the eminently respectable Titus household. And there were other reasons why Arabella Titus must be Jimmy Jones' sister. The Arabella that Earl knew sang; she was poor, and when Renshaw had sought to vindicate his calling in her eyes she seemed confused. Yes, now that he recalled the incident, she had actually blushed guiltily.

From all of which it may be gleaned that the honest-fighting, clean-living Earl Renshaw harbored a certain liking for Arabella Titus around the region of his heart. He had met her at a picnic, and they had walked together under the trees, hunted four-leafed clovers, and sat out on deck in the moonlight all the way back to the city,

on the noisy, bunting-dressed excursion boat.

The girl had invited him to call on her, and now he took the opportunity to settle the question of her relationship to the young boxer whose sense of brotherly obligation was somewhat warped.

"Miss Titus," he said casually, "have you a brother they call Jimmy Jones?"

"Yes," she answered, so low he could hardly hear her. "Should I have told you? I don't know why I didn't—truly. You couldn't have thought any the less of us. You're a—a boxer yourself. But mother—well, we'd hoped Jimmy would pick out a more artistic career."

"It's artistic enough," Earl said, in quick defense. "You've got to be clever to get along in this trade."

The girl's eyes were averted. "That's what Jimmy says," she murmured gently. "I've always believed, in spite of mother's teaching, that one business was as good as another. It's not so much a man's work as the way he performs it that counts heaviest with me."

Renshaw's eyes gleamed hopefully. He realized that he admired the girl very much. "If it came to picking a husband, now—" he began constrainedly.

"But I don't want a husband," she said bluntly, feeling that it was her duty to set him right on that score. "I've got other ambitions for myself."

"Oh!" was all he said.

Arabella's face was alight with the vision of her dreams. "I want to be a great singer!" she said ecstatically. "I went to be able to hear my own voice soar up and up and up. And just to think of hearing the applause ripple, swell, and burst into pandemonium, and know that it's all for me—for what I've done! I've laid awake nights wondering how I'd feel when they recalled me and I saw the usher hurry down the aisle, hidden behind the stacks of flowers, the ribbons fluttering. If Jimmy can get it for me I want my taste of fame. Perhaps I'll be quickly disillusioned. I want to find out about that part, too. Do you think me heartless?"

"No," he said frankly. "You're still the best little girl in the world."

CHAPTER III.

THE CHAMPION'S WHIM.

BUT Renshaw wasn't the young man to sit around and mope over what couldn't be. He had his work to do in the world, his own ambitions to accomplish.

He applied himself rigorously to his ring work. Tim Dolan watched him shrewdly. There was no appeasing his thirst for fame. It seemed to consume his waking hours as with a fire, and he went to bed completely fagged. And through it all he kept his gloves spotless of taint.

There came a day when he could climb no higher. Across the rung of the ladder on which he stood was written in letters of gold the magic, significant word: "Champion."

He attained that height in a California ring pitched not very far from Oakland. But, after all, it was an empty sort of an elation that welled up in his breast as he stood, arms akimbo, above the motionless form at his feet, while the referee tolled off the terrible count of ten, and the arena rocked with the yells of the frenzied crowd. Even in the first flush of it the victory was a hollow one. It lacked something. He wasn't getting out of life what he wanted chiefly. He wanted Arabella Titus, and when a fellow wants a girl nothing else really matters.

Now that he was the champion, Renshaw found that he was the busiest of all the boxers. He toured the country as a vaudeville attraction. His picture stared back at him from the sporting pages. Wistfully he hoped that Arabella might hear of him through her brother. Patiently, persistently he had struggled upward, until to-day he was the best man at his weight in the universe. It was work well done. And one day the champion hunted up Jimmy Jones purposely to ask him a question that bothered him.

Jones was still knocking around the clubs from pillar to post, a fourth-rater. He was doomed to the rank and file of the great horde of mediocre boxers, and Renshaw had some difficulty in locating

him without stumbling into Arabella at the same time.

The champion heard that Jones was carded to fill one half of the opening bout at the Stadium Athletic Club, and went around there secretly. He slunk into a dark corner, and breathed a sigh of relief when none of the crowd seemed to recognize him. He was just a trifle weary of being shoved protestingly up into the ring, and posing in the flare of the arc lights. Nowadays he was tolerant of the homage that was being showered upon him. This champion was a shrewd enough observer of human nature to see that to-morrow a new idol would rise above his own prostrate form. He would be forgotten just as Newcomb, the young fellow he had wrested the title from, was forgotten. It was the way of the game.

Earl watched Jimmy Jones through the rounds. He looked like a little old man up there, shuffling his feet wearily over the canvas, his face seamed with the wrinkles of worry. Renshaw watched him closely. The summit of his ambition that night seemed to be to stay the limit. He acted discouraged and bitter.

When Earl hailed him afterward in the dressing rooms, from behind, he turned slowly.

"How are you, Renshaw?" he said listlessly. "They couldn't keep a good man like you down, could they? I'd like to congratulate you. With me it's turned out differently."

The lightweight's eyes narrowed. "What's happened, Jimmy? The old nerve gone. What's killed it off?"

The other didn't seem to know precisely how to explain. "I can't seem to remember when it started," he confessed slowly. "The strain sort of got too great. I was fighting along about every week, and no matter how many of 'em I knocked out, there was always more to take their places. Why, it got so bad I used to see 'em jumping through the ropes in my sleep, and coming for me! It was like trying to beat the breakers back with a pair of boxing gloves. And I never could win out fairly." His face grew bitterly whimsi-

cal, reminiscent. "Renshaw, I never realized before what a lot of tough guys there are in the world! I haven't got the punch or the footwork that will lift me out of the ruck of the class. I'm a fourth-rater. That's all there is to it."

"And Arabella?" questioned Earl anxiously.

A look of positive pain replaced the rueful humor.

"She's still praying for the luck to change," he sighed. "If it wasn't for her I wouldn't mind so much. I can earn enough with my gloves to keep us from starving, and that's something. But that little girl—well, she cries herself to sleep almost every night. She wants that year abroad, studying her music, just like a kid wants a hobby-horse. And she'll never get it, now that I can't give it to her!" He choked miserably.

"That's too bad!"

"But that isn't the worst," Jimmy Jones went on fiercely. "I'm ashamed to look her in the face. She wouldn't approve of what I've stooped to for her sake. And I don't blame her, either. I've been thinking a good deal about what you said to me that night right here in the Stadium. You're right, Renshaw. It's a fine thing to be able to dare any man to find a flaw in your past. I can't do that, and I'm paying. I'm paying in suffering!" He ceased speaking suddenly as some one came up to speak to Renshaw.

A lightweight star can't remain forever unknown where men of the padded gloves congregate. A lowly second had spotted Earl, and whispered hoarsely to a fellow worker. And the champion was compelled to retreat laughingly upstairs to escape being lionized.

It was just as well he left when he did, for he had a few instructions to give Tim Dolan, his manager, that couldn't wait until morning. He knew that he would sleep better for getting them off his mind. Tim would surely raise a protest, but that wouldn't get him anywhere. Renshaw always saw a thing through.

He found Dolan in his shirt sleeves, at his flat uptown, brown derby perched

on the back of his head. This was Tim's quaint idea of getting all dressed up for the evening. He had worn his hat so assiduously in the house that he was very bald on account of it.

"Tim," began Earl, well-nigh bashfully, for some reason not yet apparent, "I'm tired of loafing. I want some action. I'm getting rusty. Tim, I want to put my title up, and fight to retain it. Match me up with some one, will you?"

Dolan pursed his lips thoughtfully. "There's Gaskett, Kid Willets, Andy Gooch, Larry Malone," he tolled off musingly, checking the names on his fingers as he went along. "We won't have to rope and tie any of those boys to get them into the ring with you. I'm all twisted sideways from dodging them now. Which one's challenge shall I accept?"

"None of them," declared Earl sweepingly, with quick, startling decision.

The manager seemed mildly surprised. "Then who—"

"Jimmy Jones is my meat!" The champion thumped his fist into his palm. "Get into communication with the man who's handling his interests, and bind the match."

It wasn't like the mild-mannered Earl to give orders this way, and Tim Dolan stared speechlessly.

"But you whipped him once," he finally contrived to articulate protestingly. "You were a novice then. He's not in your class any more, Earl. The bout will be a joke. And the real good men who've been howling their heads off for a chance at your belt will call you a staller. It will look as if you were taking on this lemon to crawl out of a match with one of them."

Renshaw nodded as if he knew all that for himself, without being told all over again. "That'll be all right," he assured his manager evasively.

"But what's the idea?"

"Tim, that's none of your business," the champion said easily, with a deceptive smile. "And there's something else I want you to attend to for me, now that we're on the topic. I want you to see to it that Jones gets all the conces-

sions—the long end of the purse, the big half of the films. You've got to let his manager rub it in on—”

That was too much for Dolan.

“Earl, Earl, wake up!” he shouted, getting tight hold of his charge, and shaking him. “Come out of it, man. You're trying to commit suicide.”

“No, I'm not,” said Renshaw tranquilly. “Why, Tim, you don't understand half of this! Some day I may be able to tell you. You've got to trust me. And let me tell you this, you mercenary hobo: This is the proudest moment of my life! Go out and do as I tell you, or—I'll take the bull by the horns and manage my own affairs. There's a good fellow, Tim!”

Tim Dolan grumbled and argued and pleaded for half an hour longer, and at the termination of that period Earl Renshaw indulgently said good night and went home. He hadn't backed down an inch.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WHISPER.

IN the days that followed sensations came thick and fast in sporting circles. Tim Dolan bowed his proud head to the dictates of Earl Renshaw, lightweight champion of the world. He must humor the headstrong young fellow in this wild whim, because there was nothing else for him to do. The champion was in the mood to discharge him tomorrow, and take the bit between his strong white teeth all by himself. And the loyal manager felt that his place was by the irresponsible Earl's side in this hour of his temporary aberration. So Tim shook his head sadly, and allowed himself to be imposed upon outrageously.

The first sensation came with the making of the match; the second when Jimmy Jones knocked the champion into slumberland with a single blow!

And right here it is no more than right that the reader should be let into a little secret about that affair when a lightweight championship unexpectedly changed hands. It wasn't Jimmy Jones who had done the whispering in one of

the clinches. It was Earl Renshaw who talked in undertones. Just what he whispered not even the referee was near enough to overhear. But it lent a strange confidence to the fists of Jimmy Jones, all the same. It was practically Renshaw's undoing.

Tim Dolan rose excitedly to his feet, and stared with unbelieving eyes at the champion's limp form lying face downward on the canvas. And when he realized that in truth the calamity had come to pass, he gritted his teeth in despair. He was mortified, and couldn't trust himself to speak to Earl just then. So he hurried out into the cool night air to walk off his spleen. Behind him he left the frenzied spectators standing on their chairs, everybody talking at once. Jimmy Jones' blow had stunned them all.

Earl dressed calmly. And when his camp followers came trooping downstairs with their condolences, he was brief with his thanks. Nine out of ten of them expressed their opinion that it was a chance blow that had turned the trick against him, but he never breathed a word of excuse for himself.

He spoke quietly to the reporters, and next morning the papers bristled with his statement. Jones, he said, through the medium of the press, had won on his merits. Renshaw admitted that Jimmy was the best man at the weight. At the end of the interview he remarked that he was going away for six months to recuperate.

Without another word to anybody, he went directly home. He was up early, and about his packing. He wanted to get off somewhere where the inquisitive Tim Dolan couldn't wheedle him into damaging admissions. And he wanted to give Jimmy Jones a clear field to make his little pile. With a foxy manager directing his business affairs, Arabella Titus' brother ought to be able to get together a modest little fortune before ever he trod resin again.

He whistled, a little weakly, it must be admitted, as he tossed his clothes into his trunk. But he wasn't sorry about what he had done with his eyes wide open. The landlady came to the door,

and informed him that a lady wished to speak with him in the parlor. He went downstairs, wondering.

A young girl was standing in the doorway. He rubbed his eyes, and stared foolishly at her.

But she had her slim arms outstretched to him the way she held them out that other time, when she wanted her dreams to come true.

"Earl Renshaw!" she was saying softly, with a woman's wonderful tenderness, "I've come here to tell you that—that it was a splendid sacrifice—the way you gave Jimmy the championship last night! He's told me all about it, and I've hurried here to—to thank you. But if you did it so that Jimmy could afford a musical education for me," she continued naively, "it's—it's all wasted.

Truly! I've changed my mind about—about wanting to go to Paris."

Still he could only stare incredulously.

"Why?" he gasped, with all the inaneness of his slow-thinking sex in a crisis like this.

"Because, Earl, I've learned to—to care for—for somebody," Arabella faltered. "Everything seems different to me now."

But Earl Renshaw wasn't quite so slow that he let that admission pass. The next second she was wrapped in his arms, crimson to her pink little ears.

That's about all there is to the story except that six months later the husband of Arabella Renshaw regained his championship crown; and brother Jimmy, best man at the wedding, was the first to congratulate him..

A Puzzling Question

IT became the solemn duty of justice to pass sentence on an aged man for stealing.

"It is a shame that a man of your age should be giving his mind up to stealing. Do you know any reason why sentence should not be pronounced on you according to the law?"

"Now, judge," was the reply of the aged sinner, "this is getting to be a trifle monotonous. I would like to know how a fellow can manage to please you judges. When I was only seventeen years old I got three years, and the judge said I ought to be ashamed of myself, stealing at my age. When I was forty, I got five years, and the judge said it was a shame that a man in his very best years should steal. And, now, when I am seventy years of age, here you come and tell the same old story. Now, I would like to know what year of a man's life is the right one, according to your notion."

New Leaf Turned to Gloom

MANY witty letter writers have made effective points by starting a sentence on one side of the paper, and finishing on the other. One celebrity always replied to letters asking for subscriptions in this way:

"SIR: I feel highly honored by the application you have made to me, and I beg to subscribe"—here the reader had to turn the leaf—"myself your very obedient servant," et cetera.

The Last Straw

HAL: "Have you stopped calling on the girl with the silk blouse?"

Tom: "Yes; it's all over in that direction."

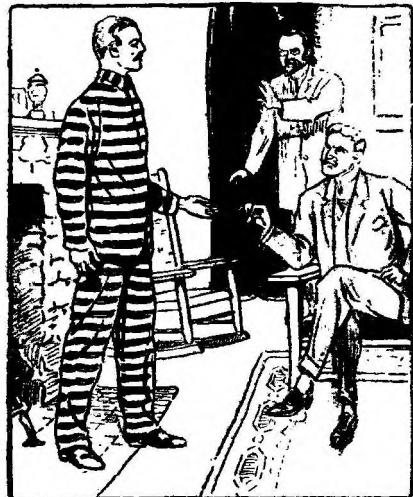
"Why? Father object?"

"Bless you, no! And I had nerve enough to dodge all her hints about popping the question also; but the last time I called she had the sign 'Do it now' stuck on the center table. That floored me, and I've quit."

A Knight of Tennessee

By Clinton Dangerfield

(A SERIAL NOVEL)



THE OPENING CHAPTERS.
Condensed for those who have not
read them.

CHELMSFORD, a wealthy artist—the man who tells this story—is visiting at the house of Lawrence Arnett, when the latter kills an old rival and enemy, Arnold Bentley, in a pistol duel. Arnett's friend, Randolph Carisbrooke, is accused of the murder, and he persuades Arnett to let him face the charge, as Arnett's invalid wife could not survive such a shock as the arrest of her husband would cause, and Carisbrooke feels certain that he can escape with a light sentence on the plea of self-defense. Arnett has three times saved the life of Carisbrooke at the risk of his own, and Carisbrooke claims the right to offer his now in return.

Chelmsford goes abroad, and eighteen months have passed when he returns to Tennessee, bringing with him his niece, Diana Hardeman. Chelmsford has heard nothing of the murder case during his absence, but as he and Diana are journeying to the mountain bungalow of the girl's father, Thomas Hardeman, a mining magnate, they meet Carisbrooke on his way to the State convict camp, where he is to serve a two-year sentence, having been convicted of manslaughter.

There is a slight railway accident, and Carisbrooke protects Diana from injury. The girl recognizes him as the man who offended her some years before by objecting to his younger brother's paying court to her, on account of the low origin and brutal nature of her father. She is secretly glad to hear that he is now a convict, but Chelmsford is regretful, knowing that Carisbrooke will be at

the mercy of Hardeman, who has great political influence, and is allowed to make use of convict labor at his mines.

The Duke of Winton, who has been a suitor for Diana's hand during her stay in Europe, comes to visit at the palatial Hardeman bungalow, and the ambitious Hardeman encourages his suit with enthusiasm. Chelmsford keeps in touch with Carisbrooke by affecting to seek models for his painting among the convicts, and the two men have several conferences. Chelmsford counsels Carisbrooke not to resent the slights that are put upon him, as he only lays himself more open to the brutality of the prison-camp warden.

CHAPTER XII.

AN EASIER JOB.

ROM the window of the prison shanty I could see my brother-in-law progressing slowly toward us. He was detained by more than one convict, who pressed up to ask favors, and probably got them, according to the flattery shown.

In a Napoleonic way, Thomas Hardeman was far from unkind to underlings. He strolled along, smoking a big Havana, listening with evident good humor. Presently he dismissed them all, and came briskly to the room we occupied, entering it without the formality of a knock.

I looked up and nodded as he came in, though I heartily wished he had stayed at the bungalow.

He came up to the easel, ignoring Carisbrooke. "Not your model, eh?"

"Yes, he has precisely the figure I want for the center of my next forest scene."

"He looks out of drawing to me," retorted Hardeman drawlingly, glancing over Carisbrooke with the studied contempt of a man determined to have reprisals. "I've seen many a black with a better figure than his. But you know what gets the public."

"It's a matter of proportion," I explained, as I saw Carisbrooke's face grow calmly expressionless. "We painters have to go by certain laws. Mr. Carisbrooke happens to fit them."

"There are no misters among convicts. He's number four hundred," growled Hardeman.

"All right," I murmured.

"Could none of the others do as well?" inquired Hardeman sourly.

"No," I said truthfully; "he makes such a model as we don't find once in ten years."

"That so? Well, then, you'll need him constantly. And you can't paint him in the mines. I've an idea for keeping him out. Thought I'd induce Meacham to make him a trusty."

Carisbrooke's face softened at the word. My heart leaped with pleasure to think how much more generous Hardeman was than I had supposed him.

"Fine and dandy!" I answered enthusiastically. "Meacham could let him drive one of the teams in the morning, and let me have him in the afternoons."

"Oh, I've an easier job for him than that, Chelmsford." Then to Carisbrooke: "You'd be willing to take the oath, my man, that you won't escape?"

Carisbrooke answered quietly:

"I should be glad to take it, to get the chance of working on a team, or something outside. I would be a fool to escape—my sentence is so short."

Thomas Hardeman surveyed him leisurely, then drawled:

"Driving is too rough work for a man of your descent. I want you for a house servant in my kitchen and dining room."

I whirled round on my seat. I might have guessed that from under this apparent kindness a thrust would come.

A flood of scarlet ran up Carisbrooke's finely proportioned neck and into his face, clear to his forehead. It receded, but it left his eyes shining with rage, as he answered slowly:

"I might have known that was the sort of offer a cad like you would make."

"Come, come, Hardeman," I interrupted hastily, as my brother-in-law was about to speak, "give him something better than that. Mining is a man's work. Don't ask him to take anything less dignified."

A long puff floated out from Hardeman's cigar.

"Didn't know a convict had anything to do with dignity," he drawled.

"I say, Hardeman," I exclaimed, "the man's in your power—be merciful."

Carisbrooke stepped forward. A less fearless man than my brother-in-law would have shrunk back before the increasing anger blazing in Carisbrooke's eyes, before the involuntary shutting of Carisbrooke's right hand. But Thomas Hardeman didn't know the meaning of the word fear.

"I don't want his mercy," Carisbrooke said, in low, controlled, but none the less furious tones. "Neither his mercy nor his dirty jobs. I came here as a prisoner of the State to do a man's work for the State. He can't make me a trusty unless I choose to make myself one."

Thomas Hardeman laughed. "It won't be long, number four hundred," he muttered, "before you will be ready and glad to wait on me at the bungalow."

Turning on his heel, he left the room, and went coolly across the grounds toward the large gate, the warden and several guards dancing deferential attendance on him.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE DUST.

WHILE waiting for Diana to accept or refuse him definitely, the Duke of Winton interested himself in everything around him. He and Diana rode horseback daily. She made a beautiful picture in her graceful divided skirt, the lines of her lovely figure harmonizing with those of the horse in a way to gratify any artist's eye.

Her horse was a satin-coated gray, confident in carriage, sure-footed as an antelope, and keenly appreciative of the little hand that guided him so skillfully and sympathetically.

I can't say that the duke looked well. He was able to ride any horse with surety and pleasure, but he slouched in the saddle. He looked just as ugly there as he did everywhere else, and just as undistinguished. Watching those two go off together one morning, I thought how superbly Carisbrooke would have sat Winton's handsome black gelding; Carisbrooke, who at that moment was laboring by the side of his negro "buddy" for the sake of those two young lovers fighting for love and life in the Italian world of sunshine.

Winton and Diana came back glowing from their ride, and manifested enormous appetites at lunch. Winton announced that they had been exploring the mines. The interior workings of the mines were very new and interesting to him. He was evidently anxious to discuss them, but there were interruptions, and little was said until that evening after dinner, when we foregathered on the piazza.

It was the loveliest of evenings. Hardeman had just returned from a fresh victory at a directors' meeting. It seemed he had spoken no more than truth when he said everything was coming his way. He listened with deference to Winton's somewhat naïve comments on the State mine.

Diana was swinging in a Mexican hammock. Winton was gently keeping the hammock in motion, while gazing adoringly at her. Yet, in spite of Winton's humility, in spite of the way

Diana had snubbed him, there was an undercurrent of belief in him that she was surely his—that their wedding was only prettily deferred. For it was hardly possible for him to believe that in the end she could refuse such a title as his.

Winton betrayed this to me in several subtle ways. And Thomas Hardeman naturally shared Winton's belief that the granddaughter of the illiterate English undergardener could not afford to refuse that delectable title.

Winton was, in his way, rather lovable. If he was ugly and lacked presence, his manners were quite perfect, and he had led a clean life. He was good at nearly all outdoor sports, and had a very pleasant command of small talk. What is still more important, he could turn a compliment.

But to-night Diana listened to him vaguely. Her face in the white moonlight was rather grave and troubled, as if she were haunted by some disturbing memory.

Finding her unresponsive, the duke was wise enough again to turn his attention to Thomas Hardeman.

"Saw rather a fine thing to-day in that mine, don't you know," he observed.

My brother-in-law looked up with the interest he always showed in any remark of Winton's.

"What was that, duke?"

"I was interested in the men, don't you know, and in watching them work. Some of those fellows can certainly make the stuff tumble down. And in one room was a tall, splendidly built, dark-eyed white man working with a negro. And the black had a beastly attack of rheumatism, so the white man was doing all the black man's work to keep him from being punished, don't you know."

Thomas Hardeman sneered. "And boasted to you of his philanthropy, I suppose?"

"Not at all! The white fellow never said a word about himself, and tried to make the black fellow hush because the black fellow was praising the white fellow, don't you know. Called him 'Marse

Randolph,' and said the white man used to own his—the black fellow's—people. The negro looked badly used up, don't you know."

"It was all put on," asserted Hardeman.

"Really?"

"I know the nigger. Biggest liar and the most consummate actor in the camp. Four hundred was breaking the regulations in doing that nigger's work, and they both knew it."

"Still, it was by way of being awfully decent on this white man's part."

"I don't see it. He ought to listen to what the warden tells him about that nigger. Four hundred was aiding an infraction of discipline, and he knew it."

"But the white fellow was uncommonly decent to do it," reiterated Winton obstinately.

I saw Diana send him an approving glance. For myself, I wished Winton had kept his mouth shut about Carisbrooke and Carisbrooke's kindness. A certain uneasiness stirred in me. It increased when Thomas Hardeman presently excused himself, went into his telephone booth, and closed himself in.

Diana apparently shared my uneasiness. She stirred uncomfortably in her luxurious hammock, then said a little impatiently to Winton:

"I wish you'd kept quiet, Snooks, about that incident with Mr. Carisbrooke."

"Mr. Carisbrooke? I didn't meet any Mr. Carisbrooke, Miss Diana."

"The man who did the negro's work is Randolph Carisbrooke. He belongs to one of the oldest families in America. He's a gentleman, in there for two years for manslaughter—not murder, you know. And it just happens he—he angered dad very much. And—and dad rather has it in for him, you know. And—and, although I personally dislike Randolph Carisbrooke exceedingly, still I don't want dad to be getting him into any difficulty. And—and every time he's brought to dad's notice there may me fresh trouble for—for Mr. Carisbrooke."

Winton whistled softly. "Oh, I see!"

I'm awfully sorry, don't you know, I mentioned Mr. Carisbrooke. Shan't do it again."

But it was too late to remedy the matter, as I learned after Diana and Winton had said good night. Nor as soon as Winton disappeared Thomas Hardeman, pulling at his inevitable cigar, said slowly:

"I've got a line on that infernal Carisbrooke through infraction of rules to-day. It's just what I want."

"Thomas," I returned, with a touch of anger, "you carry your desire for revenge too far."

"Don't be a fool, Chelmsford. I haven't had any revenge yet," retorted my brother-in-law dryly.

"Good Lord, the man's in the very dust."

"Not dust of my making. That's the State's work. What I'm going to do is bit and bridle him with *my* harness. I've been scorned and insulted beyond words by this fellow. I'll never rest satisfied till this high and mighty descendant of all the Carisbrookes is waiting on my table like a lackey—understand?"

"You'll never make him do that."

"Oh, yes, I will. I've handled various kinds of men, Chelmsford. I understand 'em better than you do. Now I mean to have Carisbrooke in my kitchen before the sun sets again, and you're the man to look after this for me."

"Excuse me! I'll have absolutely nothing to do with your dirty work, Thomas. Carisbrooke was and is a kind of friend of mine, though we had only a short acquaintanceship. I'd rather do him good than harm. I'll never execute any commission of yours against him, Thomas."

"Don't be so quick with your nevers," snarled Hardeman. "People usually do what I want—you will, too. Listen."

I listened—for nearly twenty minutes.

"You are an infernally cold-hearted devil!" I exclaimed.

"I'm no devil. But any game I play—whether it's love or hate—I play it. Now, will you do what I want in the morning, or shall I get somebody else?"

"I'll do what you want," I said reluctantly.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CALL OF THE HUMBLE.

THE sun rose on a fair morning. I got up early, and had coffee and toast with Thomas Hardeman an hour before Winton or Diana thought of waking. I had little appetite for breakfast, and my brother-in-law was the most temperate of men at the table. He held that to put an extra ounce of food in the stomach for pleasure was to damage that most wonderful piece of machinery, the body. Certainly his rugged health well carried out his theories, while Winton, who was both epicure and gourmand, was already complaining of dyspepsia.

The meal was soon over. Thomas Hardeman went to his office, and I, lamenting the complication which had brought Carisbrooke to this place, went to the State stockade.

As I approached it, it might have been some little white-painted Swiss village, so far as scenic effects went. And outside the stockade walls the mountain flowers smiled and flung spots of ravishing color along the path, their petals still dew-kissed into translucent beauty.

Then I passed through the large gate, admitted by the guard, and into the presence of one of life's grimmest sides. As I expected, the whole force of convicts was lined up to watch the matter in hand. They were not shackled, for they were directly under the shotguns of the guard on the walls.

The men were rarely shackled until they were to leave the stockade for the mine.

They were divided into two bodies, a couple of hundred being on each side of the central square. In this square the whipping post was planted, and near it stood Carisbrooke's negro buddy, Jim. The negro's hands were tied in front. He was bare to the waist, his shoulders shining in the early sun.

The negro looked shrunken and drawn; his face was a mask of fear and misery.

I came quietly up behind the west line of convicts, and slipped among them, where I could watch unobserved. They

paid almost no heed to me; their whole attention was centered on the coming punishment of their fellow prisoner.

Near the negro the warden was standing, his legs apart, a stogy in his mouth, and a whipping strap trailing from his right hand. He was waiting. For whom was evidenced by the arrival of Carisbrooke, who was brought up by a deputy. Carishrooke was, like the other convicts, unshackled. He came striding up, his face flushed with anger; but when he addressed the warden his tone was well controlled.

"Don't punish the boy, warden," he said hurriedly. "I was glad to help him out. He was utterly unable to do his task."

He regarded the warden anxiously. The latter returned his gaze contemptuously.

"Who made you judge here of what a black is or isn't able to do?"

"I am in position to know because I am working with the man."

"Yes, boss, Mr. Warden, suh," exclaimed the terrified Jim, "he sutney do understand' my case, suh!"

"You know just about as much about blacks, four hundred," drawled the warden, "as you do about how to keep outer trouble—which is nothing at all!"

Stepping close to the warden, Carisbrooke said something in a low tone. His listener gulped, swallowed hard, and with difficulty recovered his poise of just indignation.

"Bribin' me don't go!" he exclaimed loudly. But I could detect the effort the refusal cost, and judged Carisbrooke must have offered several hundred dollars. The warden, however, had wisdom enough to know that no man can profitably serve two masters. He was already "grafted" by Hardeman.

At a sign from him, the negro was promptly fastened to the post. Carisbrooke protested passionately.

"You are whipping him for a mere nothing! The full measure of the stuff was dug out. The State isn't a penny the worse. It was no real infraction of discipline. Because I happened to do a sick negro's task doesn't mean that every other convict will be double tasked

by his mate. Be reasonable, warden! Be just!"

"That's enough from you, four hundred," the warden said roughly.

"I will promise never to do his task again," urged Carisbrooke.

"You'll do as you are told; that's what you'll do. And you'll never dig another pickful for this black, unless you want him half killed."

As the warden spoke, he wheeled toward Jim, lifted the whipping strap, and brought it across the negro's shoulders.

I have seen some unpleasant things in my travels; I have heard the cry of mortally wounded men, the wailing of women for their dead; but never in the course of my existence have I heard a howl of such anguish, despair, and agony as Jim let out when the first tap of the strap struck him. The negro's voice is always a fine vehicle for wails. Full, passionate, chорded to wild and hopeless supplication under trouble, it can carry at the owner's pleasure a burden of such woe as would make the fortune of any actor who could achieve such use of the human voice.

Through the gurgling of his scream ran the wild appeal of the Southern-born negro to the man whose father had been a kind of god to his slaves:

"Marse Randolph! Save me, Marse Randolph! Oh, save me!"

Just so had Jim's negro daddy once appealed to Randolph Carisbrooke's own father in a time of great peril, and the elder Carisbrooke had answered it by deliverance. Perhaps Randolph Carisbrooke remembered this; perhaps it was only the effect of the desperate call of the weaker race to the strength of the warm-hearted superior white; an appeal which, to a slave holder's son, carried a claim utterly inexplicable to those not trained in the South's patriarchal ideas.

Its effect on Randolph Carisbrooke was instant, and utterly disastrous. Under that cry, his reason went where reason goes when impulse surges into control. He sprang toward the warden, his eyes glowing like fire.

"Drop that whip!" he shouted, in

tones as harshly commanding as though he were himself in authority. "Drop it, you dog!"

The warden wheeled, and struck at Carisbrooke with the whip; the blow went wild. Carisbrooke delivered an uppercut which stretched the warden flat on the ground of his own camp.

CHAPTER XV.

A DOUBTFUL ALTERNATIVE.

NO sooner had the warden fallen than two deputy wardens, a guard, and three trusties hurled themselves on Carisbrooke, who naturally went down nearly as promptly as the warden had done. When the representatives of order dragged him to his feet again, he was handcuffed and breathing hard from rage and struggling.

The warden by this time had risen also. His left eye was bruised, and from the way he rubbed the back of his head the contact with the ground must have raised a bump of unpleasant size.

He stalked up to the handcuffed Carisbrooke, and glared into his face with eyes grown absolutely wolfish as he choked out:

"You fool! I'll make you pay for this, *Mister Carisbrooke!*"

Carisbrooke returned his glare by the high, steady look which was always such an exasperation to those on whom he used it. The warden fairly danced with fury.

"You won't hold your nose in the air like that when I'm done thrashing you!" he cried. And then to his deputy wardens: "Turn the nigger loose, and tie up Mr. Four Hundred for fifty lashes."

Carisbrooke fell back a step. His color receded until he was ghastly white. A sudden horror utterly beyond words leaped into his handsome eyes. I saw instantly that this highly organized, impulsive man had actually never conceived that he could be beaten as the common prisoners were. He had been careful to keep every law, careful to do his tasks; he had been silently obedient in all things to the authority at hand—except in the one slight fault, if fault it could be called, of digging a sick

man's task. He had trusted to his perfect service and his own proud knowledge of his social standing to protect him. Of course, if he had stopped to think at all before he struck down the warden, humiliating that official in the very face of his men, he would have appreciated what he was bringing down himself. But up to the time of Jim's wild and frantic appeal Carisbrooke had conceived his own good work held him immune from the whip, and after Jim's cry he had not reasoned about anything. Now, quite too late, he saw what was before him. Only those comprehending to the full Randolph Carisbrooke's pride of birth and his haughty personality could even approximate the extent of the loathsome humiliation which punishment by the whip meant to him.

From white, a slow tinge of gray crept into his skin. He seemed on the verge of fainting. I was just about, against my judgment, to go to him, when, with a desperate effort, he recovered himself.

The negro—Jim—was promptly released. He scuttled into his jacket, and fled like a scared rabbit into the ranks of his fellow prisoners, where he effectually concealed himself from view.

Carisbrooke spoke to the warden, in tones so thick and choked that they were barely distinguishable:

"If you touch me just once with that whip of yours, I'll kill you, if I have to choke you with my bare hands!"

The low, fierce sincerity of his phrases made me shiver. There was no question but that he meant every word of it. The warden, however, was not to be frightened out of his revenge.

"No, you won't, my buck," he said coolly. "You'll not get a chance to hurt me. I know your kind, and I'll have you watched. And just you do a little listening. I meant to whip you, anyway. But you'd have had only ten lashes for digging that task against positive orders. Now you'll get full fifty—and it ought to be a hundred."

He nodded to his men. They were about to lay hands on Carisbrooke when I stepped forward.

"One moment, warden," I interposed,

and pressed on him a note in Thomas Hardeman's handwriting.

The warden took it brusquely. While he read it, I looked at Carisbrooke. He turned on me eyes whose desperation was more eloquent than words, and from his lips fell the first appeal for aid that had ever passed them.

"Chelmsford," he said, in a low voice, "help me!"

I put my hand on his shoulder, but I said nothing. When the warden had finished the note, he was red with exasperation. "I ought to have my rights!" he sputtered.

"Will you give me a few words alone with Mr. Carisbrooke, or not?" I demanded sharply.

"I—I—" He gulped hard, then said with difficulty: "I reckon so!"

Running my arm through Carisbrooke's, I led him off to the room where I painted. Once we were alone, I lost no time in coming to the point.

"Carisbrooke," I said hastily, "there's just one way to save you from this, and it's a hard way."

He searched my face, but he said nothing. I hurried on:

"My brother-in-law sent me here this morning to watch this affair. He knew what was about to be done. He told me to say to you before you were touched that if you would take oath as a 'rusty,' and work in his kitchen and dining room you would not only escape this punishment, but he would promise you absolute exemption from any touch of the lash while you were in his service."

Still he looked into my face, and said nothing.

I went on: "Here's a copy of the note he sent the warden by my hands. I'll read it to you:

"If the convict four hundred, otherwise Randolph Carisbrooke, will come to me as a house rusty, release him without fail, un-punished, into Mr. Chelmsford's hands. See that you do not under any conditions touch him with a whip. But if he refuses the offer Mr. Chelmsford brings, take it out of the convict as much as you like. I shall be done with him."

"You see," I continued, "whether you had struck the warden or not, you would have been beaten, anyway."

"I see. Hardeman played this whole hand to drive me into what he wanted."

"That may be. My brother-in-law pretty well owns this fellow Meacham, and so you are absolutely in his power. If you don't accede to his terms—what is before you this morning is only the beginning of even worse. You have made a deadly enemy of that warden. You will be lashed and maltreated constantly; will be Meacham's football. And you'll get no chance to kill him."

"If Thomas Hardeman gets me into his service, will be keep his oath that I shall be exempt from any physical punishment?"

"Yes. I'm sure of that."

Carisbrooke began slowly pacing up and down the room. Then he halted.

"Could you save Jim from any further beating for this particular offense?"

"I'm sure I can. I'll have the warden let him alone until he hears from Thomas Hardeman, and I'm reasonably sure I can get this favor for you. Hardeman is lavish with his money when he has an end to attain. He'll fix Meacham on any thing to gain you."

Carisbrooke gave a hard little laugh. "Your brother-in-law is no slouch as a chess player. He has me cornered where service as his white slave actually looks like salvation. There's only one way I could defeat him—kill myself. But that's cowardly. Moreover, it would burden Arnett cruelly. He'd always be thinking it was his fault."

Again he began slowly pacing up and down; then turned to me with a grim smile.

"But why am I delaying you here as if I had any choice?" he said. "There's nothing left but to take Hardeman's offer."

CHAPTER XVI.

A PARTY OF THREE.

UNDoubtedly the play on great human emotions makes up the varying interests of life; but I am one of those who do not care to swim in the fiercer currents, and the ocean of Thomas Hardeman's apparently boundless hatred for Carisbrooke was incom-

prehensible to me. I either forgive my enemies or forget them; generally the latter, as it's less trouble.

But Hardeman wished neither to forgive nor forget. And none of us was likely to forget, with Randolph Carisbrooke calmly waiting on the dinner table.

The negro in the kitchen did the cooking, but the last of the Carisbrookes was taught to set the tables, serve the meals, and wash the dishes.

Hardeman had accomplished the incredible. He had rounded out a revenge far superior to killing his man. But success is a mysterious thing; it never contains quite the elements we expect. Unfortunately for Hardeman's perfect satisfaction in his triumph, the transferred prisoner bore his enforced humiliation with such quiet self-poise, such unaffected, unprotesting, and dignified obedience to the curt orders given him, that there was lacking the flavor which a cringing attitude on his part would have given to Hardeman's victory.

Whatever Carisbrooke's sensations may have been as he brought in food for us and served around the table, he bore himself with a cool self-possession, a decorously masked contempt that threw us all drolly into the wrong.

The swift, vindictive glances Hardeman sometimes shot at him when he was leaving the room, the red light growing stronger in Hardeman's eyes, began to prove to me that there would be trouble ahead. All this affected my appetite. It is a serious mistake to bring a "situation" into one's dining room; it interferes with digestion.

For the presence of Carisbrooke troubled three out of the four of us very seriously. When Diana found what her father had accomplished in driving Carisbrooke into his personal domestic service, it is only just to her to say that she was nearly as humiliated as Carisbrooke himself. She was able to comprehend at once that Thomas Hardeman's excessive use of his power over his enemy had put her father in the wrong, and had preserved, not destroyed, Carisbrooke's dignity.

She also perceived that she must not show Carisbrooke the least kindness in her father's presence. She saw how his hate of his prisoner waxed with the possession.

Carisbrooke's self-poise, his cool calm under many drawled insults brought the relations between himself and Thomas Hardeman into something like a daily duel of personalities in which the impregnable self-control of the insulted continually brought him off victor. When Hardeman was called away on business for a week, I found it a relief.

Winton alone had remained untroubled by the addition of Carisbrooke as a servant. The very afternoon of Hardeman's departure, while Diana, Winton, and myself were lounging in the living room, Winton commented good-humoredly on our acquisition.

"Mr. Hardeman tells me," he said to Diana, who was sitting on the leather-padded divan, supported by a mass of cushions, "that this fellow Carisbrooke elected to come here as a house servant in preference to working in the mine. Fellow makes a good enough servant, but he can't be a gentleman, or he wouldn't have changed his pick for a dishpan."

Diana's eyes blazed. "Daddy shouldn't have given you that impression, Snooks," she said impulsively. "He had no right to. I'm going to tell you the whole truth."

"Diana!" I cautioned.

"Yes, uncle, I'm going to play fair." She turned again to Winton. "When daddy offered Mr. Carisbrooke this place at first, Mr. Carisbrooke was furious. Then daddy—" She halted, and choked over saying what her father had planned against the helpless man in his power. At last she found some cloak for the circumstance, and continued: "Daddy had—had—such pressure put on Mr. Carisbrooke at the stockade that Mr. Carisbrooke was driven—at what you might call a pistol's point—to take this place up here."

"I see! When between the devil and the deep sea—"

"That's not civil, Snooks."

"Choose the deep sea," Winton continued hastily. "It's a compliment to call a man the deep sea. Because your father is like that, you know—calm sometimes, and sometimes by way of being perfectly resistless."

Diana laughed. "You got out of that very well."

An hour later Winton had wandered off downtown into the mining settlement. He was given to prowling about a bit on his own account. Diana remained on the divan, dipping into a pile of recent magazines, and I went to my studio.

It was a well-lighted room which Hardeman had thoughtfully reserved for me. I got my things together, and went in search of my model. This was the first time I had felt it wise to use him since the episode at the stockade. For if by any manner of means I betrayed to Thomas Hardeman my intense sympathy for Carisbrooke, it would be Carisbrooke who would pay, and plentifully.

He had finished his dishes, and was busy polishing the great walnut dinner table.

He had thrown aside his striped jacket. His sleeves were rolled to his shoulders, leaving bare the muscular beauty of his white, powerful arms. Under the easy strength of his well-shaped hands, the wood was shining exquisitely, throwing up at him a clear reflection of his gravely handsome face.

He turned his head as I entered, and smiled cheerfully at me.

"Good piece of wood," he said. "Rather wonderful what a variety nature has made in woods. It would be a job to make post oak shine like this!"

"Woods are as various as people. Put up your polishing cloth, and come sit to me, Carisbrooke. You know, Hardeman said you might any time I wanted to paint."

"I'll be glad enough to come." He dropped his polishing cloth into a drawer, and went with me. When we reached the studio, I made him take an easy-chair.

"We'll have a drink first," I said, bus-

ily attacking the contents of my cellar-ette.

"I'll get some glasses," he murmured, somewhat ill at ease.

"No, you won't; I'll do the waiting this time. And I—"

A light rap on the door interrupted me.

"Enter!" I called, and Diana entered. "May I watch you paint?" she asked, a little timidly.

I nodded, rather wishing she had kept out.

"Mint juleps?" she inquired lightly. "Let me mix them, will you?"

"No; I like to mix my own. Go get me the glasses," I said.

She went. She came back with three glasses on a silver tray. When I had filled them, she carried the tray first to Carisbrooke, who accepted his glass with grave thanks. The three of us drank together, although Diana took only half of hers.

Setting down her glass, she came slowly toward Carisbrooke, who had risen on her entrance, and had remained standing.

"Mr. Carisbrooke," she said, a little fearfully, "there's something I want to say to you."

"There is nothing you could have to say," he returned quietly, "to your father's servant, unless you have some order to give me."

She understood the cut, and flushed. But she persisted: "Yes, there is something else. I want to say to you that I am very, very sorry that you have been dealt with so hardly. It—it—in a way—almost justifies what—what you called us. But—but I'd like you to know that if—I could have had my way things would have—been different for you. I tried to make my father see with my eyes, but he—he hates you intensely. And he is a man of very fierce emotions."

Carisbrooke's face softened slightly over her anxious air as he answered slowly:

"It is really kind of you to care at all what my opinion of you or yours may be. And I believe what you are saying about yourself, because I could not,

from my work in the dining room on the silver, help overhearing what you said to the Duke of Winton concerning my having been forced into this position. There are not many women who have your sense of fair play. I know it cost you much to say what you did to the duke, because your father has shown you only the better side of himself."

Although she was over medium height, she had to look up to him as they stood together; she in her white linen gown, with its apparently simple but costly embroidery; he in his convict stripes.

As he paused, she said anxiously: "The worst of it is, Mr. Carisbrooke, I cannot do anything for you. The very influence I have with my father would turn to ashes if I interceded for you."

She used the wrong word. His face settled into his usual grave and slightly scornful composure. "Before you distress yourself over that," he said cuttingly, "it might be well to discover if I desire any intercession. The affair is purely between Mr. Hardeman and myself."

Her eyes suddenly filled with hurt tears.

"It's not necessary to—to speak to me like that," she faltered, "when you know that I am humiliated to death over the insults put on you. No—no matter what you did—or what you called us, as soon as you were in our power we should have been too generous to take advantage of you."

He folded his arms, and looked down keenly at her, his dark eyes searching every line of her high-bred, beautiful face.

"Miss Hardeman," he said slowly, "the phrases of that unhappy letter are most unfortunately engraved on the minds of all concerned. In regard to your father, I wish to say absolutely nothing. But in regard to yourself, I want to state plainly that when I used the terms I did in relation to you, I wrote what only my ignorance begot. Now that I have seen you, now that you have shown me something of the beauty of your soul, I wish to apologize humbly,

and absolutely for having ever, even in my ignorance, used such a term concerning you. You more than justify my brother Arthur's effort to win you. He was the more unfortunate in that he didn't succeed."

Diana's face grew lovely with relief.

"Thank you, Mr. Carisbrooke," she said simply, and held out to him a small right hand.

He hesitated a moment, but the charm radiating from Diana scattered his reserve to the winds. He took the little fingers in his.

At this point I posed Carisbrooke again, giving him a seat on a kind of dais. Diana ensconced herself in a comfortable armchair, and I began to paint.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN A NEW LIGHT.

THERE followed a couple of hours in which I had an opportunity to see Carisbrooke in a new light. In my brief acquaintanceship with him at Arnett's rooms, Carisbrooke had been friendly, but not much inclined to conversation. It now seemed that he was one of those men, who, under the proper stimulus, can be little less than brilliant.

As though to prove to Diana that he had not only meant his apology in good faith, but that he also appreciated her desire to screen him, he yielded completely to her efforts to draw him into conversation.

It developed that he knew Europe in a very broad, unusual way; that they had mutual acquaintances abroad; that he had a keen and witty perception of Continental life and its humorous side; that he had also had his share in Russia of somewhat perilous adventures. Carisbrooke told his adventures modestly, but instead of afflicting one with Winton's dry-as-dust mode of describing incidents in which he had participated, Carisbrooke gave a vivid picture which sketched out the episode in vivid coloring.

Diana listened with increasing interest. When Winton returned and added himself to our number, she was openly

vexed. She evidently feared Carisbrooke would go back into his shell.

This he didn't do. He continued his conversation with her, Winton being left hopelessly in the rear. The latter listened with amazement, then interest, then with a smothered resentment.

When Carisbrooke had gone back to his dining-room work, Winton turned to Diana with a touch of boyish pettishness.

"Don't spoil that fellow," he said, "or you'll have him getting too uplifted and too impudent to wait properly on the table."

Diana gave his grace of Winton a hard little stare, and lifted her eyebrows. "I thought I explained to you that Mr. Carisbrooke is a gentleman?" she said.

"A gentleman in an infernally queer position," muttered Winton.

"You know he was forced into it," continued Diana, with somewhat too elaborate politeness. "And what makes you think that you are here to regulate my behavior to any one?"

Winton was alarmed. "Don't get huffy," he said hastily. "If I said anything rude, I'm sorry. Let's be friends, Diana. What do we care about quarreling over a stupid convict?"

"I'd rather you called him Mr. Carisbrooke."

"Before your father?"

She flushed. "No. You know dad won't allow him called anything but four hundred."

"I know it. He makes even the negroes call him four hundred." Winton laughed. "One of the blacks called him 'Mistuh Fo' Hundred' yesterday."

"I think it did the negro credit."

"Your father didn't think so. He blew the negro up like the deuce."

Diana frowned.

Winton stared hard at her. "Did you know this Mr. Carisbrooke before he went to jail?"

"I did not."

"Did you know any of his people?"

"I knew his brother Arthur—his younger brother," returned Diana calmly. She added maliciously: "I was half engaged to Arthur once."

"Half engaged?"

"I changed my mind at the last moment, and wouldn't marry him. It's a way I have of doing."

Winton turned red. But such speeches only exasperated him afresh into a determination to have, at all costs, this girl who so frequently made him feel she might, in spite of his usual certainty, leave him in the lurch, after all.

"What's become of this Arthur?" he inquired stiffly.

"He married—and died. He was awfully delicate—not strong and handsome like his elder brother."

"A man couldn't look handsome to me in convict stripes," sneered the provoked and scowling Winton.

"I thought only climbers judged people by their clothes?"

Winton glared. "Are you goin' on takin' me up like that?" he growled, his wits having played out in the match.

Diana instantly became gracious: "Why, of course, we're just funning with each other—aren't we, uncle?"

"Certainly," I said dutifully; but uncomfortable thoughts were in my mind. How wise had Thomas Hardeman been in bringing this prisoner into his household? And what effect would his proximity have on a girl like Diana, who could no more help tormenting men and playing them against each other than she could help breathing? Was she about to indulge her coquettishness on Carisbrooke out of sheer cruelty? Was she playing, after all, for a revenge so subtle that her father's was child's play beside it?

The peace of the afternoon vanished. Nor did it return that week, although I painted diligently, and Thomas Hardeman remained away.

Diana persisted in coming into the studio. This exasperated the duke into coming also. Afternoon after afternoon Diana sat and drew out my model, who answered her brilliantly, and developed a kind of careless gayety. Quick to remark and take offense at Winton's cold manner, he ignored the duke unless the latter directly addressed him. If Winton did speak to him, Carisbrooke replied with a courteous reserve in his

voice that carried a steel-point, and this began to annoy Winton keenly.

I saw with some dismay that I was likely to have another pair of mental duelists on my hands, and I didn't enjoy the prospect. I could not blame Carisbrooke. It was impossible for him to stoop to curry favor with any man. The one appeal which he had ever made was that single low "Help me, Chelmsford!" in the stockade grounds.

Winton was not an excessively clever man, but he possessed a high, jealous temper; he had been sharply spoiled by adulation since his boyhood, and he was passionately in love.

He was quite able to perceive that if Diana had been properly in love with his coronet, she would have tempered her coquettishness to a far more judicious use of her charm and power. She might not have done so much with Carisbrooke if he had not overheard her impulsive defense of him to Winton. This made him sure of her sincerity—which I was not.

I could not believe that Diana could think one moment even of a convict as a possible conquest. The thing was inconceivable, considering her position and her rather cynically expressed ambitions. I could only think that she who had begun to make amends to a man very bitterly used had now carried the matter into a very reprehensible desire to conquer by her charm this reserved and proud man.

Something of the kind I hinted to her, whereat she grew openly furious.

"Winton put you up to that!" she cried. "He's always scandalously jealous, although we are not engaged yet. But I did suppose I might, at least, be allowed to lighten the burden of an unhappy prisoner."

"You are carrying it too far, Diana. You will have Carisbrooke in love with you."

"No danger of that!" she exclaimed, with a bitter little laugh. "He feels he's a captive prince in the house of utter barbarians. Every line of him shows it."

"Why, Diana——"

"Randolph Carisbrooke sees the real

heart of things," my niece went on steadily. "He belongs to that queer class of people in the South who love or hate people for what's in them individually. Our money produces absolutely no effect on him. But if he had found us measuring up to his standards, that would have affected him. Daddy's power does not move him; but if daddy could only have seen his opportunity he could have crushed Mr. Carisbrooke into the ground by generosity. As it is, daddy has done everything he could to prove us the veneered savages Randolph thought we were when Arthur wanted to marry me."

I glanced at her uneasily.

"Snooks thinks," she went on, "that he can overawe Randolph by his coronet. Snooks knows very well that we Americans are sometimes slavish admirers of titles. Anything for an assured social position in the top ranks! But Randolph Carisbrooke never dreams of valuing any title but one, and that's 'thoroughbred.' Once a horse or a man is a thoroughbred, he knows very well that no broadcloth or tinsel are needed for that man—or that woman."

"But, Diana, you are thoroughbred."

"Am I? How do I know? I am my father's daughter!" She gave a hard little laugh. "I tell you," she added, a little fiercely, "that Randolph Carisbrooke, in his convict stripes, pities me!"

"And you'll make him pay for his pity," I thought. "Why the deuce couldn't Thomas Hardeman let Carisbrooke alone?"

I repeated this query to myself when Thomas Hardeman returned the following Saturday, fresh from another successful deal. Yet he had scarcely got into the house before he was calling for "four hundred," and giving Carisbrooke orders in a tone more contemptuous than he had ever before affected.

Carisbrooke obeyed him with the same cool aloofness of manner he had shown before, but with an increase to match Hardeman's own rudeness. The mental duel was snatched up before Hardeman had more than kissed his daughter, and in the very midst of my brother-in-law's triumphant return he

was incensed that he, who could control financial destinies, could not drive into Carisbrooke's eyes the cringing servility he so often exacted from other men in his path.

To add to the general electricity in the atmosphere, Winton was in the ugliest of humors. As Diana had said, he was really of a very jealous disposition. And he was also a gentleman born, who knew far better than Hardeman that no humiliations heaped on a prisoner can lessen that prisoner's actual standing; that it is only what a man seeks under the exercise of his free will that enables his occupation to honor or disgrace him.

Knowing this, and unable to guess, as I did more keenly than ever, that Diana was playing for a subtle revenge on Carisbrooke, Winton was growing into a mood far beyond Diana's conception. One rainy afternoon this came to an acute head—came with a volcanic climax which, could Diana and I have foreseen it, should have been averted at any cost.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DUKE CONDESCENDS.

CARISBROOKE had been set to clean out the living-room fireplace. He had a couple of buckets and a small shovel, and was quietly taking out the ashes, for we had light fires quite frequently. This done, he was to polish the brass andirons.

Winton, Hardeman, and myself were in the room, smoking. Hardeman was telling us the details of his trip. Diana was busy giving the cook some orders.

Presently the phone rang. Hardeman answered it, shutting himself into the booth.

Winton rose, and went to the fireplace to get a match from the mantelpiece. Whether purposely or not—I don't know—he dropped his unlighted cigar in the ashes.

Carisbrooke, who was kneeling at the hearth, rescued it, and handed it up to him.

Winton took it, and the devil entered fully into him with the taking.

"Thank you, my man," he said, took the cigar, put it between his teeth, thrust his free hand into his trousers pocket, brought up a handful of silver change, and held the tip out to Carisbrooke with a manner as coolly assured as though he honestly believed he was dealing with a flunk.

My own cigar almost dropped from my fingers.

Carisbrooke started up. He put down very delicately on a chair the shovel he had been using, and he extended his right hand.

"Put your tip there," he said.

"Get yourself something nice, don't you know," said Winton condescendingly.

He dropped the silver pieces into Carisbrooke's apparently ready palm, unwarmed by the curious smile on Carisbrooke's lips, or the equally curious glitter in his eyes. But as Carisbrooke's hand clenched on the silver I sprang up and came toward them.

I came too late.

Carisbrooke flung the handful of coins hard into Winton's face.

"When you want to offer me an-

other tip," Carisbrooke said, in a low tone, "by all means do so!"

Winton did not waste any time saying anything. He had staggered back from the impact of the coins. Recovering himself, he rushed in blind fury at the man he had insulted. I knew the duke was a trained boxer. England very rightly considers boxing an important part of a boy's education. But I also knew that Carisbrooke's father had had the same idea, and I wasn't surprised to see Winton encounter an uppercut which sent him flat to the rug.

At the sound of his fall Thomas Hardeman hurried from his phone booth.

"What's happened?" he cried loudly.

As he spoke, I became for the first time aware that Diana was in the room, and that she might have been there unobserved for several minutes.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The next section of this serial will appear in the September TOP-NOTCH, out August 1st. Back numbers may be obtained of news dealers or the publishers.

The Rebuke Elegant

COUNT JAUBERT had attacked Marshal Soult with a number of epigrams, and the marshal, meeting him at a reception of the Court of Louis Philippe, turned his back upon him just as the count was coming forward to speak to him, and this in the presence of thirty people.

"M. le Maréchal," said Jaubert quietly, "I have been told that you consider me one of your enemies. I see with pleasure that it is not so."

"Why not, sir?" demanded Soult.

"Because," said Jaubert, "you are not in the habit of turning your back to the enemy."

The marshal held out his hand, and the count's success was complete.

Faithful Accuracy

A SPINSTER, Miss Cocker by name, and her niece who bears the same cognomen, went, one evening, to a reception at the house of a friend.

"What name, please?" inquired the footman.

"Miss Cocker," answered the elder lady.

"Miss Cocker, too," joined in the niece hurriedly.

Whereupon the man of plush and buttons opened the drawing-room door, and, with all the dignity of his profession, ushered them into the midst of the company with the convulsing announcement:

"Miss Cocker and Miss Cockatoo!"

Too Much Money

By Charles H. La Tourette



THEY might have known it, for hadn't old Mammy Dinah, their colored oracle, declared that she had seen it all in the black sow's ear? "Gwine ter be somethin' doin' in Plainsboro, eh? Well!"

Obadiah Silvers, proprietor of the Majestic Hotel, was meditating on the startling prophecy, when, looking over his spectacles, he beheld something. He roused himself, and presently was looking straight at a tall and sleek stranger who had suddenly entered. He was neither fat nor lean, but rather well proportioned. His dress, too, was the costume of "a gentleman." A polished silk hat glistened on his head; a long frock coat hung in a graceful sweep from his shoulders; from his patent-leather shoes to the big diamond in his immaculate shirt front, he was the living exponent of a clothing advertisement. His features were strong, but rather benevolent looking. His general appearance was that of a man who had seen a lot of the world and had come in contact with its different sides.

The stranger was addressing Obadiah with an air of familiarity: "I beg your pardon, my dear sir, but are you the plentipotentiary of this gastronomic establishment?"

Obadiah stretched himself to get a better look. Here was a proposition different from anything he had ever met. A stranger of this type was new to Plainsboro. Not that the place was completely isolated, for it was a thriving little town in its way, but, owing to its being situated about two miles back from the main line of the railroad, the guests at the Majestic were limited. A drummer stopped over occasionally, but the majority were automobile parties who happened to be passing through, and selected the Majestic as a last resort.

Obadiah scratched his head, and confusedly sputtered out: "I don't quite ketch your meanin'."

The stranger adjusted a pair of gold-rimmed glasses to his nose.

"Ah, I see," he said, as he gazed through them at Obadiah. "I will be more explicit: I was asking if you were the proprietor of this magnificent hotel?"

"I reckon I am," replied Obadiah, as his chest swelled. It was the first time any one had ever called the Majestic "magnificent."

"I wish to know your rates per week," resumed the stranger, "as I intend staying here for an indefinite period. I've often heard of this beautiful

town and your famous hotel, and have decided to reside here for a while. Now, my dear sir, what are your terms?"

Obadiah began to comprehend. In other words, he was taking notice, for "terms" sounded like money, and that was his weakness. But here was a predicament. Before him was a man who wished to become a guest, and the man had money—it was written all over him. But what was he to charge? The usual terms were eight dollars per week, but that certainly wouldn't do for a man of this stamp. The limit must be raised. Figures of all sizes loomed before him. He selected what he thought would be about safe, and stammered:

"Ten dollars a week."

"Ten dollars per week?" questioned the stranger, as he wiped his gold-rimmed glasses with a purple silk handkerchief. "Astounding! Miraculous! How can you possibly do it?"

Obadiah's knees seemed to be trying to force themselves through the counter. "I reckon I could go a trifle cheaper," he gasped out, thinking he had spoiled his chances for a guest by raising the price.

"Cheaper?" continued the stranger. "Why, my dear sir, I don't see how you exist on a price like that! I have paid as high as fifty dollars per week in the city, and I'll venture to say that the food wasn't any better, if as good, as that which you serve here. Now, as to your terms—well, I just couldn't accept them. My conscience wouldn't let me; it would seem like taking milk from an infant. Here"—he pulled out a roll of bills that made Obadiah's eyes bulge—"I'll increase your price to twelve dollars, and pay you two weeks' board in advance. There you are, my dear sir—twenty-four dollars, and two extra, for good measure, making twenty-six in all." He stepped over to the desk, and placed his signature upon the book; then he turned to Obadiah again. "Pardon me, sir, pardon me; I had almost forgotten to ask your name."

The astonished proprietor was trying to collect his scattered senses.

"Obadiah Silvers," he feebly gasped. "Delighted to meet you, Mr. Silvers.

Delighted, I assure you." He extended his hand. "Allow me to introduce myself. You will find my name upon the register there." Leaving two suit cases upon the desk, he slowly walked from the hotel. Ten minutes later, while the stranger had gone for a stroll up the main street, the bewildered Obadiah took occasion to glance at the register. After wiping the dust from his spectacles, he was able to make out the following name scrawled half across the page:

"C. U. Cumming, Where, Alaska."

CHAPTER II.

AN ARABIAN NIGHT.

A WEEK passed. The stranger's popularity increased by the hour. He was the sole topic of conversation throughout the town. His gracious manners and gentlemanly bearing had lifted him high on the wave of rural approval. The Ladies' Aid Society of one of the churches discussed him at their weekly meeting, and unanimously voted him "perfectly lovely." The frequenters of the Majestic bar awaited his coming with moist lips, for it was the signal for quenching their thirst, as he never failed to say: "What you going to have, gentlemen?"

The usual gossip was forgotten in the excitement of keeping track of his movements. He spent his money freely whenever the occasion presented itself. He treated the boys when he met them in the leading store, and he went to church on Sunday, and dropped a two-dollar note in the collection plate. It doesn't take a fortune to create a stir in the ordinary small town, and he was truly conscious of it. The more he spent the more he seemed to have. His generosity was unprecedented in the annals of Plainsboro history. The editor of the *Weekly Gazette* risked a guess, and proclaimed him a multimillionaire who was looking for a desirable site to build a palatial summer home.

It was the evening of the tenth day after his arrival. In the "sittin' room" of the hotel, a number of the leading citizens were holding a discussion re-

garding the new sensation. They had been there a half hour perhaps, when, just in the most critical part of their debate, the door opened, and the subject of their remarks walked into the room, looking as though he had just stepped forth from the proverbial bandbox.

"Good evening, gentlemen. A delightful evening," he said, smiling, as he lifted the tails of his coat and seated himself. "You seem busily engaged this evening. Were you discussing the merits of your favorite politician, or holding a town meeting? In either event, I trust I am not intruding?"

No one spoke. The citizens crossed their legs, and squirmed rather uneasily, each waiting for another to say something. Finally Obadiah broke the disagreeable silence. He reddened, then stammered:

"Well, I'll tell you what we was a-doin', an' you're welcome t' join us, fer you might kinder lighten us up a bit on th' subject. It's like this: We was all a-settin' here an' sayin' 'mong ourselves how generous you've been t' everybody, so we got t' guessin' how awful rich you must be."

His frank statement was received with approving nods and a chorus of: "That's jest it!"

Mr. Cumming laughed heartily; then he smiled in that irresistible way of his.

"Well, I haven't any objection to your remarks regarding me, for I suppose my actions have created more or less wonder since my arrival in your beautiful and friendly town. If you think you would care to hear my history, I certainly don't mind telling you. But before proceeding, however, I suggest that we have something to drink and smoke—it will promote good-fellowship. Mr. Silvers, will you oblige us by bringing a bottle of your very best; also a box of your A-one cigars?"

Obadiah hastened to comply. Then, after the "preliminaries" were over, and the cigars all going, Mr. Cumming blew a funnel-shaped cloud of smoke toward the ceiling, and commenced.

"Years ago," he said, in a voice that seemed to possess a magnetic power, impressive with its truthfulness, "my

ancestors accumulated a vast amount of money. It was handed down from generation to generation, increasing with the years, until it came to my father. He, being of a roving and extravagant nature, decided to put it into circulation. He traveled all over the world, leaving a trail of gold in his wake, until he grew tired of seeing and doing the same old things over again; then he settled down to rest.

"During one of his resting periods he met my mother, and they were married. She was a quiet woman, and it seemed that he had become entirely broken of his wild and roving habits. They lived happily together until I was eighteen years of age, and then a fit of roving seized him again. My mother tried to persuade him to stay, but it was useless. And as she wouldn't accompany him, he went alone. He was gone two years, and when he returned he was brought home dying.

"He had been dead but a short while when my mother followed him, and I was left the sole heir to his vast fortune. It had decreased considerable through my father's extravagance, but there was still a large amount left. A few months later I became of age, which made me wealthy and my own master.

"Inheriting some of his disposition to wander, I drifted West with the tide of humanity which was rushing there during a gold fever. There was no need of my trying to increase my fortune, for I was left sufficiently well cared for, but my love of excitement drew me on, and I followed the procession.

"I fell in with an old miner who had heard of great possibilities in Alaska, and, he being filled with the thirst for gold, and I with the love for adventure, we collected supplies and a pack mule, and pushed on toward the new gold fields.

"After a month or two of hardships and toil, we arrived along the Yukon. Not knowing where we were—for we had lost our bearings—we decided to camp till the weather abated. The winter had come upon us sooner than we expected, and here another grim reality faced us. We were alone in an un-

known wilderness, away from all signs of habitation, and our camp supplies almost gone—scarcely enough to last one man a week. Gentlemen, our tortures were almost unbearable. No matter where we looked, we saw nothing but snow and ice. Not a sign of life seemed to exist anywhere. We were the only visible living objects; two men and a mule.

"Another week passed. Our provisions were completely exhausted. We were nearer dead than alive, and starvation facing us! We realized that something had to be done quickly, for a man hates to starve. What were we to do? There was no game anywhere upon that vast plain of ice and snow, and eat we must. We were almost driven to despair when we happened to think of the mule. It was our last resort, so we killed him, and divided the portions between us. We deeply regretted this, for he had shared our hopes and fears, and it seemed almost like killing and eating a brother.

"A few days later, and we were again confronted by the same appalling situation; we had eaten the last of the mule. We broke camp again, and pushed off, for better a death of trying than one of giving up all hope. For hours we traveled on through the biting cold. A little farther—a mile more—and then we were through. Here was the end. We staggered, almost crawled, to what looked like a mighty wall of snow, and fell, played out, against its icy sides.

"As our combined weight struck it, the sides gave way, and we landed together in a heap, both sprawling into a sort of tunnel. We jumped to our feet, and clutched each other in surprise. For what we had thought was only snow proved to be a cavelike opening in the rocks. We struck a light, and looked. Heaven! We were saved! The place was a big, roomy cavern, and filled with thousands of strange birds that had taken shelter there. It filled us with new life.

"We killed a couple of the birds, and ate them raw, even while they were warm. Striking another light, we gathered a pile of dried moss and bones

which had collected there, and built a fire. As the blaze illuminated the place, the sides seemed to be reflecting back the glare. We stepped closer, and then—the cave seemed to be dancing and jumping at us. *Its sides were filled with veins of gold!* The floor of the cavern was strewn with nuggets of gold the size of baseballs. There at our feet lay the wealth of a mighty kingdom.

"The sight of so much gold crazed us for a time, and we forgot that we were alone in a strange locality. We thought only of the gold and the fact that we were saved. As the days passed and the excitement from our luck abated somewhat, we took a more serious view of the situation, and planned what we would do when the winter began to break. At length the weather moderated, and we decided that one of us should start back for new supplies and tools to work our mine. We drew lots to decide who should go, and my partner was selected.

"Now, right here, gentlemen, comes the most wonderful part of my narrative. Within six months from the time we discovered our find the camp of Where—which was the name we had given it—became the goal for thousands of fortune hunters. We, of course, had staked out the largest claims, but all around us were others giving signs of wealth. Wherever a pick was struck the earth yielded its yellow treasure.

"The little settlement of Where grew in size and importance, each day bringing new faces and signs of civilization. And now it is a thriving town, with its mines still giving forth their precious metal. Ours, however, are the richest of the lot; their output has made my partner and me millionaires many times over. Even now he is back there looking after our interests, while I, filled with my inherited desire for wandering, am spending the money as my father did before me. And why shouldn't I? No matter how I may squander it, I will not feel the loss. To every dollar I leave in my wake there are hundreds still coming to me from my interests in the mines. I can never spend one-half of my income, and have no near rela-

tives to leave it to. In my room at this moment are mine bonds worth thousands of dollars, simply a burden to me. Ah, gentlemen, you know not the trouble and trials that come with too much gold! To me it is but a load of care, bearing me down with the years, which at my death will be left for the courts to fight over."

He gave a pathetic sigh, then rose wearily from the chair, amid the star-ing-eyed and gaping-jawed auditors. Spellbound they sat from the effects of his narrative. Replacing his silk hat upon his head, he bade them a good night, then strode toward the door. He had scarcely reached it when the editor of the *Gazette* was suddenly seized with an idea.

"Excuse me," he said nervously; "but I'd like to make a suggestion."

Mr. Cumming paused. "Certainly, sir, certainly; and I would be delighted to hear it."

The editor fumbled his cigar. "Well —er—I suggest that maybe you wouldn't object to offering a couple of the bonds you mentioned for sale at a certain price. Now, I for one would be willing to invest, providing you didn't make the price too high."

"Me, too!"

"An' me!"

"So would I!" chorused the rest of the party.

Mr. Cumming gazed at the floor in a meditative attitude.

"Friends," he said, "you have certainly presented the subject to me in a new light. The idea never occurred to me before."

"As you said a while ago," resumed the editor, becoming encouraged by his hesitancy, "you'd never miss them; and, anyway, they're only a burden to you!"

Mr. Cumming gazed into space again. "Your suggestion presents a problem to me, and one that I can't at present decide. You see, I don't need the small amount they would bring. However, I will consider the matter to-night, and in the morning give you my decision. I wish I could do so now, but that is almost impossible at this time, for I must give it careful consideration. Good

night, gentlemen, and pleasant dreams." Then he passed through the doorway.

Long after he had gone the men sat there pondering the events of the evening. In their ears sounded the clink of gold—the whisperings of opportunity—while the very air seemed to rustle with the swish of flying mine bonds.

CHAPTER III.

AN ACT OF CONDESCENSION.

THE morning sun had scarcely peeped before the vicinity of the Majestic showed signs of activity. The hotel had its doors open, and Obadiah was busy putting the chairs back in their accustomed places. He had just finished the work when some of the citizens who had been there the night before came upon the scene. The editor came first, and following came the others in twos and threes.

"Good morning, Obadiah!" he exclaimed, as he leaned up against the railing. "You seem to be busily engaged to-day. Expecting more new boarders?"

Obadiah assumed an air of indifference. "No, not in particular; but it's best t' have things in shape, fer they're liable t' drop in at any time. It's things what you ain't expectin' as what happens nowadays, y'know."

"That's true," answered the editor, as he looked around at the others who had taken their places by the rail. "Now, who ever expected that Plainsboro would be honored by having such a great man as is now in our midst? It's my candid opinion that—"

"Good morning, gentlemen! I thought I was the first upon the scene, but I see you have preceded me."

The group turned about. Mr. Cumming was standing in the doorway, while the big diamond in his shirt front caught the beams of the morning sun. Then, without waiting for them to start the subject which he knew was predominant in their minds, he started it himself.

"Well, friends," he said, "I've been considering your proposal, and have decided to give you a chance. I have

come to the conclusion to distribute a number of the shares among you. 'Live and let live' is my motto. I will leave them where they will be appreciated rather than have others fighting over them at my death. Now, I haven't enough of the shares with me to go around to all, so, to be fair and honorable, giving every one an equal chance, I am going to offer them at a nominal price. As you know, I don't need the small amount they will bring; it's simply a business form.

"I have but a few of the shares with me—perhaps a dozen or so; I can't tell exactly, for I have never taken the trouble to count them—and these I am going to offer at a price within the reach of all. They consist of but two denominations—one-thousand-dollar shares and five-hundred-dollar shares. A one-thousand-dollar share will bring you an income of not less than one hundred dollars a month—perhaps more—according to the rise and fall of the gold market. A share of this denomination will cost you but two hundred dollars. The five-hundred-dollar shares draw almost a quarter of their face value each month, and these you may obtain for one hundred dollars per share. Now, friends, I leave it all with you, for, as you know, I am not compelled to dispose of these. It's simply for your own accommodation. This is an unparalleled chance for you to advance to riches. I am doing it just to show my appreciation of your kindness to me since coming among you. It is merely a token to remember me by—"

"I'll take one of the one-thousand shares!" interrupted the editor.

"Me, too!" exclaimed one of the others.

"Make mine three, right now!" sputtered Obadiah.

Mr. Cumming raised his hand to quiet the rising tumult.

"I congratulate you, friends, on your good business judgment. I see you are not men to let an opportunity pass. Now, regarding the transfer of these; let me see." He drummed on the railing as he meditated. "I won't be able to attend to them this morning, and this

afternoon I've arranged to go driving. How will this evening suit you—say, at seven-thirty?"

The citizens nodded their heads in approval. "Very well," he resumed. "Then we understand each other. Some time during the day I will sort them over, and have them ready for you by evening. It's so long since I saw them I scarcely know what they look like; however, I will try to have them ready for you." Graciously excusing himself, he started toward the dining room for breakfast.

CHAPTER IV.

A MISSING HAND.

LONG before the appointed time the hotel contained a multifarious assortment of citizens. They who had made the suggestion earlier in the day had collected the necessary capital, and were ready to invest. As was natural under the circumstances, the news was too good to keep, and they had given the tip to a few near relatives and friends. The result was that the crowd of would-be speculators had increased tenfold.

At about a quarter of eight Mr. Cumming appeared at the side door with a large roll of paper under his arm. He was attired in his usual dignified black, but instead of the one bright diamond which always gleamed from his shirt front two now threw their rays of fire. His finger also was adorned by one of marvelous brilliancy. Surely his appearance was in keeping with his great generosity.

After a few preliminary remarks relative to the transaction, he opened the roll, and spread it upon the desk. Instantly there was a swaying of bodies and a craning of necks. And no wonder. The documents were enough to arouse curiosity. In color they resembled huge twenty-dollar gold certificates. In each corner the figures "\$1,000" seemed to be trying to step out from the paper. A large red seal and ribbon hung from the bottom, and in the center was a picture of a gold mine in full operation.

"There, friends, are the shares," he said, as he dramatically waved his hand toward them. "I thought I had about twelve with me, but I've discovered twenty-five. They are all the one-thousand-dollar shares with the exception of one. Lucky indeed is the man who steps from this room to-night with one of these shares in his possession. But you all know why I am doing it—just to show my appreciation of your good-fellowship. Now, I wish to relieve myself of this responsibility. Let us proceed. Here is a one-thousand-dollar share; two hundred dollars takes it. Who wants it?"

The words had scarcely left his lips before Obadiah rushed forward. "Give me two of 'em!" he screamed, as he waved four crisp one-hundred-dollar bills in the air.

The crowd surged forward, all eager to be in front. The usually quiet room was turned into a miniature stock exchange. They shoved, they pushed, they yelled and fought. Cries of "I'll take one!" and "Save one for me!" filled the room. Mr. Cumming stopped, and raised his hand to quell the tumult, but it was useless; the fires of speculation had taken control.

Quickly placing Obadiah's name in the blank space, and affixing his own signature at the bottom, Mr. Cumming transferred the share to him.

Deacon Combs came next, and wanted four shares, but, owing to the limited number, he was allowed but two. The excitement increased, and the number of shares decreased. The last one had been handed to its fortunate possessor, and Mr. Cumming stood behind the desk gazing at the money-mad crowd. Stepping upon a chair, he clapped his hands for silence. After a number of attempts, he succeeded in getting their attention. Speaking in that commanding voice of his, he said:

"Friends, the excitement has been more than I expected, or even dreamed of. It has demonstrated your superior business ability—the faculty of taking advantage of opportunities. I admire your spirit; I am becoming enthused with it myself—so much so, in fact,

that I have decided to stay here among you, and make your delightful town my home. My one regret is that I haven't more shares with me—at least, enough to go around. Let me see, you now have scattered among you just twenty-five shares. Let the fortunate ones raise their hands, till I count them."

The hands were raised, but when they were counted there were but twenty-four shares accounted for. He counted them again, but the number remained the same.

"That's strange," he said reflectively. "I could have sworn that I brought them all down with me. Then there must be another one still in my room. It is the five-hundred-dollar share; does any one want it?"

A thicket of hands were raised, while the room fairly echoed with a chorus of voices: "I'll take it!" "Save it for me!"

"Excuse me a moment," he said, as he started from the room. "It is certainly somewhere about, for I am positive I had it before I came down."

Five minutes went by. Then ten. The crowd became restless. Obadiah opened the hall door, and called out: "Mr. Cumming!" But no answer. Surprise, anxiety, doubt, and alarm showed upon the faces of the crowd.

Deacon Combs suggested that he and Obadiah go to the room. Acting upon the suggestion, they went, and tried the door, but found it locked upon the inside. Exchanging glances in which were expressed similar meanings, they combined their strength in an onslaught upon the door. The lock was not as strong as they had expected; it gave way with a rush, and they landed together in a heap on the floor of the darkened room.

The deacon quickly jumped to his feet, and struck a light. As the flame illuminated the room, they both stood speechless, for Mr. Cumming had disappeared from sight. Obadiah rushed over, and raised the curtain from the window at the back of the room. The window was wide open, showing a hasty departure by the way of the rear porch.

CHAPTER V.

A JOKE THAT WAS LOST.

FOR a moment they stood silently gazing out into the summer night. As their eyes became accustomed to the darkness, they observed a commotion at the rear of the yard—a swaying of several bodies as if in combat. Rushing from the room, the deacon dashed in upon the crowd below, and told them of the discovery, while Obadiah ran on toward the kitchen, and secured a lantern. Quickly lighting it, he ran on down the yard toward the scene of conflict, closely followed by the crowd of speculators.

Arriving there, they were met with a surprise not down on the evening's program. Lying on the ground, and tangled among the weeds and tomato vines was Mr. Cumming, in a rather ill-used state, with the editor of the *Gazette* astride of his shoulders, and the town constable hastily binding his arms with a clothesline. It was a spectacle to go down on the front page of local history.

The crowd of excited citizens formed a circle as the constable finished the job and he and the editor proudly rose to their feet, and then led their prisoner back to the Majestic.

The room which but a short while before had been the scene of the prisoner's financial victory was now turned into a chamber of defeat. This was accentuated by the angry and excited citizens, who were growing more unruly as the realization of the imposition flashed upon them.

The prisoner tried to regain his old composure. "Friends, this is an outrage!" he exclaimed. "There has been a grave mistake."

"Yes, there was a mistake," excitedly declared the editor, as his chest swelled with pride. "A grave mistake, and you

made it by not trying another point for your escape. But fortunately for the welfare of the community, we came in here by the back way instead of the front—"

"How did it happen?"

"How'd you an' the constable know about it?" interrupted some of the crowd.

"It's easily explained," replied the editor proudly. "I merely used my reasoning powers. This afternoon I got to thinking over that story of the mine up in Alaska, and it sounded like too much money to me. Then, too, I couldn't figure out why a man with so much wealth should stop in an out-of-the-way place like this.

"While I was thinking it all over, I happened to see in one of the exchange papers at the office where a man of this type was headed this way, and swindling the communities by this same scheme, so I came to the conclusion that this was the man. As there is a reward of about five hundred dollars for his capture, I got the constable, and we were just coming to stop that sale of 'mine bonds' when we happened to see him jumping from that back window. He put up a good fight, boys, but the power of the press and the law combined was a little too strenuous for one of his retiring disposition."

Mr. Cumming smiled, in full possession again of his coolness of manner and smoothness of speech.

"I suppose you will want your money back, gentlemen?" he said quietly. "Really you ought not to require that. Haven't I given you an equivalent? Who besides myself ever enabled you to say 'There has been something doing in Plainsboro'?" It may never happen again."

But the joke did not get over. It only caused the constable to tighten his grip on the prisoner.

What Might Have Been

JUDGE: "The sentence of the court is that the prisoner be confined in prison the remainder of his natural life."

Prisoner: "But, your honor—"

Judge: "Not another word, sir, or I'll give you four years more."

Forbidden Cargo. By Allan Stephens



(A COMPLETE NOVELETTE)

CHAPTER I.

MYSTERIOUS ACTIONS.

ONE day early in April a lone passenger alighted at East Whitney from the forenoon accommodation train from New York City. He stood upon the station platform for a few moments, sniffing the salt air from Long Island Sound, then picked his way across the tracks and entered a waiting depot hack. He directed the driver to proceed to the best hotel in the village.

"That'll be the Central House, mister," chuckled the driver, as he picked up his reins. "It's the best hotel, as well a' the worst, 'cause it's the only one in town."

A ride of about five minutes' duration brought the occupant of the hack to the three-storied wooden edifice which served East Whitney as its only hotel and tavern.

"What are your charges?" the passenger inquired, as he alighted, and thrust a hand into his trousers pocket.

"Four twenty cents—seein' that you didn't have no baggage."

"Get a cigar for yourself with what's

left over," suggested the passenger, as he handed the man a coin, and started to turn away. But the driver had a question to ask.

"If it ain't no offense," he muttered, "be you Chinee or Jap?"

"I have the honor to be a native of China, my friend," gravely returned the fare, in the purest of English. "By the way," he continued, "if you can hunt me up a horse and a light conveyance of some kind, I'd like to have you drive me around town for a few hours after dinner.

"I'm Moy Ku, of New York," the nattily dressed visitor explained to the hotel landlord, after the driver had agreed to call. "I've come to town for a brief stay—dinner, a drive, and supper. I'll return to the city by the New London boat to-night. I wish to lease a building for a countryman of mine by the name of Sing Yup. He wishes to open a laundry here in town."

"He'll never make a livin' at it if he does open up," volunteered the landlord. "You see, this is mostly a fishin' and lobsterin' village, and the boys all wear flannel shirts. The wives do the washin' and ironin'; and outside of the

druggist, myself, and the Fishers & Farmers Bank people, nobody in town wears white shirts and collars 'cept of a Sunday."

"Do you know of a building of any kind for rent?" asked the visitor, undismayed.

"There's a vacant store right in town, that used to be used for a fruit stand," the landlord answered. "And there's Widder Knowles' place on the edge of town—a little two-storied cottage with a hedge 'round it."

Dinner over, Moy Ku entered the waiting buggy, and was driven around town. He shook his head at the vacant store on the main village street, but expressed himself as being satisfied with the Knowles' cottage on the beach near the edge of town. The widowed owner had long since left the locality, to reside with relatives, but the keys were secured at the bank.

A lease for a year was drawn up. The Chinaman paid a quarter's rent in advance, and deposited a round sum with the bank, to be levied upon in case of damage to the property.

After a hearty supper at the Central House, the visitor was driven to the station in ample time for the "boat train" to New London; but, instead of boarding the Sound steamer for the metropolis, Moy Ku took a seat in one of the drawing-room cars of the Shore Line Express. Three hours later he reached New York, and was swallowed up by the after-theater crowd in the vicinity of the Grand Central Station.

Several days after Moy Ku's visit to East Whitney, a strange Chinese in native costume appeared in the village. Introducing himself at the bank as Sing Yup, he received the keys of the cottage. A fair-sized bill of goods was ordered from the general store and paid for in cash.

Sounds of hammering and sawing issued from the Knowles' cottage for a day or two, although no one in the village was in a position to say who the carpenter was, or what work was being done.

Finally, after a new red sign had been affixed over a doorway on the street side

of the house, Sing Yup opened for business. The laundry seemed doomed to failure, however, for, after three weeks had passed, the housewives of East Whitney figured that Sing Yup had not taken in enough money to pay for the tobacco he smoked.

If the Chinaman himself was dissatisfied he uttered no complaint. Complacently he smoked his long pipe, and walked the village streets with no sign of worry upon his bland countenance.

"Mebbe so bimeby business come good," he was heard to observe at the general store one day, after one of the clerks had expressed his regret that East Whitney was not "a cuff-and-collar town."

CHAPTER II.

TWO SENSATIONS.

AS the weather grew warmer Sing Yup invested in a small, flat-bottomed skiff, and the townspeople were fast growing accustomed to the sight of the Chinaman fishing for cunners on the edge of the channel, when an event occurred which overshadowed the petty affair of the new laundry.

Tom Bates, the freckled ne'er-do-well, returned to town with pockets full of cash, driving a gray, high-powered automobile, which he claimed was his own property.

About five years before, after a happy-go-lucky existence as lobsterman, clam-digger, and eeler, Bates had suddenly disappeared from East Whitney. Some of the village gossips had it that Tom had shipped on a coaster. Other rumors circulated around town from time to time to the effect that he was in Florida, Jamaica, or Mexico.

No one knew for a certainty just where he had been; and, as the big fellow was unmarried, and had no living relatives in East Whitney he considered that it was his own business, and kept his own counsel.

His first act after returning to town was to drive his car up to the bank, where, to the unbounded astonishment of the cashier, the former clam-digger deposited a round sum of money.

"I don't want any interest on it," said Bates. "Just take it and keep it for me. I'll add a bit to it now and then, and when I want a thousand or so for spendin' money I'll call on the bank."

He then drove up to the Central House, engaged the best vacant room in that hostelry for permanent occupancy, but, to the surprise of the proprietor, refused to join him at the bar.

"I turned over a new leaf about three years back," he informed the landlord. "Booze and I had a fallin' out. I'm takin' a long vacation now, and you'll find me a liberal customer, without liquor enterin' into the proposition. I'm a different Tom Bates from the one you used to know."

Bates found temporary shelter for his car under a shed adjoining the shop of the local blacksmith. He was on the point of constructing a garage at his own expense, when he learned that a small barn in the rear of the Knowles' property was vacant. An inspection of the barn showed that it would answer his purpose. The Chinese laundryman was agreeable to letting it at a nominal monthly rental, and the owner's agent offered no objection after Tom had obtained the consent of the fire-insurance company, and paid an additional premium.

An open tonneau arrived by freight, and was stored in the loft of the barn, but Tom seemed to be contented with the closed limousine body of his car, apparently being either too lazy to exchange the closed body for the open one, or else indifferent to the comfort of old cronies whom he took out for spins.

Quizzed by every inhabitant of East Whitney as to how he had made his money, and where he had been, Bates found no opportunity of escaping from his tormentors save when he was upon the road with his car. Finally, in a spirit of desperation, he permitted the news to leak out that he was a part owner of a Mexican platinum mine, that he was taking a year's vacation, that he objected to further questioning, and that he had no idea of marrying within the next ten years.

This information satisfied the gossips

in a measure, and within a fortnight after his arrival in town Tom was left to follow his own inclinations, which consisted mostly of wild rides at top speed at all hours of the day and night. A few of the villagers mustered up courage enough to accompany him once, but none of them could be induced to take a second trip. The freckled mine-owner had an unpleasant habit of taking corners with two wheels in the air; and at the expiration of three weeks it became town talk that Tom was a very reckless driver, whose death might be reasonably looked for at any moment.

About this time East Whitney was treated to another sensation. The only son of "Old Man Adams," the "Lobster King," came up the bay in command of his father's well-known schooner, the *Eva*. After the schooner had dropped anchor in the lower harbor, the young man was rowed ashore by a pair of uncommunicative black men, one of whom picked up a heavy canvas sack, and followed his young master, while the other remained by the yawl.

Making his way to the bank, Stephen Adams treated the cashier of that institution to his second surprise of the season. Barely pausing to exchange greetings, the young man gave a word of command to the black man. The latter dumped the canvas sack upon the oaken counter, and then departed without a word. One vigorous slash with the blade of a pocketknife, and a flood of golden coin burst forth.

One of the coins fell upon its milled edge, and rolled to the cashier's side of the counter. Reaching the edge, it clattered to the floor at the feet of the astonished official.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed, when he had found his tongue. "What does all this money mean, Steve?"

"It means that I've just got back from a little treasure-hunting expedition," explained the young man, with a laugh. "There ought to be exactly thirty thousand in American gold in that pile. It's not in a very convenient form, but I can't help that. It's a part of my share, and I have to take it just as I get it."

"And you want us to have it changed

into paper, I suppose," suggested the cashier, as he proceeded to arrange the coin in symmetrical stacks.

"Not at all," answered the owner of the gold. "I want you to accept this on deposit. If I find myself in need before I leave port, I'll draw on you."

"But about the interest," faltered the cashier. "I don't see how we can pay our regular rate. The demand for loans is—"

"I don't want a penny of interest," interrupted young Adams. "All I ask of you is that you will take good care of my money, and say nothing to anybody. I don't want you to say a word about treasure hunting, either. I have my own reasons for asking your silence. Some day I'll explain it all to you."

"But where have you been since your father died?" asked the cashier, unable to restrain his curiosity. "And how did you come into possession of the *Eva*? We all understood that she was sold to pay your college expenses."

"It's a long story, Mr. French," began the young man. "It's true about the schooner being sold about three years ago, but father left a little mining stock that was thought to be worthless at the time of his death. You all overlooked it. It picked up in value, then jumped way above par. The day I was graduated I sold the stock for a good round sum. I was attached to the *Eva*, and, instead of returning to town, I traced her to Norfolk, and purchased her. Then I took a course in navigation, and now I make my home on the schooner, cruising about as I please."

Waiting until he received a bank book, and was informed that the amount was correct, the young man left the bank, and joined his negroes. A few townsmen idling about the dock recognized him. Greeting them briefly, and promising to make them a more extended visit on the following day, he sprang into the yawl, and grasped the tiller ropes. The negroes lay to their oars with a will, and, after a thirty-minute struggle with a head tide, the yawl crept under the taffrail of the snug little sixty-tonner.

About the hour of noon on the day

following, the chambermaid of the Central House reported to the proprietor that Mr. Bates was still asleep, and must have been out nearly all night, as she had been unable to obtain admission to his room to put it in order.

She made a similar report the next day; and as the acetylene headlights of the gray car had been seen flashing along the New London turnpike some hours before dawn, the hotel man made up his mind that Tom Bates had either fallen off the water wagon, or had found some potent attraction to the westward of East Whitney.

CHAPTER III.

WHITE PAINT.

IF I hadn't known you since you was a baby, I'd say this was mighty fishy business, Steve."

Stephen Adams gazed at the speaker somewhat reproachfully, but held his peace. From her post at the window, a girl glanced at the two men from time to time. As the voice of her father rose to an angry pitch, she trembled for the future plans of the man who loved her.

"I think you do me a great injustice, Mr. Sprague," quietly objected the young man. "If idle town gossip leads you to believe that I have a large amount of money at the bank, surely that's no reason for you to assume that I've come by it in a dishonest manner. It's been understood all these years that Grace and I were to marry when we grew old enough. The time has come. I am old enough, and she's old enough. I'm in a position to support her properly. My purpose in coming here this morning was to obtain your consent to our marriage this fall. I'm sailing at daybreak, and I want an answer before I go."

"You don't deny that you've got a lot of money deposited at the bank that you can't explain?" Reuben Sprague looked searchingly at the younger man.

"I most positively deny that I have any enormous sum at the bank. I am willing to admit, however, that I have some money to my credit at the Fishers & Farmers'. How or where I got it is

my own affair. I don't mind saying that I earned every penny of it with the *Eva*."

Sprague gazed out of the window of his living room at the trim outline of the little schooner, less than a hundred yards distant. For some moments he looked, then shook his head slowly.

"It's pretty hard for me to doubt you, Steve," he finally said. "I knew your father before you. I knew you pretty well up till the time you went away from here to college. Colleges and city life make changes. You've been away from us now for three years or so. Your father died a poor man. Now you come sailin' back here, a rich man, accordin' to village ideas. You admit that you've made more money in these last two or three years than your daddy and I made durin' our lifetime, but you refuse to explain your method. You've also been seen skylarkin' around with Tom Bates in his automobile. Tom just returned to town with more money than he could've come by in an honest way and—"

"Mr. Sprague," interrupted Stephen, "you've no right to speak that way of Tom. Simply because you are ignorant of how he has made his money, the fact that he spends it to suit himself gives you no license to roast him behind his back. It's very unfair." Steve's gray eyes flashed indignantly as he spoke. Half unconsciously he clenched his fists; then, remembering that he was addressing Grace's father, he picked up his hat, and rose to go.

"Speakin' of rights, I want you to know that I'll speak as I like in my own house, Steve Adams!" The old man stood up and roared out his ultimatum. "I've got a right to my girl, too. Even if she wasn't under age, she'd do as I tell her to. You can't have Grace if you won't explain, and you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

The last words were shouted at the top of his voice, for the younger man had fled from the house after a glance into the tear-dimmed eyes of the girl. Entering his yawl at the dock, Steve was rowed out to the *Eva*, where he shut himself up in the cabin, after giving

orders for all to be in readiness for an early start at high water the next morning.

Shortly after dark, a sharpie grazed the side of the *Eva*, and a folded note was handed to the negro lookout. He lost no time in taking it to his master below. It bore no superscription, but contained a message of cheer, for its contents read:

DEAREST STEVE: I will be of age in December. We must wait until then. I not only love you, but trust you completely. Always yours,
GRACE

Just before dawn upon the morning following the *Eva* stole softly away from her anchorage. While two black men were cutting and fishing the anchor, a third busied himself in coiling up the halyards. Stephen Adams was at the wheel, and, after the schooner had threaded the narrow passage at the entrance of the lower harbor, he called for his binoculars.

The sun was just rising above the waters of the sound. Long and earnestly he looked behind him. As the sun crept higher, and dispelled the mists of the morning, he saw what he had been looking for. It was a tiny handkerchief waving from a second-story window three miles away.

As Montauk Point was rounded, Captain Steve turned over the helm to one of his negroes. The course was then changed to south-by-east, and two hours later the blue hills of Long Island melted into the gray line of the horizon.

As the wind hauled from the westward to the northward, the fore and mainsails of the black schooner were set wing-and-wing, and her single gaff-top-sail spread. Slipping over the water like a yacht, the little craft steadily ate its way southward, while the black crew made all snug, as if in preparation for a long cruise.

For ten days the little schooner kept to her course, bearing somewhat to the eastward to avoid the Gulf Stream. Variable weather was encountered, but the wind held fair, and the *Eva* had long since crossed the most southerly of the usually traveled transatlantic steamship lanes. Few sails had been

sighted during the last day or two, as the schooner's position was far offshore.

Early in the morning, upon the eleventh day out, Captain Steve came on deck, and glanced aloft. A light breeze was blowing. Off the port beam the rising sun, scarcely an hour high, was mounting steadily into a cloudless sky. Skipping up the shrouds, the commander gained the maintop, and unslung his binoculars. For fully ten minutes he swept the horizon through his powerful glasses, before descending to the deck.

"Call all hands, Manuel!" he ordered. The black lookout perched on the forecastle head.

The man sprang to obey the command. He roared some gibberish down the tiny companion hatch, and three woolly heads appeared, followed by their owners.

"Get the fore hatch off, and those dories out of sight!" was the next order. "You go for'ard and help!" Steve added, addressing the negro at the wheel.

Taking the helm himself, the captain saw the tarpaulin removed from the fore hatch. Lashings were cast off from the two nests of dories, and the boats slung below.

"Down with the galley!" ordered the captain, after he had seen the last dory disappear below the hatch coaming.

Knocking off sundry cleats in the interior of the cook's galley, Manuel gave a signal, and the roof was lifted off. The sides followed the roof down the fore hatch, and after the stove had been slung below, and the grating unscrewed from the deck, no trace of the galley remained save a few inconspicuous holes in the deck planking.

Turning over the helm to one of his seamen, Captain Steve again mounted the shrouds into the maintop, and swept the horizon with his glasses. Neither sails nor steamer smoke appeared. Sliding down a backstay, he relieved the man at the wheel, and gave more orders.

Cleats were knocked off the main hatch, and the tarpaulin removed. A spar was sent up on deck, followed by a

smaller one. The *Eva* luffed up, and the headsails were dropped. Springing to their work with a will, the black sailors ran out a flying-jib boom. A gantline was rigged, and a tapering foretopmast sent aloft and stepped. Stay and martingale followed as if by magic. A handy-billy was rigged on the foretopmast-stay, and attached to the windlass. The black men manned the brakes, and, after a few heaves, the stay was tautened in such a manner that both the fore and maintopmasts were sprung forward at a rakish angle.

A new gaff- topsail was sent aloft, and bent to the spar. A flying jib was rigged in a trice; then, sail by sail, the worn and stained canvas of the *Eva* was replaced by new sails of spotless duck. This work accomplished, the four negroes rested for a brief space, while the fifth prepared a meal for all hands upon an oil stove in the cabin.

After a hasty lunch, work was resumed. A half barrel of white paint was broken out of the stores. A stage was rigged over the side, and, while two of the negroes placed a second stage in position, a third filled a patented spraying attachment with the white paint, and handed it to the men on the first stage.

Sweeping the sides of the *Eva* from the copper at her water line to her rail, the black men worked rapidly. The compressed air hissed through the sprayer, and the paint, thinned to the proper degree, completely covered the old coating of black.

From time to time, as the men were working at the water line, Captain Steve brought his helm up, and kept the *Eva* off a few points. As the light breeze blew directly athwartship, the schooner heeled perceptibly to the leeward, thus baring the copper on her weather side, and giving the painters an opportunity to make a neat job.

As fast as the men worked their way along one stage, the men on deck had the second stage in position. They seemed to know exactly what to do, and needed no urging from their captain.

One side finished, the *Eva* was put about on the other tack and the work resumed. Finally, the last plank hav-

ing been covered with a coating of immaculate white, the stages were taken inboard. The exterior of the cabin and the companion hatch over the forecastle then came in for attention.

While the paint hardened, the old sails were stowed away, and everything made snug. The deck was then scrubbed and holystoned. Rings of brass were affixed over the visible cabin ports, and all the bright work polished.

Lastly, a boatswain's chair was slung over the stern, and Manuel took his seat in it, with a canvas bag slung around his neck. Giving up the helm to one of the seamen, Captain Steve leaned over the taffrail, and personally superintended Manuel's operations. One by one, the galvanized iron letters forming the words, "*Eva, New London*," were unscrewed from their position, and placed in the canvas bag, while letters of equal size, but of glittering brass, took their places. After the last letter had been affixed, a brushful of white paint was handed to the negro. Carefully touching up the new paint surrounding the brass letters, he finally handed up his brush, and smiled at the captain.

"Let the watch go below now, Manuel," ordered the captain. "You take the wheel while I get some sleep. Call me as soon as the first star appears, or in case it gets thick."

Descending into the cabin, the captain threw himself, fully dressed, into his berth. He did not dare to trust the vessel entirely to his negroes, but he had stood more than his share of the night watches, and was in need of rest.

CHAPTER IV. THE YACHTSMAN.

IT seemed to Steve that he had scarcely closed his eyes for more than a few minutes, when he heard Manuel's voice calling him. Taking a sextant from its case, he went on deck. There was no change in the weather, and several stars were visible. The negro lookout was softly crooning a lullaby; otherwise no sound could be heard save the ripple of the water under the forefoot of the schooner.

Waiting until the North Star appeared, the captain took an observation, and then went below to work out his position. He was a rapid figurer, and soon ascertained the approximate latitude. Producing a North Atlantic track chart, he laid off a new course, and then returned to the deck.

"West-sou'west, Manuel!" he bade the man at the wheel.

The order was promptly obeyed. All hands were called, and a pull or two taken at the sheets. The black cook then prepared a hearty supper of bacon, potatoes, and corn bread.

Having eaten his fill, Captain Steve sent the crew below to their supper. A fresh lookout was then posted, the remainder of the crew instructed to turn in, and with her captain at the helm to stand the first half of the night watch, the schooner slipped swiftly through the water in the direction of the Bahamas.

Several days later, the operator on duty at the wireless station maintained by the naval authorities at Key West flashed the following message to the secretary of the navy at Washington:

SEC-NAV, Washington: White schooner yacht, double topmasts, passed Key West offing noon to-day headed west. Displayed letters B-B-M-R and then spelled out name and home port as *Ada*, of New Berlin. She asked commercial wireless station here by means of code flags to report her passing by wire to the *Herald*. McDONALD, W. O.

Tossed about in the rough waters of the Gulf, and handicapped by head winds, it was fully eight days after passing Key West that the white schooner dropped anchor in the harbor of Vera Cruz.

The gaskets had scarcely been tied around the sails before a launch put out from the mole and headed for the schooner. A few minutes elapsed, and Captain Steve found himself cordially greeted by the Mexican health and revenue officials. They knew the Yankee captain well, and wished that more like him would honor the port of Vera Cruz with an occasional call. Such visits were the forerunners of generous fees and fat tips.

It mattered not that the commander

of the white schooner was in bad standing with his own consul for various reasons. The papers of the *Ada*, of New Berlin, were all that could be asked of any yacht, as far as the Mexican authorities were concerned. If her commander chose to sail at unseemly hours, surely that was his own affair. He never came into the harbor with sickness or contraband goods aboard; and if he sailed away with contraband or yellow jack aboard, it was a matter which concerned the United States consul and his superior officials at Washington.

The greetings over, Captain Steve led the way into the cabin for a friendly glass. A bottle of Irish ginger ale served to quench his own thirst, but before he accepted their invitation to a ride to the quay in their launch, two bottles of iced champagne and one of French cognac had been consumed by his guests.

Giving instructions to Manuel to admit no one aboard the schooner under any pretext until he returned, the captain boarded the launch; and as the latter approached the stone quay of the *Aduana Nacional*, the first to wave a greeting was Thomas Bates.

"Been here five days," chuckled Tom, as he gripped the bronzed hand of the captain in his own freckled paw. "This is no place to talk, though. Specials are as thick as flies around here."

He waved his hand comprehensively at the group on the quay, and called a carriage. Driving to a plaza near the cathedral, the man finally pulled up before a café which boasted of artificial ice and fresh limes. Taking their seats at a corner table, out of earshot from the nearest customer, the friends were served with cooling drinks, and proceeded to discuss their affairs.

"Left East Whitney as soon as I saw the report in the *Herald*," began Tom. "Your old friend, the *Falcon*, is cruisin' around outside. There's two or three strangers in town that run into the consul's office two or three times a day. The *Yoshida* arrived at Manzanillo last Saturday, five days behindhand. That makes up for your bein' overdue. There's no yellow fever in town, but it's a poor place to hang around, and I'm

missin' the rides in my car. Everything's lovely, and I'm goin' back with you by the water route."

"How did you leave everybody in East Whitney?" asked Captain Steve, setting down his glass with a nonchalant air.

"Come to think of it, I've got a letter for you," replied Tom, as he felt in an inner pocket. "It's from a young lady. I didn't tell her just where I expected to meet you, but hinted to her that it was more than likely that I'd run across you in the near future."

Stephen Adams slit the envelope with the blade of his knife, but had scarcely finished perusing the letter from the girl he loved when two Americans in linen and Panama hats entered the café, and seated themselves at a near-by table.

"As I was sayin', captain. I think it's about time we were movin' along," suggested Tom, with a pointed glance at the newcomers.

Placing the letter in his pocket, Steve arose, and followed his companion out of the establishment.

CHAPTER V.

WITHOUT CLEARANCE.

FOUR days after the conversation in the café, the white schooner was ready to sail. Her captain and owner, resplendent and cool in a suit of white duck, was driven to the United States consulate to have his papers attended to.

"It's useless for you to ask me for clearance, sir," declared the perspiring official, as the papers were extended to him. "The only condition under which I'll give you clearance is that you submit to me a sworn manifest. After that I'll go aboard your schooner, check off your crew, and see what you're carryin'."

"But I can't submit to that," objected Captain Steve. "I have a yacht's papers here, made out in the name of the *Ada*, of New Berlin, Florida. They're perfectly regular and, I assure you, genuine in every particular. I've a clean bill of health from the local quarantine officials here; and under the law I don't

need any manifest, as we're not supposed to carry cargo. I'm the owner and master of the *Ada*, and if I don't feel inclined to let you come on board and prowl around you're not going to."

"Captain," put in the consul sharply, "you've made a number of trips out of this port during the last two years. Although I've had my suspicions about you and your schooner, I've given you clearance to Kingston, Port Au Prince, New Providence, and other West Indian ports. You've never showed up at any of them. You've had your last clearance from me unless you comply with my instructions, so you may as well waste no-more time."

Calmly folding up his papers, and thrusting them into a side pocket, Stephen Adams removed a cigar from his mouth. Leaning over the flat-topped desk of the consul, he placed his face within two feet of the official countenance.

"I'm going to sail within two hours, sir!" And the gray eyes narrowed a trifle as he concluded: "Without your clearance!"

"Impossible!" stormed the consul, startled out of his official aplomb. "Why, you'll be no better than a pirate without my stamp on your papers. You can't enter any United States port without it."

"Then I'll keep away from port—like the *Flying Dutchman*," laughed Steve, as he quitted the consulate.

"May I inquire where you intend sailing?" asked the consul, as he followed the young man to the door.

Steve paused. He thought for a moment, then, with a sober face and serious manner of speech, he made reply:

"I think I'll run up toward the Azores for a spell. I'll cruise for a few weeks, and try to get some bluefish before I see you again. Good morning, sir."

But the consul retreated within doors with a snort, not deigning to return the parting courtesy. Dispatching his Mexican clerk to an address near by, he busied himself for the next half hour with a code book and telegraph blanks. At the expiration of that period, his clerk returned with two American gen-

lemen, and a lengthy conversation ensued.

The captain of the *Ada* proceeded to the quay, where he found Tom awaiting him in the yawl.

"He refused me clearance this trip," commented Steve, as he took a seat in the stern, and the negroes gave way.

"I don't see what you waste time around the consulate for, anyhow," grumbled the freckled man. "You don't need his stamp for our business."

"I can't resist going around there," chuckled the captain, tossing his cigar butt into the oily waters of the harbor. "To tell the truth," he continued, "my sole purpose in visiting the consul was to tease him. I want to see what the state department can do. He'll make a kick at Washington, of course."

"It's a big game—this one of buckin' the whole United States government," observed Tom.

"Commerce and labor has been after us for two years," said Steve. "The treasury department and the navy for a year. Now we'll have the state department stirred up. It seems to me we ought to figure out some way of getting the agriculture, interior, and war departments on our trail, then we'll have something to boast of."

The side of the schooner gained, the yawl was quickly hoisted on the davits and swung inboard. The black crew manned the windlass and hove short on the anchor until the cable was up and down. Gaskets were then cast off the mainsail and foresail, and nothing remained to be done but to await the approach of a towboat.

By noon the *Ada* was in tow of a wheezy Mexican tug. When well below the fortifications, Captain Steve ordered the towline cast off, and, with all her sails set and "a bone in her teeth," the white schooner stood off to the eastward.

Save for the fact that half of her main hatch was off, and a pair of canvas ventilators rigged with outstretched wings guyed to the shrouds, the white schooner presented the same appearance as she did the morning she dropped anchor in the harbor of Vera Cruz.

With Manuel at the wheel, the schooner heeled to the breeze, and slipped along merrily over the sparkling waters of the Gulf. Captain Steve, with Tom Bates at his side, was surveying a black dot to the southward. Suddenly he handed his binoculars to Tom.

"It looks like our old friend," he commented.

Tom looked through the glasses for some time without replying. The dot seemed to change its shape, and a smudge of black smoke stained the horizon.

"It's the *Falcon*, all right," observed Tom, without removing the glasses from his eyes. "She don't care how much coal she burns, either, if she can catch you within three miles of United States soil."

"I understand she was recently hauled out at Key West, and had her bottom scraped and painted, and her engines overhauled," said the commander.

"That won't do her any good," declared Tom. "Nothin' short of a torpedo destroyer can catch up with us unless we want 'em to."

"Nor'east-by-east!" the captain called out to the helmsman, after a glance aloft.

"If the wind holds this way we can nail her to the course," he remarked, after he had seen his command obeyed. "And do you know," he continued, "speaking of torpedo destroyers, I verily believe that the government will send one after us some day. I'm not a hog. Two more trips will satisfy me. December will see my last trip. It's good work, and it ought to go on, but it'll have to go on without me."

"There's goin' to be a weddin' in East Whitney about the first of the year, ain't there?" asked Tom, a grin spreading over his face.

"I wouldn't be surprised," admitted the captain. "I think we'll have enough by that time to keep the wolf away. That's my reason for giving up this business. I'm heart and soul for it, but I don't intend to have any government people separating me from my wife, once we are married. That deposit at

the bank started the tongues a-wagging. I was a fool to show off so.

"You take the deck, Tom," went on Captain Steve. "I'm going below for a while to look things over. If the *Falcon* creeps up within three miles of us before I get through, call me up."

CHAPTER VI.

CLEAN HEELS.

GLANCING astern from time to time, Tom Bates paced the weather side of the deck, whistling a lively tune. Within an hour, however, his whistling suddenly ceased. The craft astern was overhauling the schooner rapidly. The single funnel and grim outline of the cutter could be distinguished with the naked eye.

Tom strode to the cabin companion hatch, and hailed the master.

"They certainly made a good job of it in Key West," said the captain, after he surveyed their pursuer. "She's doing fully three knots better than she did last trip. She must have been very foul. Guess it's about time to shake her. We've only about two hours before sunset. Of course, she can't lay a finger on us outside the three-mile limit, but I don't want her trailing along after me."

Calling for one of the negroes to follow him, the captain selected a handspike from a small rack at the foot of the mainmast, and disappeared down the hatchway. A few minutes later the sound of some muffled explosions came faintly to the deck. As these sounds died away, they were succeeded by a strident, humming sound, as of a thousand electric fans working in one room. The vessel quivered in every timber. In the pantry adjoining the cabin, the china rattled upon the naked boards of the safety shelves.

Shivering from keel to truck, the *Ada* fairly bounded forward, leaving in her wake a creamy wave which threatened to bury the brass letters upon her stern. Slowly but surely she drew away from her pursuer, although her outraged hull creaked a noisy protest against the heavy strain put upon it by the powerful gasoline auxiliary.

For over two hours the race continued, until darkness permitted Steve to shut off his engine. Then the course was altered slightly, and one of the watches sent below for needed rest. Tossing pennies to see who would stand the first night watch, Tom won the toss, and elected to stay on deck.

"A thousand-horse-power engine's too heavy for this schooner," he observed, as the captain was about to go below. "You don't need so much speed; besides, some day she'll be shook up so hard that the whole bottom'll drop out of her."

"I have an idea that she'll do for two more trips," said Steve.

He glanced into the lighted binnacle, to see that the little vessel was on her proper course, then left the deck, satisfied with his day's work. He was to be called at midnight; and thereafter six-hour watches for the balance of the voyage had been agreed upon.

At daybreak there was not a sail in sight. The wind still held fair and the schooner kept on her course. For four days and nights the *Ada* ate her way to the eastward, until a blur on the southeastern horizon warned her master that the coast of Yucatan was not far away. Bearing up slightly to the northward, the schooner kept off, and in due time crossed the Yucatan Channel.

Pleasant weather and fair, strong breezes were the rule; and aided by these, the white craft hugged the Cuban coast, and cleared the Bahamas within fifteen days of her departure from Vera Cruz. Her master then headed for the swiftest part of the Gulf Stream; and, still helped by fair winds and the six-knot ocean current, the *Ada* made a record voyage northward.

A fortnight later, when well to the eastward of Cape Hatteras, a new course was laid. The schooner sheered directly to the east, and sailed for a day and a night.

When well out of the usually traveled transatlantic and coasting tracks, the galley was brought up from the hold and set in place. The new sails were un-hent and carefully stowed away. The foretopmast was unstepped and sent

down, and the flying-jib boom taken in. Martingale and stays were coiled up and laid away for future use, and the work of bending the old sails accomplished.

The paint sprayer was again called into play, but upon this occasion black paint was used. The dories were hoisted on deck, nested, and lashed; and, last of all, the brass letters were detached from the stern of the schooner, and letters of galvanized iron affixed in their places.

This accomplished, the schooner, once more the black, single-topmasted *Eva*, of New London, bore up to the northward, and was headed for Montauk Point, while its crew doffed their linen suits, and donned habiliments more in keeping with their rôle of fishermen.

A few days later the Long Island coast hove in sight. Montauk Light was rounded at night, and as the rising sun peeped over the distant outline of Block Island, Captain Steve took the helm of the *Eva*, and steered her between the jaws of the Ticklers at the narrow entrance of East Whitney's lower harbor. A few minutes afterward the anchor was let go from the cathead, and the sails dropped.

The black schooner, snubbed by the cable, slowly swung to the tide, and of its occupants two at least were at home again. The captain ordered the yawl to be put over the side and manned. Shore clothes were brushed and donned, and within an hour Captain Steve was at the general store ordering a stock of fresh food for his men.

It was quite early in the morning, and but one customer was waiting to be served. Curiously enough, it happened to be Grace Sprague; and as the bronzed hand of the master of the *Eva* pressed hers, she gazed into his eyes and bade him welcome home.

"I'm very sorry, Grace," he said, speaking in a low tone. "I can't explain at present, but as far as I'm concerned I'd like to give up the sea now. It's impossible, though. My word has been pledged to make two more voyages. If all goes well we'll be together by the first of the year. We've waited so long now, we may as well wait until then.

I'll speak to your father again some day."

At this juncture a shuffling step was heard in the doorway, and Sing Yup shuffled in to make a purchase. Glancing carelessly at the Chinese, Steve accompanied the young woman to the doorway, and helped her into her buggy. He paused for a word with her, but when he reentered the store the laundryman had departed.

In the meantime, Tom Bates was overhauling the gray car. Filling the cylinders with kerosene, he then drained them, and inserted fresh spark plugs. He turned over the engine, and was rewarded by finding it in perfect condition. He opened the barn door to its widest extent, and, after backing out of his extemporized garage, proceeded to the Central House to see about his old room.

He found it unoccupied, but did not seek his bed until long after sunrise upon the day following. He claimed that automobiling was far more desirable at night, on account of the hot weather. Singularly enough, however, in spite of the warm weather, he still clung to the closed limousine body, and suddenly ceased his night rides after the first three nights following his return.

CHAPTER VII.

THE STAR OPERATIVE.

A HEATED discussion was going on in the private office of the attorney-general at Washington. There seemed to be a lack of unanimity among the cabinet members present, and the head of the department of justice had been asked to referee the dispute.

"We've looked up this schooner," the tall secretary of commerce and labor was saying, "and we find that, in so far as her papers are concerned, everything is regular. She was built at Newport News three years ago for a man named Bowman. He claimed to hail from New Berlin, Florida, and paid the builders cash. The schooner was named *Ada* at the time of her launching, and papers were issued in that name. I've had this man Bowman investigated, but all that

is known of him in New Berlin is that he has a hundred dollars or so on deposit at the local bank in that town, but is otherwise practically unknown."

"But we don't care a fig about the building of the schooner," observed the secretary of the treasury, tapping his gold-rimmed glasses upon the polished surface of the attorney-general's massive desk, as if to emphasize his remarks. "What we want to know is what she carries out of Vera Cruz, and how she gets by our lookouts along the coast. There's no question about her effecting a landing at some point. What I'd like to know is, where?"

"Why don't you use your secret-service men on the case?" put in the dapper secretary of the navy.

"It's not a counterfeiting case," was the reply. "Congress has stipulated that the secret service is to be used chiefly for the purpose of guarding the president and running down counterfeitors. I've had two of my best special agents at Vera Cruz for some time, however. They have satisfied themselves that the white schooner is engaged in some illegal traffic, but haven't been able to learn anything definite."

"You've taken pains to have the schooner followed?" inquired the attorney-general.

"That's just what brought us over here to you," declared the head of the treasury. "I've had the *Falcon* on detached service in the Gulf of Mexico for the past ten months. She's the fastest cutter we have on the Atlantic side. She has given chase to this schooner upon three different occasions, but without success. The schooner has some kind of a gasoline plant aboard that she brings into play when pressed too closely. The commander of the *Falcon* has estimated the schooner's speed to be about eighteen knots per hour. The best the *Falcon* has ever done is fourteen and a fraction. Now, what I want is that a naval dispatch boat or cruiser be assigned to the case. The secretary differs with me."

"But there is absolutely no precedent for such action," asserted the secretary of the navy. "Under the law, I have

no right to assign a vessel for such a purpose. I've helped you in every possible manner by means of the wireless stations and the North Atlantic Squadron. They all have instructions to keep an eye open for this suspicious craft, and to wire the particulars in case she is sighted. She's never been sighted north of the Bahamas, as I understand it, and it's my impression that you are all barking up the wrong tree."

The official paused to help himself to water. No one present seemed to have any comment to offer, so he continued:

"Even in the event that a swift vessel followed this craft, it would be useless. Her commander is no fool. If he had a contraband cargo on board, he'd certainly not attempt to make a landing with another vessel on his trail. He would cruise around outside the three-mile limit until his water and provisions were nearly exhausted, and then seek refuge in a foreign port—or return to Vera Cruz. In any event, unless you show me that this man has been guilty of piracy, the case is not within the jurisdiction of my department, and I'm confident that the attorney-general will uphold me in this contention."

All eyes were centered upon the head of the department of justice, who was toying with a paper cutter, and seemed buried in thought.

"What do you suspect this schooner of carrying?" he finally asked the secretary of the treasury, who seemed to be the one most deeply concerned.

"No one can say," was the reply, accompanied by a shrug. "It may be either gold dust, silver and copper matte, opium, or Sumatra leaf tobacco. There's a duty on the ore and metals which would make them worth smuggling. China sends considerable opium to Mexico. Most of it is prepared for smoking purposes, and sooner or later reaches the United States through secret channels. It is forbidden to import it under the provisions of the new law, and every pound of it that reaches New York pays the smugglers a profit of approximately twenty dollars. As for the Sumatra tobacco, I've learned that Antwerp sends more or less of it to Mex-

ico through Vera Cruz. Sumatra leaf tobacco in the shape of wrappers is subject to a duty which means a five-dollar bill in the pocket of the smuggler for each pound landed, and no other single item on the tariff schedule gives me half so much trouble."

The attorney-general pondered for a few moments, then rang for his chief clerk.

"Send for Mr. Forrest, at once," he directed his right-hand man, as the latter answered the summons.

A few moments later the chief of the bureau of investigation entered the private office, and glanced interrogatively at his superior.

"Mr. Forrest," began the attorney-general, going directly to the point, "what operatives have we whom we can spare for a month or two? I want a good man to proceed to Mexico at once."

"Briscoe is in the city, sir. He worked on the sugar investigation and the pension frauds."

"Just the man!" exclaimed the head of the department of justice. "Can he be reached at once?"

"I know just where to phone for him, sir," was the reply. "It ought not to take him over five minutes to get here."

"Send for him at once."

As the door closed behind the chief, the attorney-general turned to his distinguished callers.

"Gentlemen," said he, "the secretary of the navy is right. This matter is not within the jurisdiction of his department. The case seems to be too deep for the special agents of the treasury, and the secret service cannot be employed. But I will lend you a man who will get to the bottom of this mystery in short order. I pay him five thousand a year and his expenses, for it has been my experience that good secret agents cannot be obtained for four or five dollars per day. Briscoe is my star operative. He never fails to get what he goes after."

Giving his attention to a pile of documents at his elbow, the attorney-general employed the next few minutes in mechanically affixing his signature to

, some of them. He had signed his name barely a score of times, however, when the swinging door leading to the outer office opened, and a smooth-shaven, lark-complexioned individual of medium stature entered and stood before him.

"Briscoe," began the attorney-general abruptly, "how long will it take you to get ready to go to Mexico?"

The man glanced at his watch. It lacked a quarter to one.

"The Southern Palm leaves the Union Station at one-thirty, sir," he answered, adding: "I've had my lunch."

"Very good," said the attorney-general. "You will proceed at once to Vera Cruz. A white schooner flying the American flag is due there sooner or later this month. Her name is the *Ada*, and her master is known by the name of Bowman. There is reason to believe that some mischief is afoot. Two five-dollar-a-day special agents of the treasury department have been at Vera Cruz for some time without tangible result. You will use your own judgment as to whether you will work with them or independently. Report to me by wire as soon as you have learned anything of importance. Should you discover any violations of the law, you will wire me for warrants—that is, if the trail leads you into United States territory. How are you fixed for money?"

"I've a little under three hundred on my person at the present moment, sir. In all probability I'll need more."

"Go at once to the chief clerk, and have him draw up a memorandum voucher for a thousand. Bring it to me for my signature, and then present it to the disbursing clerk without delay."

"Very well, sir." The operative turned upon his heel, and left the room.

CHAPTER VIII. TO HIS SATISFACTION.

AS the conductor of the Southern Palm snapped his watch shut, and signaled the engineman, Operative Briscoe, without baggage, walked calmly through the gate at the head of the platform, and swung himself aboard the

moving Pullman coach at the rear. Aside from a toothbrush hastily purchased on his way to the train, a government travel warrant, and an official letter of identification, his pockets were empty; but in a money belt strapped around his waist he carried the sinews of war.

An hour's wait at Atlanta afforded him an opportunity to bathe and obtain a change of clothing. New Orleans provided him with additional traveling paraphernalia, and by the time Briscoe set his watch back thirty-six minutes at the International Bridge, the Mexican customs officers at Nuevo Laredo found him in possession of a normal amount of baggage.

Thirty-six hours later he found himself in the City of Mexico, with but thirty minutes in which to catch the Short Line's evening express to the coast. The following afternoon he reached Vera Cruz, and, with wilted linen and hair full of cinders, sought a small hotel which commanded a view of the harbor.

Bright and early the next morning, after an evening spent in looking around the city on his own hook, Briscoe put in an appearance at the consulate, and borrowed one of the Spanish-speaking clerks attached to that office. Then followed a weary round of visits to railway and steamship officials. From warehouse to warehouse, Briscoe proceeded with his interpreter, looking over invoices, checking and verifying shipments. He took nothing for granted, and always insisted upon looking over the documents himself.

Three days of careful inquiry satisfied him that not an ounce of Sumatra tobacco had come into Vera Cruz within the past year but what could be legitimately accounted for by local cigar manufacturers. He also ascertained that no metal or matte had been shipped to the coast from the interior within the recollection of any railroad official.

Leaving instructions at the consulate in case the *Ada* should come into port during his absence, he then proceeded by rail to Manzanillo, where he spent a week in studying the opium situation.

By means of petty bribes and strenuous efforts, Briscoe learned that a considerable quantity of the drug was coming into Manzanillo direct from Hongkong by the monthly steamships of the Toyo Kisen Kaisha Company.

Satisfied that most of it was being re-shipped to Guaymas to be smuggled across the border in the vicinity of Nogales, and that very little opium, if any, was finding its way eastward, Briscoe returned to Vera Cruz.

There he made himself known to the special agents, and for their benefit told them what he had learned while in Manzanillo; but otherwise he kept his plans to himself, and devoted his spare time to making friends among the natives along the water front.

Through the medium of unlimited drinks of cheap cognac, Briscoe was soon in possession of a ring of unsteady admirers and adherents, most any of whom would have cheerfully committed murder at his bidding. He devoted particular attention to the boatmen of the port, and few indeed were the muggy nights when he failed to put in an appearance at one or more of the cafés along the water front.

It was mid-October when Briscoe arrived at Vera Cruz. November was half over before the white schooner came into port, and anchored off the quay. The operative learned of her arrival before the black crew had had time to tie up her sails. He waited for her captain to be rowed ashore; then, after engaging a boat, was rowed out to the schooner. He made no effort to board her, as the special agents had once nearly had their heads cracked in the attempt.

Ordering the boatman to row slowly around the *Ada*, Briscoe looked the schooner over thoroughly from her cutwater to the letters on her stern. Baffled in his attempt to gain any useful knowledge of the vessel by her appearance, he ordered the boatman to row ashore.

Later in the day he managed to obtain a seat in a restaurant patronized by the captain of the *Ada*. The latter was enjoying a steak, and as the government

man took a seat at an adjoining table, the sailor frankly returned his gaze.

An hour before sundown, accompanied by the clerk from the consulate, Briscoe proceeded to the water front, and enlisted the services of a number of boatmen. From dusk until dawn half of the men haunted the quays nearest the *Ada*'s anchorage, while the others took to their boats, and circled leisurely around the schooner at some little distance away from her.

Taking up his station in a convenient grogillery, Briscoe awaited results. Before the sun rose he made a startling discovery as to the nature of the schooner's freight, but the great mystery—her destination—still remained unsolved.

Snatching a few hours sleep, the operative then posted himself at his window, a pair of powerful field glasses in hand. Not a move was made on board the white schooner that escaped the watchful eyes of Briscoe. He was now on his mettle, resolved to exhaust every resource in the attempt to learn the schooner's destination.

Late in the afternoon one of the black men threw some rubbish over the side of the *Ada*. Briscoe perceived some of it afloat, drifting away with the sluggish tide. Immediately seized with a fresh idea, he hastened to the quay, and was rowed out to a spot where he saw some of the floating objects.

A few empty tins bearing the labels of well-known American packers were impatiently returned to the waters of the harbor after a cursory examination. He was about to give up for the time being, and was on the point of ordering the boatman to row ashore, when he perceived the lid of what had apparently been a cracker box floating a short distance away.

He laid hands upon the dripping object, hauled it aboard, and turned it over. A tag was tacked to that side of the lid, and, after scrutinizing the writing upon it, he glanced hastily at the schooner to see if his actions were being observed. A negro was lounging upon the forecastle head, but his eyes were turned in another direction.

Removing the tag from the lid, Bris-

coe placed it in his pocket, and was set ashore. His exertions had been rewarded. The key to the problem was safely in hand, for, in spite of its salt bath, the tag still bore the legible address:

CAPTAIN STEPHEN ADAMS,
SCHOONER EVA,
EAST WHITNEY,
CONN.

The next forenoon the *Ada* sailed. Her master entirely ignored the consul upon this occasion, and left Vera Cruz in excellent spirits, ignorant of the fact that the star operative of the department of justice was hot on the trail. It was to be the last trip; and Captain Steve was not expecting any trouble aside from a storm or two, and some bitterly cold weather.

As the white schooner disappeared in the offing, Briscoe proceeded to the telegraph office, and penned a dispatch to the attorney-general. It ran as follows:

JUSTICE, Washington, D. C.: Work completed in Vera Cruz to my satisfaction. Will report to you in person by earliest train. Borrow for month's work Gup Jong from Chinese bureau and have batch of warrants in blank ready for me. BRISCOE.

Waiting until he had been assured that his message had been wired on, the operator returned to his hotel, and made preparations to leave town by the evening train.

CHAPTER IX. THE YELLOW FACE.

TOM BATES and Sing Yup were enjoying a quiet chat in the laundry establishment of the latter. It was a cold evening in late December, and Tom, knowing that it was to be Captain Steve's last trip, was discussing the formation of a new alliance.

"Captain Steve ought to get here 'most any day now," observed Tom. "It's too bad he's goin' out of the business. You people'll never find a man like him."

"Cap'n Steve, velly fine man," remarked the Chinese, as he continued making a series of Chinese ideographs

in India ink upon the page of a large manila ledger.

He glanced up at Tom as he spoke, and smiled in a genial manner. Tom was on the point of speaking, when suddenly, to his utter amazement, the expression upon the laundryman's face changed: The smile disappeared as if by magic, the lips straightened into a thin line, the eyes narrowed, and the yellow hand moved to a drawer which Tom knew held a loaded revolver of large caliber.

Sing Yup was not looking at Tom, however. His gaze was centered on some object behind the freckled man. Turning his head, Tom was just in time to obtain a fleeting view of the cause of the Chinaman's alarm.

Framed by the wooden panels of the front door of the Knowles' cottage, a yellow face appeared for an instant, and was then hastily withdrawn. It was unquestionably the face of an Oriental, yellow as saffron, the upper lip drawn back in such a manner that the front teeth were bared to the gums. A livid scar extended from the lobe of the right ear to the corner of the sneering mouth. It was a face, once seen, never to be forgotten.

"Gup Jong!" snarled Sing Yup, as he grasped the revolver, and attempted to gain the doorway.

"Not so fast, Sing!" objected Tom. His tall form barred the way, his powerful hands seized the laundryman by the arms.

"There'll be no murderin' done while I'm around," went on Tom. "If Gup Jong is on the trail, I s'pose the game's up, but you're not goin' to kill him if I can help it. Hand over that gun!"

Mastering his emotion, Sing Yup relinquished the revolver. Slipping the catch, Tom promptly broke the weapon and ejected the cartridges. He then tossed the revolver carelessly behind the counter and buttoned up his heavy ulster.

"I s'pose this matter leaked out through some of your fightin' tongs down in the city," he said. "'Twas too good to last. The only thing we can do now is to save Steve and destroy the

evidence. This Gup Jong can't hurt us with the evidence out of the way. I'm goin' out to the barn to get the car ready. While I'm doin' that, you pour a lot of kerosene all over everything upstairs. You get out what property you positively need, and when you hear my car at the door, touch a match to the oil, and get aboard the car. Then we'll drop over to New London and figure out how we can warn Steve."

Waiting until he saw Sing Yup disappear up the stairway, bearing a five-gallon can of oil, Tom shrugged his shoulders, and strode out to the porch. The night was clear and starlit. A light snow had fallen, adding to the brightness of the scene, and as Tom looked toward the village he saw a figure disappear in the shadow of the Central House, and a sound of stamping feet was borne to his ears as the figure apparently gained the veranda of the hotel.

Proceeding to the barn, Tom cranked up the gray car, lighted the lamps, and adjusted snow chains to the rear tires. He then drove to the door of the cottage, and softly sounded the horn. Sing emerged, muffled to the eyes, and entered the limousine without a word. Tom let in his clutch, and pressed his foot upon the accelerator pedal. The car responded with a leap, and tore through the main street of the village at top speed.

At the top of a hill, some two miles west of East Whitney, Tom shut off his power, and brought the car to a halt. Looking behind, he perceived two long tongues of flame shooting upward from the doomed building, and heard the church bell summoning the volunteer fire fighters.

"It's pretty tough to have to set a buildin' on fire," muttered Tom, as he proceeded on his way to New London. "Guess we can stand the damages, though, if it's goin' to save our hides."

An hour later Tom sat in one of the best rooms of the Wilson House. Sing Yup had been instructed to wait for orders at a local Chinese laundry, and the gray car had been put up at a garage.

Moodily gazing over the lights of sleeping New London at the icy waters of Long Island Sound, Tom pondered as to the best course to pursue. Gup Jong, the government spy, was on the case; that was evident. Strangely enough, the appearance of the Chinaman was made upon the third day subsequent to a new arrival at the Central House—a smoothly shaven, dark-featured individual, who let it be understood that he was looking for a site for a lobster cannery.

For fully an hour Tom thought over plans for warning his partner, then, knowing that nothing could be accomplished that night, he went to bed. He had formed a plan, however, which he resolved to put into execution the following day. It seemed to be the only hope.

The office of the Scott Wrecking Company had barely been opened the next morning before Tom Bates put in an appearance.

"I want to charter one of your small tugs," he informed the office manager, going directly to the point.

"For how long a period?"

"Maybe two days—maybe ten days, I can't tell," explained Tom. "It's this way," he went on, "I want to be set on board a craft that's due off Montauk 'most any day now. It's important that I see her skipper before he docks. I've got a commission that means big money to him. All I want is for you to give me a small tug that'll set me aboard, and then take me off after a few minutes. You'll have to furnish a double crew, that ain't afraid of cold weather, so's we can stand watch and watch day and night. There won't be any towin' to do—just stand off and on between Montauk Point and Watch Hill."

The manager mused for a few moments, and gazed out of his window toward the Thames.

"I'll let you have the *Quickstep* with a double crew for two hundred and fifty dollars," he finally informed his visitor. "She's able to stand any weather you'll be apt to run into off the point. You pay the money in advance and keep her five days if you need her,

If you're more than five days on the job you'll pay fifty dollars a day. How does that strike you?"

For answer, Tom produced his wallet, and laid three yellow-backed bank notes upon the manager's desk.

"She's got steam up now," went on the latter, as he took up the money. "If you want her right away, I'll drum up the extra men, and you can leave the pier at the foot of Bank Street in an hour."

So saying, he turned to the safe, and was about to pull out the cash drawer, when Tom interrupted him:

"Never mind that extra fifty, friend; you keep that for yourself on one condition—I don't want this deal advertised. I'll wait at the pier."

"I see," chuckled the manager, as he winked at Tom. "It's some freight or charter scheme. I'm as mum as a mackerel, and much obliged to you. I'll have the *Quickstep* ready in no time, and not a soul in the city will know where she's bound to."

The man was as good as his word, for by the time Tom reached the pier, after visiting Sing's new quarters for the purpose of giving him instructions, he found the little tug in readiness. After a hurried introduction to the captain, Tom assured himself that the coal bunkers of the *Quickstep* contained a sufficient quantity of fuel to last for eight or ten days according to his plan, which was barely to maintain steerageway while on the lookout at night, and to drift along just outside of Montauk Point during the daylight watches.

Tom boarded the tug, the lines were cast off, and within the space of two hours New London lay far behind them, and the lighthouse at the extreme eastern point of Long Island loomed big on the starboard bow. Once on the station, Tom ordered the tugboat captain to have all hands maintain a sharp lookout for a black, single-topmast schooner of about sixty tons burden. A zest was added to the task of the men by Tom's offer of a fifty-dollar bill to the first one to sight her.

For three days and nights the *Quickstep* alternately steamed at slow speed

and drifted along the fairway between Montauk Point and Watch Hill. Although the weather continued cold, the winds were light, and the sea remained comparatively calm.

The morning of the fourth day dawned, and Tom, who had been on the lookout himself for the greater part of the night, was snoring upon the leather-cushioned bench in the pilot house, when the mate of the tugboat touched him upon the shoulder.

"I guess the schooner you're lookin' for's about two mile ahead of us," the sailor volunteered as soon as Tom had opened his eyes.

Seizing the binoculars, which hung beside the helmsman, Tom lowered a window sash, and brought the glasses to bear upon the sail ahead.

"It's the *Eva*," he shouted to the mate, after a hurried look. "Call your captain now, and get some steam on this packet! I want you to meet her and set me aboard as quick as you can."

The jingle bell sounded in the engine room of the *Quickstep*. The engine seemed to spring into life. The pumps sobbed a fresh note; and the propeller, which had barely been revolving, shook the tug from nose to overhang before it settled into its rhythmic, full-speed throb. The clang of the slice bar and the ring of the shovel over the fireroom floor floated up through the speaking tube into the pilot house.

The captain entered and took the wheel. Larger and larger loomed the schooner ahead, until Tom could make out the muffled figure of Stephen Adams at the schooner's helm.

"Run in as close as you can, cap," directed Tom. "I'm goin' to hail him."

Grasping a megaphone which hung within reach, Tom took up a position at the open window sash. The *Quickstep* swung around in a wide circle as the polished spokes of the wheel flew around in her captain's hands; and a few minutes later the tug was a cable's length off the weather quarter of the schooner, steaming ahead at half speed.

"Hallo! The *Eva*!" roared Tom.

"Hello yourself! That you, Tom?" came back against the wind.

"That's me! Luff up! I'm comin' aboard!" shouted Tom.

Waiting until he saw the *Eva*'s helm put down, and her sails shiver, Tom stepped into the *Quickstep*'s round-bottomed tender, and a single oarsman soon laid him alongside the black schooner. Grasping a backstay, Tom swung himself on board, and the two friends clasped hands.

CHAPTER X. UNLOADING CARGO.

"It's all off," declared Tom Bates, as he followed Stephen Adams into the cabin. "Gup Jong and another government spy are in East Whitney waitin' to grab you. Sing Yup spotted Gup Jong prowlin' around the laundry, and wanted to kill him. I prevented him, and we took the car and went to New London, after settin' fire to the cottage. She's burned down to the ground, so that part of the business is all right. We can pay for the cottage. I chartered one of the Scott tugs, and came out here to warn you. How many are you bringin' up this trip?"

"Fifty-one," replied Captain Steve, who was doing some hard thinking.

"That'll be about twenty thousand, after payin' expenses," observed Tom, after a moment's calculation.

"That part of it doesn't worry me," said Steve. "It's the landing that we have to figure on."

"I've got that all schemed out," declared Tom. "Have you got plenty of water and gasoline?"

"We're carrying water enough for a fortnight more, and gasoline enough for a hundred-mile run."

"You know the Sound pretty well up to Hart Island?"

Captain Steve nodded.

"Here's the plan, then," went on Tom. "I'm goin' back aboard the tug. As soon as we're a mile or two away, get your engine goin', and run by Plum Island, down the Sound, past Flushing, to a point on the flats just off North Beach. Anchor there, and wait for me and the car. I'll have everything ready in the city, and I'll fetch Moy Ku and

Sing along to help out. North Beach is very quiet this time of the year, and the ice hasn't made along the shore yet in any part of the Sound. When you get rid of the load, you can let those black fellers go, and I'll help you to work the *Eva* back to East Whitney. On the way back we'll get all those spars, canvas, and white paint over the side. Then we can sail into East Whitney, and laugh at Gup Jong and his friend."

"The plan seems feasible," said Steve, as he smiled in approval. "As far as the spars and other stuff are concerned, though, you needn't worry. They all went over the side ten days ago—papers and all. At the present time not a shred of stuff or an ounce of material is aboard that doesn't belong here—except the freight."

Leading the way to the deck, Captain Steve shook Tom by the hand.

"So long, then, for about ten hours," murmured the freckled man, as he lowered himself into the *Quickstep*'s tender.

Boarding the tug, Tom directed the captain to put back to New London without delay. The tug's nose was pointed to the northwest, and, after an hour's run, during which a fair tide aided them, the deck hands of the *Quickstep* made fast to the New London pier.

Paying his bonus to the mate, Tom clambered up the spiling, and hastened to the garage for the gray car. Picking up Sing Yup, he muffled himself for the cold, long drive, and proceeded west as fast as he dared drive.

At New Haven he paused long enough to obtain a hot drink and replenish his gasoline tank. At Bridgeport he halted the car to telephone ahead of him, and as he approached the city limits of Greater New York, he perceived a taxicab waiting by the roadside.

Putting on his brake, Tom halted the gray car abreast of the taxicab, just as Moy Ku stepped forth and handed some money to its driver. Buttoning up his fur-lined overcoat, the Chinese greeted Tom with a warm smile and a hearty handshake, then took a seat beside him.

Turning into Third Avenue, Tom drove down that thoroughfare as fast as the traffic permitted, and finally turned into Pell Street. A council of war followed in the headquarters of the "Six Companies," and as Moy Ku and Sing Yup entered the limousine of the gray car at dusk, lookouts were posted at every entrance to the Chinese quarter.

Tom headed for the Queensboro Bridge, and made good time to the deserted summer resort of North Beach, where the car was left in the shadows of a roller-coaster structure near a boathouse. Fortunately for their purpose, the moon was not due to rise until an early hour in the morning, and the stars were obscured by clouds which seemed to promise a storm.

Not five rods from where he stood, Tom saw the riding light of the *Eva*; and within the space of a few minutes a dory bumped gently against the side of the floating dock of the boathouse.

"Saw your headlights three miles up the road," were Captain Steve's first words. "Here are six boys in this boat, and Manuel's sculling off with five more. That makes eleven for your first trip. You'll then have just forty more—ten to a load—five trips in all."

"Tell the boys they're in America, Sing," ordered Tom. "Tell 'em to pack themselves into that limousine, and hold their tongues until I open the door. They're goin' to have a swift ride with drawn curtains."

The erstwhile laundryman approached the side of the dory and muttered some words in a guttural voice. The effect was magical, for what seemed to be a bunch of sacks huddled upon the grating of the dory resolved itself into a half dozen young Chinese, intent upon liberty and the pursuit of happiness in a land forbidden to them by the terms of the Chinese exclusion act.

Keeping within the shadows of the building, Sing led them to the gray car, where they had not long to wait before they were joined by five more of their countrymen from the second dory.

"I'm going to douse my riding light," was Captain Steve's parting word, as

Tom mounted to his seat. "Make the trip as quickly as you can, and we'll have each batch ready for you behind the boathouse."

The chained tires of the gray car bit into the roadbed, the car bounded forward, and in an instant its acetylene headlights were flashing up the road in the direction of the city. Moy Ku and Sing Yup remained behind, and the next hour was employed in ripping up the bunks in the main hold of the schooner. Lumber, matting, and telltale bedding were thrown overboard, while Captain Steve paced the deck and maintained a sharp lookout for Tom's headlights.

In the meantime Tom was threading the crowded Bowery at low speed. Turning into Mott Street, after a significant nod from a Chinaman on the corner, he drove to an Italian undertaking establishment on the outskirts of Chinatown, and, after a short wait, a stable door was thrown open, and the car disappeared from view. A few moments later a group of Chinese slowly strolled by the building, and an observant onlooker might have noticed the door open a trifle as the group was augmented by a muffled figure or two.

With the first load out of the car and in safe hands, Tom backed out of the stable, and lost no time in hastening back to North Beach. An hour and twenty minutes had been consumed by the round trip. His second load was in readiness, and the trip was made without event.

The fourth trip had been nearly completed, when a rear tire gave out as he was crossing Canal Street. A friendly policeman, little dreaming of the contents of the limousine, stood by with one of the side lights while Tom put on a fresh tire. Delayed for twenty minutes by this mishap, it was two o'clock in the morning before he backed out of the undertaker's stable for the last time.

He was nearly exhausted by the mental and physical strain of the night's work, and breathed a sigh of relief as he drove the gray car into a public garage and telephoned for a taxicab to take him to North Beach.

Shortly after three the taxicab

reached the deserted summer resort, and after paying the driver and tipping him liberally Tom ordered him to wait for some passengers. Manuel and the other members of the black crew were paid off, and given a handsome bonus and a free ride to the city.

Moy Ku and Sing Yup volunteered to accompany Captain Steve upon the short voyage to East Whitney. They desired to witness the discomfiture of the government agents when they came to board the schooner, and were also desirous of making good for the burning of the cottage.

The volunteer crew manned the windlass of the *Eva* in high spirits. They then tailed onto the halyards with a will, and got the sails up. Tom Bates and Sing Yup went below in order to obtain a few hours' rest, while Captain Steve and Moy Ku took charge of affairs on deck.

Eastward sped the little schooner, heading directly toward the rising sun. The troubles of her master were apparently over, and all seemed to be plain sailing ahead; but had any of the four on board known of the whereabouts of Gup Jong during the greater part of the previous night, the *Eva* would not have been headed toward East Whitney.

Guided by the schooner's name, and the address on the tag, Operative Briscoe had soon managed to obtain a correct description of the *Eva* from an unsuspecting villager. The burning of the laundry and the flight of Sing Yup told him that his prey had taken alarm, and he immediately dispatched his Chinese aid to the metropolis to learn all that was possible of the plot and its various details.

So well did Gup Jong succeed in his mission that, long before the *Eva* had time to appear off East Whitney, the Chinese spy made the journey by rail, and related to Briscoe what he had seen with his own eyes while secreted on the frosted balcony of a joss house overlooking the undertaking establishment. Furthermore, he had followed several of the parties of smuggled coolies, and knew exactly where to lay hands upon them.

Operative Briscoe complimented Gup Jong on his acumen. He considered the case to be ripe enough for action, and as he had his warrants in his pocket, he was prepared to close in and serve them as soon as the *Eva* should appear.

CHAPTER XI.

EXPLANATIONS.

THE schooner had scarcely been anchored in the lower harbor before she was boarded by a skiff from the Sprague dock, close at hand.

"Saw you comin' up, and thought we'd come aboard, Steve," remarked Reuben Sprague, as he swung himself on board the *Eva*, and helped his daughter to mount the rail.

"You're both very welcome, I'm sure," returned Steve, with a glance at Grace which assured her that she was doubly welcome.

"It's—it's like this, Steve," said the old man, as he fumbled with the painter of his skiff. "Grace won't give me any peace till you explain about that money. She understands that you're givin' up your trips, that this is to be the last one, and that you'll explain all. She sighted you an hour ago, and made me row her out here to see if you were ready to talk. If you ate, why, I'm ready to listen."

"If you'll all come down below, where it's a little warmer, I'll be glad to give you the whole story." So saying, Steve led the way to the cabin.

"Never mind letting go that mains'l, Tom," he called over his shoulder. "I want Moy Ku and you below. Let Sing watch the deck while we're in the cabin."

His guests seated around the cabin table, the young captain commenced his story. "Mr. Sprague," he began, "permit me to introduce Mr. Moy Ku, my friend and classmate. He comes from a very old Chinese family. His father is governor of the Chinese province of Su-sung, and he happens to be a nephew of the present Chinese ambassador at Washington."

Reuben Sprague nodded; Moy Ku bowed to the father and daughter.

"I might also add," continued Steve, "that my friend was graduated from Yale at the head of his class. His time among us is to be short, as I understand he is soon to return to China to take his father's place in charge of a province with several millions of inhabitants.

"Moy and I grew to be great friends at college. His skin is yellow, but his heart is white. Naturally, he has the interests of his people at heart. He ridiculed our Chinese exclusion act from the time of our first meeting, pointing out the fact that the United States could no longer be considered a free country, inasmuch as it passed a law making this country a forbidden land to men of his race and color. He showed me that one of our greatest educators—former President Eliot, of Harvard University—was heart and soul for the unrestricted admission of the Chinese. He quoted some of our greatest thinkers in a similar strain. In short, he won me over to his way of looking at the Chinese proposition.

"About that time," he continued, "my father sold the *Eva* in order to help me out with my university expenses. Shortly afterward—as you know—he died. Having been practically brought up on the water, and being fond of adventure, I was ripe for a proposition which Moy made me. He offered to furnish funds for the purchase of the *Eva*, that he might set me up in the coolie-running business. He pointed out that Mexico was full of Chinese who were willing to pay from three to six hundred dollars a head to have themselves conducted to the Chinese quarter of any large American city. The business offered excitement—to say nothing of big money. I agreed.

"I took a three months' course in navigation, and purchased the *Eva*. I then got in touch with Tom Bates. We found the schooner to be too old to be seaworthy, and otherwise unsuitable for the coolie traffic, so Tom and I took her just off the Long Island coast below here one dark night. We scuttled her, and then made shore in her yawl, with her registry papers and log book. That was all we wanted of the old *Eva*.

6B

"Then, with funds provided by the Chinese Six Companies, we had the *Ada* built along the *Eva*'s old lines—same model, same rig, with the exception of a foretopmast and an extra bit of jib boom. You are now on board of the *Ada*, built at New Berlin, Florida. I had special water tanks built into her, as well as a powerful gasoline engine, which has helped us to show clean heels to almost any craft of her size—barring a torpedo boat or racing launch. With two sets of genuine papers on board I've been able to sail as the *Ada*, or masquerade as the *Eva*, just as I pleased. A coat of white paint, with the fishing dories and galley out of the way, a foretopmast set up and new canvas bent, makes a big change in the look of a schooner, with a new name on its stern.

"I picked up a black crew of ex-whalemen in New Bedford. They were Portuguese Islanders from Bravo and Fayal. Only one of them—Manuel—could speak English. Then Moy Ku got Sing Yup to start a fake laundry not far from the beach at the lower end of Atlantic City. We loaded up with Chinese at Vera Cruz and Tampico, and made several trips to Atlantic City, changing the schooner's color and rigging during each voyage. Sing Yup hid the Chinese in a bunk room over his laundry until opportunity offered to run them up to New York by train, in bunches of twos and threes.

"Finally, fearing that the life-savers at Atlantic City knew, or suspected, something of our operations, we began to realize that a change in the program was necessary. Thereupon we made arrangements to run the smuggled coolies directly into the heart of New York's Chinatown. Tom Bates bought a big automobile, and Moy Ku hired the Knowles cottage for Sing Yup. Another fake laundry was started up, and Atlantic City abandoned. A carpenter from New York was engaged to build a series of bunks on the upper floor of the cottage. When he finished, Sing Yup laid in a stock of mattresses and bedding, and was then in a position to care for from forty to fifty Chinese until Tom could run them into the city.

"The appearance of the gray car with the limousine body in the streets of Chinatown acted automatically. It was a signal for dozens of lookouts to be posted, and enlisted the aid of hundreds of pairs of sharp eyes. Although Chinatown has its tongs and warring factions, the residents all work together when the evasion of the exclusion act is concerned.

"Now, as for the gold which I foolishly deposited in the local bank, it represented my savings from the Atlantic City operations. The Six Companies have an Oriental habit of paying their debts in gold coin—a custom which I've persuaded them to abandon, since large sums in gold are bulky, and cause talk.

"There's very little to add to the story. I'm through with the business for good. As it is, we've had a very close shave, for even now the government men have an idea of what we've been running into East Whitney. Of course, they can't prove anything, for the cottage has been burned, together with all the telltale evidence in the shape of bunks, bedding, and utensils. Of course, we'll have to make good the loss to Mrs. Knowles.

"As I said before, I'm through with the work, although others may carry it on. I don't see that there's anything disgraceful about it. I've been offered large sums of money to run cargoes of opium up here from Mexico. I could make more money in a year at that work than I could spend in a lifetime. I wouldn't touch it, though, for it's dirty work, and would tend to perpetuate a great evil."

Stephen Adams paused. His eyes sought those of the girl he loved. Then he turned to Reuben Sprague, and went on:

"I love Grace, sir, and want to make her my wife. That's the reason why I've given you this explanation. It's also my reason for getting out of this coolie traffic. Of course, it's illegal, and means a stiff fine and a year of imprisonment in the event of detection. But I'm through now, and the government people have no evidence against me. I've got enough money put by to—"

"Stop!" cried Reuben Sprague, at this

juncture. "I don't want to hear another word about your money. It's dirty money!" The old man pointed a bony forefinger at the *Ada's* master, as if to emphasize his statement.

"It don't make any difference how far you try to justify your actions by sayin' that this ain't a free country," continued the speaker. "We made the laws barrin' these Chinese out of the country 'cause they don't mix with us any more than oil and water. Laws are laws, and the man who runs afoul of 'em ought to pay the penalty. Money!" Reuben Sprague snorted in disgust. "Money can't buy Grace. On the other hand, if you came to me with empty pockets, but with a clean record and conscience, there's no other young man I'd rather have for a son-in-law. I knew there was something crooked about this business from the very first. I've had my say now, and I'm goin' ashore. I'll keep your secret. Grace is of age. I can't stop her from marryin' who she pleases. But there's one thing that I want you to understand—if she marries you and shares in that crooked money, she's no daughter of mine. I'll disown her!"

"But, Mr. Sprague, if—"

A loud cry from the deck, and the sound of slatting canvas interrupted Captain Steve. Springing to the companionway, he gained the deck, followed by the others. A stiff breeze had sprung up from the southeast, and Sing Yup was struggling with the mainsheet in an effort to check the swinging mainsail.

"We'll have to drop the mains'l, Tom!" cried Steve, as he jumped to the throat halyards.

He was on the point of casting off the coil of line from its belaying pin, when a yawl bumped into the schooner's side, and Operative Briscoe sprang aboard, closely followed by Gup Jong and two other men.

CHAPTER XII.

THE NET CLOSES.

"YOU'LL all remain just as you are!" Briscoe cried to the surprised company. "With the exception of the young lady and the old gentleman, you're all under arrest!"

"On what charge?" sang out Tom, winking slyly at Moy Ku.

"The illegal landing of Chinese coolies."

"Suppose you search the vessel before you make any arrests," suggested the captain of the pseudo *Eva*.

The government man laughed, and felt in his overcoat pocket for the warrants. "I'm not going to make any search," he declared. "I know the whole game. My side partner here ran down the Chinatown end of the case, and by this time your fifty odd passengers have been rounded up by the Chinese bureau. We'll hold them as witnesses against you before we deport them. The game is up. I'm Briscoe, of the department of justice. This is Gup Jong, of the Chinese bureau, and the others are U. S. deputy marshals."

Grace paled as she eyed the warrants and listened to the government man. She stepped to his side, and was on the point of addressing him, when an interruption came in the shape of a hoarse cry of pain and alarm.

Sing Yup had leaped upon Gup Jong, and was choking him. Moy Ku, standing nearer to the struggling men than any of the others, sprang toward them, but at this juncture a gust of wind caught the heavy mainsail on the outboard side of the leech. The ponderous boom swung around with a crash, and the three Chinese were swept over the schooner's low rail into the icy waters of the harbor.

"Stand by, Tom!" cried the captain, as he cast off the painter of the Sprague skiff, and threw himself into it. The yawl, manned by the government men, followed, and within the space of ten minutes the wet and shivering trio were borne into the schooner's cabin.

"If any of those men had drowned, you'd have had their deaths on your conscience, too," declared Reuben Sprague, as he arose from his seat on a locker, and beckoned to his daughter. "There's no use of talkin'," he concluded, as he eyed the prisoners and government men, "honesty is the best

policy—the only one; and darn my eyes if I'm sorry they caught yuh."

A murmur of surprise ran around the courtroom as Stephen Adams pleaded guilty on fifty-one counts. The penalty for each smuggled coolie being a year of imprisonment and a fine of a thousand dollars, matters looked serious for the prisoner. Tears gathered in the eyes of Grace, and rolled down her cheeks unheeded. Stern and uncompromising, her father sat by her.

"The court's sentence," announced the judge, "is that the prisoner at the bar will serve one year of imprisonment at hard labor on each count, in addition to a fine of fifty-one thousand dollars."

Grace clutched the arms of her chair; her senses seemed to have deserted her. It was practically a sentence to life imprisonment.

"But," went on the judge, his well-modulated tones clearly audible in the most distant corner of the room, "in the event that the prisoner will, within forty-eight hours, pay the fine in full—fifty-one thousand dollars—the court will provide that the prison sentence shall run not longer than five years. In other words, if the fine is paid in full within the period of time specified, the prisoner may be a free man five years from to-day."

"It'll mean sellin' the *Ada* to make up the fine," Tom Bates whispered to Steve. "You won't have a penny left."

But if Stephen Adams heard him, he gave no sign. He was looking across the courtroom, full into the tear-stained but smiling face of the girl he loved. In her gray eyes there welled up a message for him—a message that read: "You'll come out of prison a penniless man, but I'll wait."

He smiled slightly, and nodded, then turned to the freckled man at his side.

"Tom," he said, "I'm going to pay the fine. Reuben Sprague is right. It doesn't pay to follow a business that is against the law. I'm through."

The other prisoners, who pleaded guilty as accessories to the fact, were sentenced to serve five years each, without the payment of fines.



NOTHING is more annoying to the experienced swimmer than to see somebody crawl slowly down the steps into a bath, or lower himself gently from the bank of a stream. This is especially the case when a man or boy who does it can swim well. He has no lack of confidence once he is in the water, but he dreads the first plunge. Sometimes the water, let us say, is rather cold, and he will feel the temperature with his foot

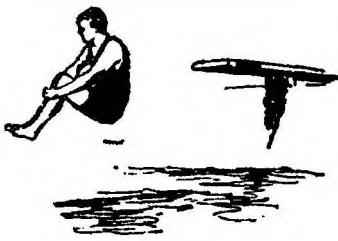


Fig. 1.

first, then shrink back and hesitate. Sometimes it is because he is afraid of hitting the water hard.

In any case, it allows him to be nervous, and that is one of the first things you have got to learn not to be in aquatic sports.

The great thing is not to hesitate at first. Unless as quickly as ever you can, and then, without thinking, run to the bank and jump in, feet foremost. It is a good plan to pinch your nose

with the fingers of one hand, otherwise the water is likely to shoot up inside it, and cause an extremely disagreeable sensation. Throw out your arms as your feet touch the water, and that will give you support, and you will not even go completely under unless you have jumped from a place higher than the water's edge.

Another way of entering the water without diving is to take a long run, and jump as high into the air as you can from the end of a springboard. As you do so, lift up your knees, and clutch them with your hands, as in Fig. 1. In this way your body is made into a compact mass, which hits the water with a great splash.

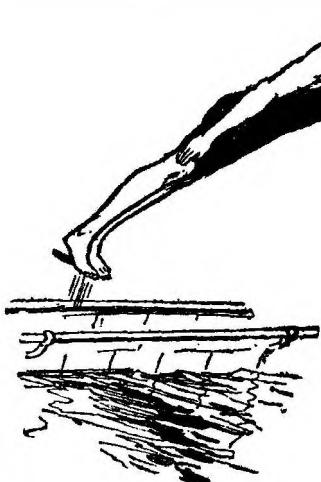
Two or three days of these exercises will nerve you to try to learn a real dive.

IN learning to dive it is much better to choose a regular swimming pool than to start this pretty branch of the art in a river. The reason for this is that you are able to get a straight and level send-off, and so pay attention to the position of your feet. Once you have learned to dive scientifically it will come naturally to you, whether it is from a springboard, a rough rock, or grassy bank.

The chief mistake usually made by beginners in diving is to direct the body downward. On the contrary, you should

try and shoot yourself outward over the water like an arrow.

Hold yourself straight, with your hands at your sides, and let your body



(Fig. 2.)

fall forward, as in Fig. 2. Just as your body seems to be falling into the water, spring forward with bent knees, raise your arms quickly on a level with your shoulders—see Fig. 3—with a loose, easy motion, and bring them together again over your head as you touch the water.

The chief art in diving is the knack of bending your back so as to enter the water nearly at right angles, and without making a huge splash. Sometimes you will see the most experienced swimmers quite unable to plunge in properly, and they will often make a splash as they go into the water for the reason that they have never taken the trouble to learn diving scientifically.

Naturally, every one has a little reluctance to dive from a height for the first time. It is better to begin learning from the level of the water. Allowing your body to fall forward is also unpleasant for the first time or two, but you will soon gain confidence. The great thing to remember is to keep all the muscles taut and firm, just relaxing those at the knees when you bend them to get your spring.

Having once learned the plain,

straightforward dive, you will be able to vary it in numerous ways.

You should, however, be very certain of yourself before you attempt any high diving.

In order to avoid striking the bottom of a pool when diving, you should, as you enter the water, try to curve your back. This action brings you to the surface again almost immediately, nor can you thus go very deep.

If you have at your disposal a spring-board from which to dive, the fun is greatly increased. You take a run up the board, which, by the way, should always be covered with matting, jump at the end, and so get an extra send-off into the water from the board as it bounces back.

Do not bend your knees as you hit the water in any kind of dive. It is this fault, in fact, which generally causes the ungainly splash which so spoils the appearance of a dive to the spectators and its pleasure to yourself.

After learning to enter the water properly, the swimmer should familiarize himself with the various strokes in swimming.

It is comparatively easy to swim on



(Fig. 3.)

your side once you have gained confidence in the water. If you can use this stroke smoothly and evenly you will find it a very fast one, and you will be able to move through the water at a great rate. Indeed, it is the stroke for pace.

You lie on your side in the water, fling up your right arm over your head, and scoop the water with your hand at its farthest reach, as in Fig. 4. Pull back your arm evenly near to your face

and body until your fingers are straight along your leg again. The head should be half submerged the whole time; often, indeed, you will find that pace can be improved by holding it right under



(Fig. 4.)

the water, and bringing it up at every other stroke in order to breathe.

The action of the left arm is different. It will, of course, be right under you. Bend it up at the elbow, and strike forward in the ordinary way, and bring it back smartly but without a full sweep through the water beneath you. That would only slacken your speed.

The movement of your legs should be something like that when riding a bicycle, if you can imagine pedaling in a position parallel to the ground. The work is mainly done with the right leg. Bend the knee up toward your body, and kick it away from you. Your left leg should move downward a little, and move up again to meet the right leg at the end of the stroke—see Fig. 5.

If you can make these four different movements work evenly together, the combined action should shoot you through the water at a considerable speed. The best of the side stroke, apart from fast swimming, is that it is a complete change from the breast stroke, so that it is a great relief to turn over onto your side. You use quite



(Fig. 5.)

different muscles in the main, so that those that were tired before can rest for a while.

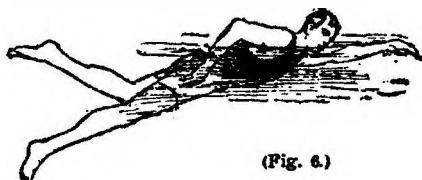
A common mistake to which almost every beginner in swimming is liable is to hurry his movements. This applies no less to the side stroke than to any other. If you hurry the action of arms or legs before you have learned it quite

perfectly, you will only make yourself easily tired, and your pace will not improve at all. The great thing to remember is to use your head as well as your limbs, and to think all the time how best you can make your stroke perfect.

THE so-called trudgeon stroke is one of the most popular, especially for medium distances in racing. It may not be quite so fast as the side stroke, but it is less tiring on the whole.

The first position that you should assume is lying flat on the water, practically on your face; if anything, you should be a little inclined to the left. Your legs should be stretched out straight behind you, and your arms in front, the palms of your hands a little scooped and turned slightly outward.

The action of the legs should be up and down in the water. This action is

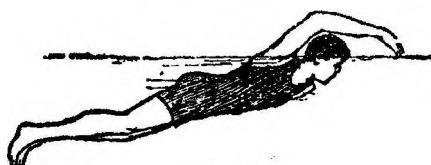


(Fig. 6.)

sometimes called the "scissors kick," as the movement is not unlike the opening and shutting of a pair of scissors. If you are on your left side, let us say, you should bring up the right leg with an unbent knee, just as though you were walking, then let the left leg meet it, bending it only at the knee, and not at the hip—see Fig. 6.

In order to make the arm stroke effective you should roll your body over from side to side, according as you require to use the left arm or the right. The stroke in question is an overarm one, and each arm works alternately. You should bring your arm out of the water with the elbow slightly bent, plunge it in again as far as you can reach over your head, and finish with a digging motion, scooping the water away beneath you. In this stroke you should remember one most important thing, and that is to bring your arm right up over your head, and not at all to the side, as shown in Fig. 7.

Another thing to bear in mind is that you must have your face under the water most of the time. At the end of each stroke let your mouth come just



(Fig. 7.)

out of the water to get a breath of air, and then empty the lungs through the nostrils under water. This comes quite easily after a little practice.

In the trudgeon stroke you should move the arm first—that is to say, the right arm, if you are starting on your left side. Follow that with the opening of the legs for the "scissor kick," shutting the legs as the right arm finishes the stroke. Then use the other arm, and as that begins to scoop the water beneath it, begin again with the first arm.

IT is important that you should master the art of floating on your back as soon as you have learned swimming and diving. The reason is this: Should you at any time be called upon to save life by swimming a long distance, or should you be upset in some boating accident and have to swim to a far-off shore, you will find that in smooth water you will be able to rest yourself wonderfully by



(Fig. 8.)

turning over occasionally onto your back and floating, or swimming in that position. In fact, one of the approved methods in life-saving is carried out by the back stroke, without the use of the arms.

Float first, then learn to swim in the "back" position. To do this you must first have the most perfect confidence in the water.

Having this confidence, you should

turn over on your back, keeping your legs straight out and your arms extended at right angles to your body. The whole success of your effort to float depends upon one thing really, and that is the holding of the head well back in the water. You should let the water cover your ears, and, in fact, only just leave the mouth and nostrils free to breathe through.

Floating will rest you, but you will find that you can swim really fast on your back. You strike out with your legs and start the arm stroke just over or behind your head. Shoot out your arms as far as they will reach, and then sweep them back through the water to your sides—see Fig. 8.

As can easily be imagined, this movement will send you along at a consider-



(Fig. 8.)

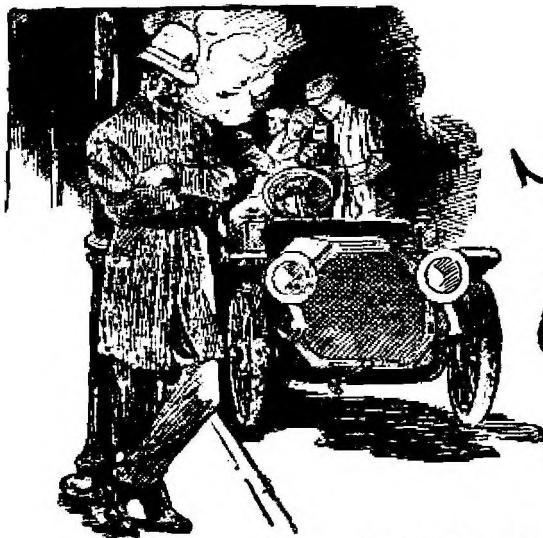
able pace. The arms act just like two oars in a boat, which drag back the water, as it were, with irresistible force.

When you have learned this it is a good plan to practice swimming on the back without the aid of your hands, which you can either hold straight down at your sides or on the hips—see position in Fig. 9.

Sometimes in order to make a good pace on your back over a short distance, you can submerge your head now and again. Let it sink right under just for a few strokes, then come up for a breath of air.

Among the fancy strokes that you can practice on your back is one by which you can propel yourself forward, though not at a great rate. For this, keep your feet well together, the head thrown back as before, and keeping your hands at your sides use them as paddles. "Scoop" the water away, so to speak, by pulling at it, and you will find that you will move along slowly but surely.

The concluding section of this article will appear in the next issue.



Snapshot Artillery

By
Bertram Lebhar

(A SERIAL NOVEL)

FORMER CHAPTERS.

Summed up briefly for those who have not read them.

FRANK HAWLEY, the camera man of the New York *Sentinel*, is ordered by his physician to go to the Catskills for a long rest. He obtains leave of absence from his editor, Tom Paxton, and goes to the mountain bungalow of a friend, near the small city of Oldham.

Being interested in police systems he drops in to pay a visit to the Oldham chief of police, and finds the latter sound asleep at his desk in such a ridiculous attitude that he is persuaded to take a snapshot of him. The chief awakes when the picture is taken, and angrily pursues Hawley into the street. The Camera Chap takes refuge in the offices of the Oldham *Daily Bulletin*, and discovers that the editor is Fred Carroll, one of his old newspaper friends. Carroll is fighting the corrupt political grafters of Oldham, and as the chief of police is one of his worst foes, Hawley permits him to publish the snapshot, with an editorial setting forth that Oldham's police sleep while the town is at the mercy of burglars and crooks.

Editor Gale, of the Oldham *Daily Chronicle*, whose son is a reporter on the New York *Daily News*, and a bitter enemy of Frank Hawley, confers with Chief Hodgins and the corrupt politicians, and gets a city ordinance passed making it a misdemeanor to take pictures in the city streets without a special permit.

Hawley receives a telegram from the editor of the New York *Sentinel*, ordering him to take a picture of the Oldham city hall. He sets out on a motor cycle to obtain

the picture, but is warned by Melba Gale, niece of Editor Gale, of the *Chronicle*, and sweetheart of Fred Carroll, that the telegram was a fake, prepared by the Gales, to entrap him.

Hawley obtains a small, cheap camera at a toy shop, takes out the film, and substitutes a jack-in-the-box, which will spring out when the camera is opened. He then pretends to take a picture of the city hall, and is arrested and locked up. Hodgins and the younger Gale open the camera in secret, discover the hoax, and immediately procure a film, and take a real picture of the city hall, which they have developed at once. Hawley is taken to the court, and is astonished when the negative he has never seen before is offered as evidence against him. He is about to be sentenced for violation of the law, when he discovers that the city-hall clock shown in the picture proves that the snapshot was taken several hours after his arrest, while he was locked in a cell. He explains to the judge that he is the victim of a frame-up, and is immediately discharged with apologies.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MAD UNDERTAKING.

THE Camera Chap watched the puzzled face of the *Bulletin's* editor as the latter pondered on his rash proposal. "Do I get the job, Fred?" he inquired eagerly. "May I consider myself a regular staff photographer of the Oldham *Daily Bulletin*?"

"You may not," Carroll replied emphatically. "You reckless Indian!" he added, with a laugh. "Do you think for a minute that I'm going to listen to such a proposition? This stunt that you propose is the wildest idea that has ever taken shape in that harum-scarum brain of yours. If I thought that you were tired of liberty and had a feverish longing to spend the next six months in jail, I might be willing to consider your offer. But I have no reason to believe that such is the case."

Hawley grinned. "I have no desire to go to prison, and no intention of going there if I can possibly keep out," he declared. "But really I don't see any reason why the venture should have such a disastrous result."

"You don't, eh?" rejoined Carroll, with an ironical laugh. "I suppose if that chair you are sitting on were a keg of dynamite you'd see no particular danger in drumming your heels against its sides. Do you suppose you could go out taking snapshots on the highways of Oldham in defiance of the new anti-camera law, and keep out of the clutches of the police? You might possibly get away with the first picture, although even that is doubtful; but you'd surely be nabbed on your second attempt."

"Why are you so sure of that?" Hawley inquired.

"Why am I sure of it? Why am I sure that a man who couldn't swim would drown if he were to jump overboard from the hurricane deck of a liner in mid-Atlantic on a dark night? Because, my reckless young friend, my common sense enables me to foresee clearly what would happen in both cases. Our friend, Chief Hodgins, would stay awake night and day in order to take advantage of such a grand opportunity to get even with you. Every policeman of the Oldham force would have instructions to bring you in, alive or dead. My esteemed contemporary, the *Chronicle*, would publish a full description of you, refer to you as 'the camera bandit,' and appeal to all good citizens to aid in your capture. The whole city of Oldham would be on the watch for you. What chance would you have?"

A sparkle came to the eyes of the Camera Chap. "By Jove, Fred, that's an alluring picture you've painted!" he exclaimed, with great enthusiasm.

"Alluring?" repeated the other deprecatingly.

"Yes... I hadn't figured that it would be quite as exciting as all that. But I have no doubt the conditions will be just as you've pictured them, and I can see that I'm going to have even more fun than I expected."

"Fun! Do you mean to say that you could get any fun out of a situation of that sort?"

"Why, of course," Hawley replied simply. "Think of the sport of taking snapshots in the face of such difficulties! Think of the fun of dodging those fellows! The greater the danger, you know, Fred, the more fascination there is to the picture game. There's nothing in taking snapshots which require no risk."

To some men who did not know Frank Hawley these words might have sounded suspiciously like bombast; but Carroll knew well that the New York *Sentinel*'s star camera man was no braggart, and that what he had just said simply and truly expressed his viewpoint regarding "the picture game."

"But, apart from the good time I shall have, think what a great thing this snapshot campaign of mine will be for the *Bulletin*," the Camera Chap continued earnestly. "I predict a big boom in your paper's circulation, Fred, as soon as I get started. The more I'm denounced by the police and the *Chronicle*, the more eager people will be to see the pictures taken by 'the desperate camera bandit.' *Bulletins* will sell like hot cakes, Fred, and your coffers will be full of real money. For Miss Melba's sake, as well as your own, you've got to accept my proposition."

In spite of himself, a wistful expression came to Carroll's face. He realized the truth of what Hawley said. He had every reason to believe that snapshots taken under such conditions and published daily on the front page of the *Bulletin* would greatly increase the sale of that paper.

He had been furnished a striking proof of this a few days earlier, when he had published those snapshots showing Chief of Police Hodgins asleep at his desk. There had been a big rise in circulation that day. Papers had sold as fast as the newsboys could hand them out. Everybody in Oldham had appreciated the joke on the fat chief of police and rushed to procure copies of those amusing pictures. And the very next day the sale of the *Bulletin* had fallen off, showing Carroll conclusively that it was Hawley's snapshots alone which had brought about that sudden and all too transient wave of prosperity.

Therefore the proprietor of the *Bulletin* was sorely tempted now by the Camera Chap's offer; but, putting his own interests aside, he shook his head in emphatic negation.

"I admit that it might help our circulation along, old man," he began; "but you see—"

"It would probably bring you a lot of advertising, too," Hawley broke in. "Really, Fred, I shouldn't be at all surprised if this camera campaign resulted in a bunch of nice fat advertising contracts for the *Bulletin*."

"I doubt that," said Carroll. "It is true that increased advertising generally follows increased circulation; but it wouldn't in my case. As I told you the other day, most of the big advertisers of this town are connected in some way or other with that bunch of grafters the *Bulletin* is fighting, and they wouldn't advertise in our columns no matter what figures our circulation books might show."

"Maybe they wouldn't," the Camera Chap rejoined; "but there are lots of others who would. I wasn't thinking about the local advertisers. I have in mind the big concerns--the breakfast-food people, the purveyors of potted ham, canned soups, cocoa, and mixed pickles; the manufacturers of safety razors, automobiles, shaving soaps, ready-made clothing, et cetera. That's the kind of advertising we'll get for your sheet, Fred."

Carroll laughed grimly. "Don't you suppose I've been after all those people

already? There's nothing doing with any of them. I've called personally on those whose advertising offices are in near-by cities, and spent a small fortune in postage stamps corresponding with the rest. Not one of them could be made to see that it would be to his advantage to advertise in the Oldham *Bulletin*."

"Of course not," exclaimed Hawley; "not while your circulation is as low as it is at present. Naturally they've no desire to throw their money away. But wait until we've boosted the *Bulletin's* circulation sky-high. Then we can talk contracts to them, and I'll wager they'll be ready enough to listen."

"So, you see, Fred," he added laughingly, "you really can't afford to turn down my application for the position of staff photographer on your esteemed paper."

CHAPTER XV.

A DETERMINED STAND.

NEVERTHELESS, I'm going to turn it down," Carroll declared firmly. "I won't hear of your doing this thing. I'm not going to have it on my conscience that I was the cause of your being sent to jail. It's no use arguing with me, old man; I positively refuse to let you run this risk on my account."

"Very well," said the Camera Chap quietly. "Of course, I have no desire to press my services on you if you don't want them. But I shall go ahead with this camera campaign just the same. The pictures will make an interesting addition to my scrapbook."

"You crazy Indian! Surely you don't mean that?"

"I certainly do. If you think I'm going to miss all this fun just because you won't give me a job on your paper, you're very much mistaken. Of course, I should greatly prefer to have the snapshots published in the *Bulletin*. I really think that they'll be worth publishing. But since you can't see it that way, I suppose I'll have to be satisfied with adding them to my private collection."

Carroll glanced searchingly at his friend's face, and was convinced of his

earnestness. Then, with a laugh, he extended his big hand.

"You win, old fellow," he said. "Since you're determined to go ahead anyway, I'd be all kinds of a fool if I were to fail to take advantage of this opportunity. The chances are about a million to one that you'll be nabbed and thrown into jail on your first attempt; but if by a miracle you should succeed in getting any pictures, I'll be tickled to death to use them in the *Bulletin*."

"Good boy!" exclaimed Hawley joyously. "That'll be much more satisfactory to me than pasting them in my scrapbook. And now that I'm a full-fledged member of your staff, Fred—beg pardon; I should say boss—have you any instructions for me? Any particular picture assignment you wish me to go out and cover?"

"Oh, no; I shall not give you any assignments. I'll leave it entirely to you to select your own subjects. Anything will do. No matter what the snapshots may be—even if it's only a picture of an electric-light pole—the extraordinary circumstances will make it of sufficient value to be worth a place on our front page."

"Very good," said Hawley; "I am inclined to agree with you that it will be the best policy to give me a free hand. But I assure you," he added, with a chuckle, "I have no intention of snapshotting such uninteresting subjects as electric-light poles. The kind of pictures I intend to go after will have a little more life to them than that. In fact, I have an idea now for a group of snapshots which I think would be of great interest to the *Bulletin's* readers. If I can put it across I think it will make even more of a hit than those pictures of the sleeping police chief."

"What's the idea?" Carroll inquired, with a little more eagerness than he was desirous of manifesting.

The Camera Chap drew his chair nearer, and lowered his voice almost to a whisper: "Do you remember, Fred, that stunt the *Sentinel* pulled off several years ago, when we were roasting the New York police department? I mean those automobiles filled with re-

porters which the *Sentinel* sent out one night to tour the entire city and count the number of cops who were loafing instead of patrolling their beats?"

"Do I remember it!" exclaimed Carroll, with a reminiscent chuckle. "I should say I do! It was just after I joined the *Sentinel* staff. I was one of the reporters assigned to the story. I shall never forget that automobile ride. We rode a hundred blocks, and in all that distance only encountered one policeman who was conscientiously attending to business. The exposé the *Sentinel* published the next day created a whopping big scandal, and resulted in the biggest shake-up in the history of the New York police department."

"That's right," said Hawley. "Well, what's the matter, Fred, with pulling off something on those lines right here in Oldham? I've got a hunch that this city isn't being patrolled any too well during the night hours. With a lazy, incompetent fathead like Hodgins at the head of the force, it's a pretty safe guess that there isn't much discipling among the rank and file. A tour of the city by night probably would reveal some interesting facts about the Oldham police department."

Carroll nodded vigorously. "You bet it would. You are quite right in supposing that the cops of this burg are a pretty punk lot. The great majority of them got their appointments to the force by political pull, and—well, as you can readily imagine, they're not by any means the best material that could have been found for the job. Yes, your suggestion is a mighty good one, Hawley, old man. I deserve to be kicked for not having thought of it myself long ago. An exposé of that sort ought to sell a lot of *Bulletins*."

"Sure it would!" declared the Camera Chap enthusiastically. "I'm glad you approve. Thought you'd look at it in that light. Guess there's no sense in wasting any time," he added. "I might as well get busy this very night."

The proprietor of the *Bulletin* looked at him in astonishment. "You get busy? Why, what is there for you to do, old man? This'll be a reporter's task. Pic-

tures, of course, will be quite out of the question."

"Oh, will they, though?" chuckled Hawley. "I don't agree with you there. The pictures will be the main feature of this exposé. Of course, we'll have a story, too—a couple of columns or so of reading matter to go with the snapshots—but, with all modesty, I think I can say that it will be my camera which will give the people of Oldham the most graphic idea of what the police force is doing while the town slumbers."

"Nonsense!" Carroll expostulated. "This will be at night. How can you take pictures—"

"How can I?" Hawley interrupted. "What a peculiar question! Surely, my dear Fred, you must be forgetting all about the existence of a certain compound called magnesium powder."

"What!" cried Carroll, almost rising in his chair. "Man alive! You don't mean to say you'd be insane enough to attempt to take snapshots on the streets of Oldham by flash light?"

The Camera Chap grinned at his friend's display of horrified amazement.

"Oh, yes, I'll have to use flash-light powder, of course," he answered. "I don't know of any other way of taking pictures at night; and we positively must have those snapshots."

CHAPTER XVI.

A NIGHT'S WORK.

PATROLMAN JOHN HICKS, of the Oldham police force, was a fairly vigilant guardian of the law—in the daytime. But when his turn came to do night duty, which happened regularly every second week, he always felt drowsy, no matter how much sleep he took by day to prepare himself for his nocturnal vigil.

"Which goes to show that night work ain't the right thing for a man," Mr. Hicks was in the habit of complaining to his intimate friend. "It's against nature. The daytime was made for man to work in, and the night for man to sleep in. Even the dumb beasts and the

birds close their eyes at night. When you try to reverse this order of things Nature rebels—and you can't blame her."

Being anxious to offend nature as little as possible, Officer Hicks had cultivated the habit of going to sleep standing up. So proficient had he become in this difficult art that he could lean against a lamp-post and slumber as soundly as if he were in his own comfortable bed at home.

The night which Hawley had selected for his photographic exposé of police conditions in Oldham happened to be one of the nights on which Patrolman Hicks was on duty.

He had selected the most comfortable lamp-post on his beat, and was propped against it, enjoying a deep sleep, when a big black touring car containing three men came along.

The automobile was moving almost noiselessly, but even if the man at the wheel had honked his horn as it drew near, it wouldn't have caused any discomfort to Officer Hicks. He was too sound a sleeper to be bothered by the ordinary sounds of street traffic.

In his somnolent moments, Mr. Hicks did not present a very picturesque appearance. Only a slender man can lean against a lamp-post and look graceful; and Officer Hicks was almost as fat as Chief of Police Hodgins. Moreover, like the latter, he had the habit of sleeping with his mouth partly open.

But in spite of its lack of picturesqueness, his appearance caused great delight to the three men in the big black touring car.

That vehicle came to a stop a few feet away from the lamp-post, and one of the men leaned over the side of the tonneau, and pointed a camera toward the slumbering bluecoat.

Then there came a vivid flash of light, a dull, booming sound, and a chuckle of triumph from the man with the camera.

Possibly the dull, booming sound and the chuckle of the man would not have aroused Patrolman Hicks by themselves, but the vivid flash of light hitting him

squarely on the eyelids brought him to his senses in an instant.

Springing to an erect position, he stared in ludicrous astonishment at the automobile in front of him.

He was about to step into the roadway and ask the three men what had happened, but before he could carry out this intention the automobile had started off at great speed.

"Oh, well," Officer Hicks muttered to himself, "I guess it was nothing serious. Probably a fuse blew out, or something of that sort. Them automobiles is queer things."

With this reflection, he once more settled himself comfortably against the lamp-post, and resumed his interrupted slumbers.

"That was a cinch!" said the Camera Chap to his two companions, as the touring car sped through the quiet street. "Didn't I tell you, Fred, that there wouldn't be much danger?"

"Well, we can't expect that they'll all be as easy as that one," Carroll replied. "Ye gods! Just imagine the lives and property of the people of Oldham being intrusted to the care of a lazy, good-for-nothing shirker like that! I hope you got a good picture of him, Frank. It certainly ought to make the taxpayers of Oldham sit up and take notice."

"At all events, it ought to make 'em buy *Bulletins*," the Camera Chap chuckled. "I'll bet you a new hat, Fred, that your paper's circulation will be more than doubled as a result of this crusade."

"But, say," he exclaimed, as the touring car swung around a corner, "aren't we on another cop's beat now? If so, hadn't we better slow down, and hunt for him?"

This remark was addressed to Parsons, the *Bulletin's* police reporter, who was running the car. Parsons had been "covering police" for some years, and knew the majority of the members of the force by name, and what beat they were supposed to patrol. This expert knowledge made him a valuable member of the expedition. As he was aware also of the habits and weaknesses of many of the bluecoats, he was able

to lead the Camera Chap to those who were most likely to be caught shirking their duty.

The reporter glanced quickly up and down both sides of the street, and reduced the speed of the touring car.

"This is 'Red' Horgan's beat," he announced. "And I guess I can tell you where he is right now. Horgan is the most notorious shirker in the department, and when he's on night duty he generally spends most of the time in 'Dutch Louie's' place on Allendale Street. I have no doubt that you'll find him there now playing pinochle in the back room."

The Camera Chap's face lighted up at this information. "Playing pinochle, eh?" he exclaimed eagerly. "That ought to make a bully snapshot. Is it possible for a stranger to get into this Dutch Louie's place at this hour?"

"Sure!" Parsons answered, with a laugh. "He runs his place wide open all night. Anybody can walk in and order a drink right at the bar, no matter what the hour. Dutch Louie is a politician, as well as a liquor dealer, and he doesn't have to worry about his joint being pulled for violation of the excise laws."

"Good!" exclaimed Hawley joyously. "I was afraid I might have difficulty in getting into the place. Is this Allendale Street we're on now?"

"No; it's the next corner. Louie's place is halfway down the block," the reporter informed him.

"Then I think it would be a good idea to stop the car right here," said the Camera Chap. "I hardly think it would be a wise plan to ride right up to the door. The sound of our motor might scare Officer Horgan into dropping his pinochle hand."

"No need to be afraid of that," declared Parsons, with a laugh. "It would take more than an automobile to freeze Red Horgan. He's a son-in-law of one of the biggest politicians in the county, and has such a strong pull that I guess he wouldn't care if Chief Hodgins himself came into the back room of the café and caught him playing cards when he ought to be patrolling his beat. I've

often heard him boast that there isn't a superior officer in the department that isn't afraid to call him down, no matter what he does—that if any of them dared to get gay with him he'd mighty soon show them where they got off at."

"Must be a pleasant sort of chap," said Hawley, with an ironical smile. "It'll be a genuine pleasure to publish his picture, eh, Fred?"

"But surely you've no intention of going into Dutch Louie's place to get it?" Carroll protested anxiously. "That's out of the question."

The Camera Chap looked astonished. "Why out of the question? Didn't you just hear Parsons say that anybody can get into the place?"

"Oh, yes, I haven't any doubt that you could get in, all right; but if you were rash enough to try to take a flashlight picture inside I rather guess you'd have some difficulty in getting out. Dutch Louie's few patrons are a pretty tough bunch. They'd probably kick in a few of your ribs before Officer Horgan placed you under arrest for taking photographs without a license. Better pass this one up, old man, and look for something a trifle easier."

But Hawley had no intention of foregoing this opportunity to procure a snapshot of Mr. Red Horgan in the rôle of a pinochle player. He realized that there were difficulties in the way of his getting the picture, but he was determined to make the attempt.

"It'll be a gem!" he declared enthusiastically. "If I can get it and it turns out all right, Fred, just imagine what a hit it will make with the readers of the *Bulletin*. Stop the car, please, Parsons. Here we are at the corner. I'm going to get out."

Carroll clutched at his coat to restrain him, but the Camera Chap laughingly shook off his hold, and got out of the automobile.

"You fellows wait here for me," he said. "Keep the power turned on, Parsons, and have the car all ready to start as soon as I come out. It's possible that we may have to make a hurried getaway, in which case it would be in-

convenient to have to wait until you cranked up."

He was stepping to the sidewalk when Carroll called to him:

"Hold on, there! If you're such a stubborn idiot that you can't be dissuaded from doing this crazy thing, I'm going with you. Do you think I'm going to stay quietly in this car while you're inside that joint being killed? I guess not! The chances are a hundred to one that there'll be a rough-house as soon as you fire the flash," he said. "I don't suppose that even with me to help you we'll stand much chance against that crowd; but, at all events, two'll be better than one."

"Three, you mean, Mr. Carroll," exclaimed Parsons. "If there's any fighting to be done, I'm in on it, too, of course. I guess nobody'll steal the machine while we're away."

The *Bulletin's* police reporter was such a frail-looking chap that Hawley could scarcely repress a smile at these words, although he greatly appreciated the spirit which prompted them.

"Much obliged to both of you," the Camera Chap said; "but really I prefer to go alone. I think I can easily convince you that it will be a much better plan for you fellows to wait here in the machine."

"I won't hear of any such arrangement," Carroll declared firmly. "If you go, I'm going, too; and if Parsons wants to come along, he's welcome. The more the merrier. You may have your faults, Frank, old man, but I like you too well to be willing to sit passively here while you're being beaten to a pulp around the corner."

"I'm not going to be beaten to a pulp," the Camera Chap protested, with a laugh. "I intend to use strategy. If I go alone, I feel confident I'll be able to get away with it; but if you fellows insist upon butting in you'll surely queer me. I'm a stranger to that bunch at Dutch Louie's, but you fellows are not. Both of you would be recognized as soon as you entered the place, and I'd have no chance to take the picture."

Carroll had to admit that there was a lot in this argument, and, after a little

more demurring, he grudgingly consented to let Hawley have his way in the matter.

"But I'm not going to stay here in the car," he declared. "I'm going to hang around outside that joint, and keep my ears wide open. As soon as I hear the sound of a rough-house I'm coming in, for I'll know then that, in spite of all your resourcefulness and ingenuity, strategy has failed."

"All right," assented Hawley, with a laugh. "If strategy fails I'll be glad to have the help of those big fists of yours. But I feel confident there isn't going to be any violence."

CHAPTER XVII.

A BIT OF STRATEGY.

THREE was no mistaking Dutch Louie's place, for it was the only restaurant on the block; moreover, the name of the proprietor was emblazoned in white letters on a flaring red glass sign.

As Parsons had predicted, the place was wide open. Although it was nearly two a. m., and the State excise law forbids business of the kind after one o'clock, the two waiters were very busy serving drinks.

The Camera Chap walked through the front room, and entered the room beyond. He pretended to be under the influence of liquor—walked like a fellow who has all the sail he can carry. It had occurred to him that this pretense might help his game along, although he had not as yet hit upon any definite plan for the taking of the picture.

In a corner of this rear room several men were seated at a round table, playing cards. One of these players wore a blue coat with brass buttons, and his hair was the color of carrots. By these tokens, Hawley knew that he was in the presence of Patrolman Red Horgan.

The card players were not the only occupants of the room. A dozen men were scattered among the small round tables, sipping their beverages or gulping them down, and paying but scant

attention to the pinochle game in progress in the corner.

They were, as Carroll had said, a rough-looking crowd. One had only to glance at their faces to realize that anybody who came into the place looking for trouble would not have to go out unsatisfied.

Hawley, spying an unoccupied table some yards away from the group of pinochle players, made his way toward it, still keeping up the pretense of being tipsy. He seated himself so that he faced the policeman and his cronies, and, summoning a waiter, ordered something. Nobody paid much attention to him. Patrolman Horgan's gaze happened to wander in his direction, but the glance was merely a cursory one. The policeman was too busy "melding a hundred aces" to have much interest in the harmless-looking, apparently very "tired" young man who had just come in.

In another corner of the room was an automatic piano which was operated on a nickel-in-the-slot basis. Somebody dropped a coin into this machine, and it started to thrum a lively waltz strain.

This music—or near music—appeared to have a peculiar effect upon the Camera Chap. Although the tune was a rousing one, it evidently served as a lullaby in his case, for his eyelids began to droop, and his head rolled from side to side in a ludicrous manner. When the waiter came with what he had ordered, he was sprawled across the table, apparently fast asleep.

The waiter shook him roughly by the shoulder. "Here, young feller," he growled, "here's your drink. Wake up! This ain't no lodging house. If you want to sleep, you'd better hire a room upstairs."

The Camera Chap roused himself as though by a great effort, and stared stupidly at the glass which had been set before him. As soon as the waiter had gone, he lapsed once more into slumber.

"That fellow over there seems to be dead to the world," remarked Patrolman Horgan, with a chuckle. "Must be

worse than he looked when he came in. Whose deal is it now?"

Needless to say, Hawley was by no means as "dead to the world" as his appearance seemed to indicate. Seldom, in fact, had his brain been more active than it was at this minute. As he sprawled across the table, with his eyes closed, and his head resting on his outstretched arms, he was summoning all his ingenuity in an effort to solve the perplexing problem which confronted him.

"Everything is dead easy except the firing of the flash-light powder," he mused. "I can get a dandy focus from here without moving an inch, and, with my camera held beneath the table, Red Horgan wouldn't even suspect that his picture had been taken—if it weren't for that telltale flash. That's the great difficulty. How the deuce am I going to fire the flash and get away with it?"

And then an inspiration came to him, and he began to groan. Usually he was not in the habit of groaning when he had an inspiration, but he had a good reason for doing so now. It was part of the plan which had just suggested itself to his resourceful mind. So he proceeded to groan loud enough to be heard by the group of pinochle players in the corner.

The waiter, hearing these sounds of anguish, once more stepped up to him, and shook him roughly by the shoulder. "Hey, young feller, brace up!" he growled. "What's the matter with you, anyway? Are you sick, or is it just an ordinary jag?"

Hawley sat up, and clapped both hands to his head, one to each temple. The waiter and the others whose attention had been attracted by his groans could see that his face was distorted as though with great pain.

"Oh, my poor head!" groaned the Camera Chap. "It feels as though it would split in two. For the love of Pete, friend, if there's any bromo selzer in the house, bring me some in a hurry."

"Sure, we keep it," said the man. "Just keep quiet a minute, young feller, and I'll fix you up a dose."

The Camera Chap was not surprised

to hear that the drug was procurable in Dutch Louie's place, for he had noticed a sign on the wall as he came in, announcing that it was on sale.

"Never mind about fixing it up," he said to the waiter. "Just bring me the bottle, a glass, and some water. I'll do the mixing myself."

Patrolman Horgan beckoned to the waiter as the latter was going out to fill the order.

"What's the matter with that guy over there, Harry?" he inquired.

"Oh, nothin' serious; just a headache."

"Is that all?" said the patrolman, in a disgusted tone. "From the way he was groaning just now, I thought he was dyin'. Come on, fellers; it's my meld."

When the waiter returned with a tray containing a small blue bottle, an empty glass, and a second glass filled with water, Hawley had an unlighted cigar between his teeth, but no one seemed to think it odd for a sick man to indulge in tobacco.

The Camera Chap was not in the habit of smoking cigars, but he always carried a couple in his vest pocket, and he had reasons of his own for transferring this one from his pocket to his mouth.

He took the bottle of bromo selzer, and emptied some of the white powder into the empty glass. Then he turned to the waiter.

"On second thought, I guess I'll mix it with vichy instead of plain water," he said; "I like it better that way."

The waiter shrugged his shoulders, and went out to get a siphon of vichy. As soon as he had gone, the Camera Chap became very busy, but unobtrusively so.

His left hand stole into the side pocket of his coat, and when it came out again the closed fist held a quantity of silvery powder. He poised this hand over the glass containing the bromo selzer, and the silvery powder fell on top of the white powder.

Then his right hand went into his coat pocket, and he stealthily drew out

a small pocket camera, which he held beneath the table.

When he had done these things, he gazed anxiously around the room, apprehensive that his actions might have been observed; but, to his great relief, he found that nobody was paying any attention to him.

Then, as he saw the waiter approaching with the siphon of vichy in his hand, Hawley struck a match, held the flame for a moment to the cigar in his mouth, then threw the match away.

Apparently he was careless, for the match, still alight, instead of falling to the floor, dropped into the glass of bromo selzer in front of him.

Instantly there was a blinding flash which momentarily illuminated the entire room, and a dull explosion. The siphon of selzer fell from the startled bartender's hand; several men gave vent to shouts of alarm; chairs and tables went crashing to the floor.

Patrolman Horgan jumped excitedly to his feet, and advanced toward the Camera Chap, who still sat at the table, surrounded by a haze of smoke which was slowly lifting toward the ceiling.

"Great guns! What was that?" the policeman demanded.

Hawley, his face a picture of bewilderment, pointed to the bartender. "That's what I'd like to know," he said indignantly. "What was it? Maybe this man can tell us. I asked for bromo selzer."

"It was marked bromo selzer on the bottle," the astonished waiter declared. "And I took it from the regular stock."

He turned to the Camera Chap with sudden suspicion. "But what did you throw that lighted match into it for, anyway, young feller? That was a queer thing to do."

"The match dropped in," Hawley replied. "Didn't you see that I was lighting my cigar? But this is the first time I've ever heard of bromo selzer being an explosive. Mighty queer it should go off like that. It's a mercy somebody wasn't killed."

"Oh, I guess the stuff ain't dangerous," remarked Patrolman Horgan, glancing around the room. "Nobody is

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even hurted, so there's nothing to get excited about. Let this be a lesson to you, young feller, to be more careful in future where you throw lighted matches."

"I certainly shall," the Camera Chap assured him meekly.

"I thought at first it was somebody takin' one of them flash-light pictures," said Patrolman Horgan. "It looked something like the kind of light them camera people use."

Hawley nodded. "Yes, it did look a little like that, didn't it?" he agreed. "I once saw a man take a flash-light picture, and, now that you speak of it, there was some resemblance."

A few minutes later Fred Carroll, pacing nervously up and down the sidewalk outside Dutch Louie's place, was astonished and much relieved to see the Camera Chap step out of the doorway, a smile on his face, and with no signs of having sustained bodily injuries.

"Thank goodness, you've come at last!" the proprietor of the *Bulletin* exclaimed. "I was just thinking of coming in for you. I heard the flash go off a few minutes ago, and things were so uncannily quiet afterward that I was beginning to be afraid they had killed you. What on earth happened?"

"I'll tell you all about it when we're in the car," chuckled Hawley, hurrying toward the corner where the automobile waited. "I don't think there's any danger now, but just the same we might as well get away from here as soon as possible. I don't believe in taking any unnecessary chances."

Parsons, who was seated at the wheel of the motor car, uttered an ejaculation of joy when he caught sight of the Camera Chap.

"You don't mean to say that you actually got the picture?" he exclaimed incredulously, as the latter climbed aboard.

Hawley grinned. "I got something," he said; "but I can't guarantee that the result will be good. I had to manipulate my camera with one hand, and I had to guess the focus. Under those conditions, the chances are against the

negative turning out all right. But it was the best I could do under the circumstances."

"How on earth did you do it?" Carroll inquired. "I can't imagine how you got off so easily. Do you mean to say that bunch didn't jump on you when you set off the flash?"

"Not at all," replied the Camera Chap, with a laugh. "They were very nice about it. There wasn't any rough-house at all, Fred. The last I saw of those fellows they were making a scientific experiment."

"A scientific experiment?" Carroll repeated, with a puzzled frown.

"Exactly," Hawley chuckled. "They were all gathered around the waiter like students in a chemistry class. And what do you suppose that waiter was doing, Fred?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

"He had several bottles of bromo selzer on the table before him, and he was uncorking each one, and dropping a lighted match into it to see if he couldn't make it go off like a flash-light powder."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A GOOD BAG.

WHITHER next?" the Camera Chap inquired, after he had confided to his two companions in the big touring car the details of what had happened inside Dutch Louie's café.

"I know a cop who goes to sleep every night in a lumber yard on his beat," Parsons announced.

"Lead us to him!" said Hawley eagerly. "That sounds like an easy one, eh, Fred?"

"I really think we've got enough already," Carroll replied anxiously. "After what you've just done, old man, I'm beginning to believe that you can get away with anything; but what's the use of running any more risk than is necessary? You've got two good snapshots, and that is quite enough to illustrate our story. Let's call it a night's work, Frank, and not tempt fate any more."

Hawley laughed at this suggestion.

"Nothing doing," he said. "I shan't consider that we've done our duty until we have at least a round half dozen snapshots of delinquent cops in our collection. No use being a piker, Fred. Two pictures on the front page of the *Bulletin* would make a measly showing. Besides, as I said before, I am by no means confident that Red Horgan's picture will turn out well. If it's too poor a negative for reproduction that would leave us with only one. Lead the way to the cop in the woodpile, Parsons. We certainly can't afford to pass him up. Is his beat far from here?"

"Yes; it's at the extreme northern end of the town," the police reporter replied.

"Don't you know any others we'll pass on the way there?" Hawley inquired. "We might as well take them in regular order. It's growing late, and we haven't any time to lose."

"Yes; there's Mike Harrington, whose beat is on Cedar Street," Parsons replied promptly. "He generally hangs out in Windmuller's Café when he's on night duty. His brother is employed there."

"Great stuff!" exclaimed the Camera Chap gleefully. "We'll pay our respects to Patrolman Harrington before we disturb the slumbers of our friend in the woodpile. Is he a pinochle player, too, Parsons?"

"I don't think so," the reporter answered, with a laugh. "You'll most likely catch him in the act of diminishing Windmuller's stock of goods. He'd have been 'broke' long ago for bad habits if it hadn't been for his pull. His father is a member of the city council and one of Mayor Henkle's most energetic political workers."

"Oldham certainly has *some* police department!" Hawley chuckled. "Please stop a short distance away from Windmuller's place, old man. It wouldn't do to drive right up to the door."

Carroll turned anxiously to the Camera Chap. "Do me a favor, Frank, and cut this one out," he pleaded. "There's no sense in taking such desperate chances. Windmuller's place is almost

as tough a joint as Dutch Louie's. Let Harrington alone, and pass on to some easier ones."

"I guess this is going to be easy enough," Hawley said confidently. "I intend to work that bromo-selzer trick over again. I don't see why it shouldn't succeed as well in Windmuller's place as in Dutch Louie's. In fact, I stand a much better chance of getting away with it this time, for I know beforehand just what I'm going to do, and can proceed with calm deliberation. Besides, practice makes perfect, you know."

Carroll shook his head deprecatingly; but he realized that argument was useless, and made no further attempt to dissuade his rash and impetuous friend.

Although the Camera Chap's adventures that night were eventful enough to be worth recording fully, limitations of space render it inexpedient to describe them all in detail here.

In the main, his experience inside Windmuller's place was similar to what had happened at Dutch Louie's. Once more he affected a bad headache, and called upon the waiter to bring him a dose of bromo selzer; and when the white powder was placed before him he made the same use of it as he had done in the former instance.

Greatly to the relief of his two companions, he emerged from the place unscathed, and laughingly assured them that he had succeeded in snapshotting Patrolman Harrington, and had reason to believe that the negative would be a fairly good one.

Compared with this exploit, the taking of a flash-light picture of the policeman who was slumbering in a lumber yard at the northern end of the town was not a difficult matter. Hawley succeeded in getting a first-class snapshot of this sleeping beauty, and although the bluecoat was awakened by the setting off of the flash-light powder, and, bellowing with rage, chased the Camera Chap through the piles of lumber, the latter managed to reach the automobile in time to make a safe get-away.

Although he now had four snapshots of delinquent policemen, and Carroll again pleaded that these were quite suffi-

cient for their purpose, the Camera Chap was firm in his determination not to give up the hunt until the *Bulletin's* collection consisted of at least six negatives.

Parsons had reached his limit. He was unable to suggest where any more members of the force whom he knew to be chronic shirkers might be found that night; but even this fact could not discourage Hawley. He declared confidently that if they rode around town a bit, and kept their eyes open, they were likely to pick up a couple of random snapshots to complete their night's work.

So, while the citizens of Oldham slept peacefully on in utter ignorance of this enterprising effort that was being made to reform conditions in their town—and incidentally to increase the circulation of the *Bulletin*—the big touring car traversed the highways and byways in search of more blue-coated victims of this relentless photographic crusade.

This search was not unproductive. As the Camera Chap and his friends rode through Main Street they suddenly encountered the most sensational and the most shameful spectacle of the night—a man in the uniform of a captain of police so merry that he could scarcely stand.

"That's Captain Alf Callman—the worst grafter and the biggest bully in the department, barring Chief Hodgins," exclaimed Parsons excitedly, as he brought the car to a stop. "Don't fail to get a good picture of him, Mr. Hawley. This is a rare piece of luck. If ever there was a rascal who deserved to be held up to public scorn and ridicule, it's that brute there."

"Yes, Frank," said Carroll, a scowl upon his face, "we want his picture, by all means. A few weeks ago he beat up a crippled boy unmercifully for selling *Bulletins* outside police headquarters."

The Camera Chap's face grew grim. "And you mean to say you let him get away with that?" he exclaimed, in astonishment.

"I did all that I could," replied the proprietor of the *Bulletin*. "I preferred

charges against him in court, and I've been roasting him on the front page of the paper every day since. But his pull enabled him to have the case thrown out of court, and the *Bulletin's* roasts don't seem to have worried him much. He's too thick-skinned to care what's said or printed about him.

"But, thick-skinned as he is," Carroll went on, "I'll bet he'll rave when he sees his picture on our front page, showing him in that condition. That'll hurt him more than anything else I can think of. So be sure to get a good snapshot of him, Frank; one that'll show the public just what a beast he is."

The taking of this flash-light picture was an easy matter, and there was no risk attached, for Captain Alf Callman was too happy to realize what was happening, and merely grinned fatuously when the flash went off. Nevertheless, Hawley had never in all his career as a camera man derived more satisfaction from the taking of a snapshot.

The last picture of the night was that of a policeman whom they discovered a few blocks farther on, fast asleep in a doorway. He was so dazed by the flash light that the Camera Chap had no difficulty in getting away.

Having added this trophy to his collection, Hawley turned to Carroll with a satisfied smile.

"Now I guess we can go home," he said. "I think we've done a fairly good night's work."

"The best ever!" chuckled the proprietor of the *Bulletin*. "If these pictures of yours turn out all right, I've got an idea that they'll stir this old town as it's never been stirred before."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ENEMY'S MOVE.

ALTHOUGH the *Bulletin* was not a profusely illustrated newspaper, it maintained a photo-engraving plant of its own. Carroll had installed this department when he first acquired possession of the paper, and had brought a man named Neilson from New York to take charge of it.

It had been Carroll's original inten-

tion to go in extensively for half-tone illustrations, but his failure to make a financial success of the publication had necessitated a cutting down of expenses wherever possible, and now pictures were seldom used in the pages of the *Bulletin*.

When Carroll informed Neilson that he would have to dispense with his services, candidly telling him the reason, the engraver proposed that he be permitted to take in outside job work in lieu of salary.

This arrangement had turned out satisfactorily for both parties concerned. Neilson had managed to get enough outside work to make it worth his while to stay, and Carroll was glad to have him on the job, because, although he had practically given up illustrations, he occasionally found it necessary to use a cut in the pages of the *Bulletin*. These occasions were so rare, however, that great was Neilson's surprise when, on the day following Hawley's night crusade against the Oldham police, Carroll appeared in the photo-engraving department with a half dozen negatives in his hand.

"Here, Ole," the proprietor of the *Bulletin* said, with a smile, "I want these enlarged, and a two-column cut made from each. Make just as good a job of them as you can, and remember that there're for to-morrow morning's issue."

"All for to-morrow morning's issue?" exclaimed the engraver incredulously.

"Sure thing! And all for the front page, too." Carroll chuckled. "It's going to be the bulliest front page the *Bulletin* has ever had, Ole. Just take a close look at those negatives, old man, and I guess you'll understand why."

Neilson stared hard at the small oblongs of film. "They ban look like policemen," he said.

"They are policemen!" declared Carroll, with another chuckle.

"What you ban going to do," the engraver inquired, "get out a special cop's edition?"

"A sort of special cop's edition," replied Carroll, with a grin. "But, say, Ole," he added anxiously, "what do you think of these negatives from a photo-

graphic standpoint? Will they make pretty good cuts, do you think?"

Neilson inspected each one critically. "I can't tell very well, of course, Mr. Carroll, until I see the prints," he replied, at length. "They ban flash lights, I see; but they look like pretty clear negatives yoost the same. Who took them?"

"A friend of mine from New York."

"Did he develop them, too?" the photo-engraver inquired. "They ban a pretty good job for an amateur."

"Yes, he developed them himself," Carroll answered. "We were so anxious to see what results we had that we came back here at three o'clock this morning, and Hawley—my friend from New York, I mean—used your dark room. But, say, Ole," he exclaimed anxiously, pointing to one of the negatives, "how about this one? It isn't quite as clear as the others. Do you think you'll be able to get a fairly good cut out of it?"

Neilson once more inspected the negative designated. It was a snapshot of a group of men playing a game of cards. One of the men wore a police uniform.

"I guess I ban able make it all right," he said. "It isn't very strong, but I guess I ban able to tough up the print a bit, and get a good result yoost the same."

Neilson held up another of the negatives. "This ban best one of the lot," he announced. "I make extra-good cut of him."

The picture in question was the snapshot of a man in a police captain's uniform. A scowl came to Carroll's face as he gazed upon it.

"I'm glad to hear that, Ole," he said grimly. "I want an extra-good cut of him. And, by the way, make that one three columns wide instead of two. I'm going to use it in the center of the page."

Then Carroll went into the editorial rooms, and, seating himself at his desk, began to write rapidly. For two hours he was occupied with this task, and what he wrote seemed to afford him much satisfaction, for at frequent inter-

vals the other occupants of the room heard him chuckle immoderately.

At length the long editorial was finished, and as he gathered the closely written pages together he exhaled a deep breath.

"Hawley said that the pictures would be the main feature of the *Bulletin's* exposé," he muttered; "and, of course, he was right. No doubt about that. But at the same time I rather think this editorial of mine is going to make quite a hit, too."

Hawley heartily indorsed this opinion when, a few minutes later, he dropped into the *Bulletin's* office, and Carroll showed him what he had written.

"It's great stuff!" the Camera Chap exclaimed enthusiastically. "Simply immense! I never had any idea that you could sling English as well as that, Fred."

Carroll flushed with pleasure at this warm praise. "I guess it's because I feel so strongly on the subject," he said simply. "A fellow can write so much better, you know, if he really feels what he writes."

"People who buy the *Bulletin* to-morrow morning are certainly going to get their money's worth," Hawley chuckled. "That editorial alone will be well worth the price of the paper. Your readers ought to paste it in their scrapbooks as a model of satire."

"Cut out the joshing, old man," protested Carroll. "If the readers of the *Bulletin* paste anything in their scrapbooks, it will be those wonderful snapshots of yours. They're going to create a big sensation, Frank."

The Camera Chap grinned. "Yes, the snapshots and your editorial combined certainly ought to stir things up. Don't forget that I've bet you a new hat that your circulation figures will be more than doubled to-morrow, Fred."

"I'll be quite satisfied to lose the hat," Carroll chuckled. "And just to show you that I don't expect to win the bet, let me tell you that I've already given orders to my pressroom to print twice the usual number of papers to-morrow."

"I guess you're quite safe in doing so," said the Camera Chap earnestly. "I

don't think you'll have many copies left on your hands. But how are the pictures getting along, Fred? Have they been made into cuts yet?"

"Neilson is working on them now," Carroll answered. "Come on up, and we'll see how he's progressing."

Neilson was working on an outside job—a half-tone cut for the letterhead of a local tailor—when they entered his laboratory. Observing this, Carroll was somewhat annoyed. He had asked Neilson to rush the cuts through, and, while he realized that it was the outside work which paid the expenses of the plant, he felt aggrieved that the tailor's half tone should be given first attention.

"How about that work I gave you?" he inquired sharply. "Started on it yet, Ole?"

The engraver looked at him in astonishment. "How can I start on it until you give me back them negatives?" he exclaimed. "I ban yoost coming down to ask you for them."

"Give you back the negatives!" the proprietor of the *Bulletin* repeated, with a puzzled frown. "What on earth are you talking about?"

"I ban talking about those police-men's negatives you want made into cuts for to-morrow's paper, of course," replied Neilson, a trifle nettled. "How can I make the cuts until I get the pictures?"

"But you have the pictures," Carroll protested. "Didn't I give them to you?"

"Sure you gave them to me once. But you ban take them back again, didn't you?" replied the man indignantly.

"I took them back?"

"Sure! At least, you sent the boy for them—which is yoost the same, of course."

"The boy?" Carroll was beginning to grow uneasy. "What boy?"

"That boy Miggsy, of course," Neilson replied, now thoroughly out of temper. "What kind of a yoke you ban try to play with me, Mr. Carroll? I ban serious feller, and don't like foolin'. Didn't you send that Miggsy up here half an hour ago to say would I please

let you have them negatives back right away?"

Carroll's face suddenly turned pale. "I certainly did not!" he exclaimed excitedly. "I sent no such message. Do you mean to say that Miggsy told you that I sent him?"

"He sure did. He said you needed the pictures to show to somebody, and must have them right away. I ban yust starting to work on them when he came up, but I gave them to him."

With an exclamation of alarm, Carroll hurried downstairs to the editorial rooms to interview the office boy. The youngster was not in sight.

"Seen anything of Miggsy?" he inquired anxiously of one of the reporters, whose desk was near the door.

"Not lately. The last time I saw him, Mr. Carroll, was half an hour ago, when he went out to do that errand for you."

"An errand for me?"

"Yes, that's what he said. He was going out just as I came in, and he seemed to be in a great hurry. I stopped him on the stairway, and jokingly asked him what all the rush was about. He begged me not to delay him, as you had just sent him out on an errand of great importance which had to be attended to immediately."

Carroll turned to Hawley, who had followed him downstairs. They exchanged glances of consternation.

"What do you make of it?" the proprietor of the *Bulletin* said hoarsely.

The Camera Chap smiled grimly. "It looks very much as if our young friend Miggsy had gone over to the enemy," he said.

"Yes, I'm afraid so," growled Carroll. "I can't imagine any other reason for his actions. The little ingrate! I've been pretty good to that kid. I never thought that he'd do me a trick of this sort."

He paced the floor nervously, his big fists clenched. "Great grief!" he muttered. "Can it really be possible that all our trouble has been for nothing—that we're not going to publish those wonderful snapshots, after all?"

Hawley patted his shoulder soothingly. It was in forlorn situations of this

sort that the Camera Chap's sunny disposition showed up to the best advantage.

"Cheer up, old scout!" he said to Carroll. "After all, there's that corking editorial of yours. Even without the pictures, it'll make quite a hit on to-morrow's front page."

"No, it won't," groaned Carroll. "That editorial won't go on to-morrow's front page. I might as well tear it up. Don't you see that I wouldn't dare publish it without the pictures? Those fellows would sue me for libel. They'd swear that my statements were false, and, without the photographic evidence, I couldn't prove that they weren't."

"I guess you're right there," said the Camera Chap thoughtfully. "It's too bad that that fine piece of writing should go to waste. Well, better luck next time, I— Where are you going, Fred?" For Carroll, muttering something under his breath, had stepped hastily toward the door.

"I'm going down to the pressroom to cancel that order for extra papers," the proprietor of the *Bulletin* explained gloomily.

CHAPTER XX.

GALE'S LUCK.

IT was quite by accident that young Mr. Gale, son of the proprietor of the *Chronicle*, learned of the *Bulletin's* contemplated exposé of police conditions in Oldham. He happened to be passing police headquarters just as Patrolman John Hicks, with whom he was acquainted, came out of that building. One glance at the policeman's scowling face was sufficient to inform Gale that something was wrong.

"What's the matter, John?" he inquired. "You look worried."

"I am worried, Mr. Gale," Patrolman Hicks replied. "Something happened to me last night while I was on duty that has got my goat. Walk up the street with me a little ways, and I'll tell you all about it."

Gale, scenting a possible story for the *Chronicle*, eagerly accepted this invitation.

"It was shortly before two this morning," Officer Hicks began. "I won't deny that I was taking a little nap. You see, Mr. Gale, night work don't agree with me at all. I think it's an outrage to ask a human being to do it."

"Certainly," Gale agreed heartily. "But what happened, John?"

"What happened was this, Mr. Gale: I was leaning against a lamp-post, sort of dozing off—as I say, I'm not going to deny it—when all of a sudden there comes a flash of light which hits me right in the eyes, and a sort of explosion. Well, of course, I opens my eyes quick, and there, right in front of me, is a big black automobile with three young fellers in it. Before I can ask any questions, that automobile moves off rapidly up the street, and disappears."

Gale was by no means a slow-witted young man. The probable origin of that flash of light immediately suggested itself to him. There arose in his mind also a suspicion of the identity of at least one of the three occupants of the big black automobile.

"Didn't one of those fellows have a camera in his hand, John?" he inquired excitedly.

"I didn't notice any camera at the time," replied the policeman, with a scowl; "but I guess they must have had one, all right. For, although I never suspected it—otherwise you can be sure I'd have chased that automobile—I have learned since that it was a flash-light picture of me the rascals was after."

"Of course it was," said Gale, with a laugh. "How long did it take you to get wise to that fact?"

"It was not until a few minutes ago that I found it out," the policeman admitted. "I thought at the time that that flash of light was caused by a fuse blowin' out in the car, or somethin' of that sort. You see, I don't know much about automobiles. And I might have gone on thinking that if it hadn't been for me meetin' Patrolman Tony Debbs at headquarters just now, and him tellin' me what happened to him last night."

"And what happened to Tony Debbs?" inquired Gale, greatly interested.

"He was taking a nap in a lumber yard on his beat, and first thing he knows he gets woke up by a flash of light in his eyes—the same kind of a flash that I got. Tony jumps up quick, and there was a young feller standin' there with a camera in his hand. Imagine the nerve of him!"

"Did Debbs catch him?" Gale inquired eagerly.

"No; he wasn't quite quick enough. The scamp got away in a big black touring car containing two other young men. From Tony's description of the automobile and the rascals inside, I'm pretty sure it was the same bunch that I was up against."

"Undoubtedly," Gale agreed. "But do you mean to say, John, that neither Debbs nor you recognized any of those fellows?"

"No; we didn't. You see, they wore goggles—the kind that automobilists wear, you know—and them things are pretty much of a disguise. Who do you suppose those rascals was, Mr. Gale? And what do you think they wanted our pictures for? I tell you, it's got me worried. And Tony's worried, too. He's got an idea that that rag of a *Bulletin* is behind it all. Do you think he's right?"

"I certainly do, John," Gale replied. "There isn't the slightest doubt in my mind that those pictures were taken for the *Bulletin*, and will be prominently displayed on the front page of that disreputable sheet to-morrow morning. And I shouldn't be surprised," he added sagaciously, "to find other pictures there, too. You can depend upon it,

John, that you and Debbs weren't the only cops those chaps caught napping last night. The fact that they hired an automobile indicates that they were out for a big killing."

"The scoundrels!" growled Officer Hicks. "Surely, Mr. Gale, we can do something to prevent them from printing our pictures in their newspaper? Ain't there any way of stopping them?"

A malicious glint came to Gale's eyes. "Probably there is, John," he said. "We must see what we can do. Perhaps it will be possible not only to prevent them from publishing the pictures, but to put them in jail besides for violating the new anticamera law."

As he finished speaking, his gaze lighted on a boy who was walking on the opposite side of the street.

"Seems to me I know that kid," said Gale. "He's employed in the *Bulletin* office. My father pointed him out to me on the street the other day as Carroll's office boy."

Then his face suddenly lighted up as an idea came to him.

"Excuse me for a few minutes, John," he said to the policeman. "I'm going to have a talk with our young friend across the way. I've got a sort of a hunch that he may be able to help us."

TO BE CONTINUED.

The next section of this serial will appear in the September TOP-NOTCH, out August 1st. Back numbers may be obtained of news dealers or the publishers.

A Delicate Matter

IT was not a bad horse to look at. It had a nice coat, a nice bushy tail, and a gentle manner. But it possessed one incurable drawback: It couldn't see. This its new owner discovered a day too late. He visited the horse dealer from whom he had bought the steed and demanded an explanation. "She's stone-blind!" he exclaimed.

"I know she is," replied the dealer.

"But look here, man: you never told me anything about it!" spluttered the irate purchaser.

"Well, you see, it was rather a delicate matter," answered the dealer, coughing slightly. "The man from whom I bought her didn't tell me himself, so I thought," he added, lowering his voice, "he didn't want it mentioned."

The Landsman *By Frank F. Evans*



THE mountains of Porto Rico reared hazy outlines off the starboard bow; new islands appeared like magic out of the blue Caribbean, and the ambition that had led Dean Winslow to the decks of the training ship *Dixie*, burned stronger as he looked for the first time on foreign soil. He grew up on the shores of Maryland, and his love of the sea was inborn.

The naval academy had been his goal, but lack of influence closed its gates to him. Finally he enlisted in the navy. It was a hard road to a commission, for it was first necessary for him to reach the grade of warrant officer, a process that would ordinarily take at least five years.

He was pondering at the moment on the odds against him when a voice broke in on his thoughts:

"So you are the man that shipped in the navy for a commission?"

Dean turned and recognized Jerry Mapes, coxswain of the first whaleboat, and petty officer in his own division.

"Yes, Mr. Mapes."

"Now, just drop that mister! I'm no officer," said Mapes, but Dean could see that his polite answer had pleased the old sailor.

"Well, if I can help you, just pass the word," continued the petty officer. "I've

been watching you, and you're as likely a man as came over the side with this draft. You remind me of the fellers who used to ship in the old days when we had a navy of wooden ships and iron men. Now it's wooden men and iron ships. In the first place, you can splice and knot, and you can box the compass and handle the lead. I found that out in division drill this morning, and I'm going to the division officer to see if you can't be rated as ordinary seaman."

Dean put out his hand impulsively, and thanked the coxswain, and the compact was struck between him and the grizzled old sailor, whose hair was white and skin brown as leather, but whose blue eyes twinkled with the spirit of youth.

"See that sail off there, two points off the port bow?" Jerry asked humorously a moment later. "Well, that's not a sail—it's a rock, and a fine landmark for St. Thomas. The Germans stirred up a big row three years ago by using it for big-gun practice."

As the *Dixie* drew near, what had seemed like a white sail proved to be Sail Rock, a white, two-peaked limestone island, noisy with the cries of sea fowl.

"We've passed the gate to the Caribbean now," remarked Jerry, "and we'll be picking up islands every hour. We

ought to make St. Lucia early in the morning. The English are making a Gibraltar of the West Indies out of it, and it's a mighty fine little island."

"Why do we stop there?" asked Dean, who knew only that the *Dixie* was bound for the South Atlantic station.

"Coal," was the laconic answer. "There's a big senator coming aboard, too. We take him down to Rio, the next stop, on some mission for the president. You may have heard of him—Senator Gordon?"

"Heard of him? Why, he's my senator from Maryland, and he wouldn't appoint me to Annapolis," was Dean's rueful answer.

The next morning the *Dixie* steamed into the bottle-shaped harbor of St. Lucia, framed in tropical greens and bungalowlike buildings under clumps of palm trees which lined the water front.

As they made their way to the coal docks, the water at their bows was thick with little black West Indians, who dived from crazy canoes after pennies, while big, white fishes jumped playfully over their heads. At the coal docks the work was done by negroes, men and women, who carried the coal aboard in baskets. They were amusing to watch, in their nondescript garments, breaking out every few minutes in noisy squabbles, the women smoking pipes and cigars as freely as the men.

In striking contrast were the soldiers of the West Indian regiment who came aboard—giant negroes wearing a uniform which consisted of a red fez, white blouse, white leggings and belt, and deep-blue Zouave breeches.

The last basket of coal was got on board and the shore boats had been emptied of pineapples and bananas, alligator pears, and mangoes, when a schooner-rigged yacht stood into the harbor.

"That's Senator Gordon's yacht," announced Jerry, after the yacht's string of signals had been answered by the signal boys on the *Dixie's* bridge. "He must be somewhat of a sailor himself."

A few minutes later the yacht's gig

made the landing, and a distinguished-looking man of about fifty came briskly up the shore gangway. A boy of about twelve—a jolly, freckled youngster—followed, and Dean heard Senator Gordon introduce him to the *Dixie's* captain as his son Charlie.

II.

THE presence of Senator Gordon on board—the man who had had it in his power to appoint him to the naval academy, but had refused to do it—had upon Dean Winslow a depressing effect, but drills followed fast on each other, and there are few idle hours on an American naval vessel.

The spare hours of the crew, Dean soon found, were spent in preparation for one of the great events in a sailor's life—the first crossing of the equator. The ship's speed even then was checked by the strong northern branch of the equatorial current which splits at Cape San Roque.

Jerry Mapes, who had crossed the line more times than any other man aboard, was to be "Father Neptune," in the traditional celebration of the event. A master-at-arms was making for him a beard of white, shining rope ends, and his royal robe was being fashioned by a corporal of marines from white sheeting, painted with startling nautical designs of mermaids and dolphins, tridents, and sea serpents. The ship's bugler was to be "Aphrodite." The other members of "the court" were busy as beavers on their costumes, and a portable gun carriage was being decorated to serve as the chariot in which Neptune and Aphrodite were to appear to welcome the novices to their domain.

The day before the great event was to be celebrated a sudden change came over the sea. From the southward a storm was racing, and Neptune was forgotten in the work of securing ship.

"It's a *pampero*, Dean," said Jerry, as they fell in for supper.

"What's a *pampero*?"

"That's what they call it south of the line; same as a typhoon in the Pacific, a monsoon in the East, and a hurricane up our way."

The wind was whistling and the waves were piling up in feathery crests. The *Dixie* was rolling heavily, and the roar of the increasing storm and the groaning and creaking of the ship as the seas broke on her impressed Dean with another side of the life he had chosen.

In spite of the racks, or "fiddles," running across the mess table to keep the dishes on, it was almost impossible to eat. Coffee, soup, and bread are the only things that can be successfully served aboard ship in a storm.

"I don't think I'd care to be out there in my whaleboat to-night," said Jerry, wagging his head wisely. "I'm short-handed, with my bow oar in the sick bay with a sprained ankle. I guess I won't need him, though."

As they reached the quarter-deck again a white-belted marine dashed by, and they saw him tug at the catch, then heave overboard the big automatic life buoy on the port side.

Its torches, filled with chemicals, flared up as they struck the water, and the sentry bellowed above the storm's tumult:

"Man overboard!"

They saw an officer race across the wet deck and drop the starboard buoy; then Jerry shouted in Dean's ear:

"Good-by! I'm going to the first whaleboat."

By this time the trill of the bosn's whistle and the blare of bugles calling away the two whaleboats had stirred the whole ship's crew to action. Dean's nerves tightened to the drama, and through his mind flashed the words of Jerry Mapes at supper. The first whaleboat was short-handed! A moment later he was swarming up the boat davits. Here indeed was a golden chance to shorten the long road to a commission, and he kept quiet as the rest of the crew, the boat having been lowered flush with the rail, stormed into their seats.

III.

AS they struck the water and shoved clear of the rolling ship, Dean gritted his teeth. He had stroked his school crew, but an eleven-foot ash oar in a gale was another story.

Like a swift sea bird the whaleboat dropped away from the *Dixie*, and Dean watched the ship turn and sweep the sea with her searchlight. Jerry was on his feet, braced at the steering oar, and the whaleboat was racing before the wind to the dim flare of the automatic buoys.

Now and then they showed on the boiling, wind-lashed sea, and then dropped into the darkness of its trough. Dean found himself wondering who the "man overboard" might be, and he chuckled to think of Jerry's surprise when he should learn who had filled the vacancy at bow oar. Stinging sheets of spray swept over the bow, drenching him from head to foot, and twice a rushing wave caught the whaleboat on the quarter, and tumbled about his feet.

His muscles lost their elasticity, but he put every ounce of his strength into his oar. Then he caught frantic shouts from the stern, and instinctively he shipped his oar and dug frantically under the thwarts for a boat hook. He faced forward, and as the boat slid down a twenty-foot wave he saw one of the buoys, and in its glow of light, hanging to the side ropes, the freckled face of yoting Charlie Gordon!

He poised the boat hook for an instant, like a vaulting pole, then thrust it straight into the circle of the buoy. The hook caught in one of the side ropes, and as the whaleboat slid alongside, the man astern of him caught the buoy.

The acrid fumes of the torches filled Dean's nostrils, but he dropped the boat hook, and slipped his right arm under the little chap's shoulders. They passed the youngster aft until Jerry Mapes lifted him into the roomy stern sheets, then headed back into the teeth of the gale toward the *Dixie*. She was steaming cautiously toward them, and her searchlight showed the other whaleboat making the two buoys secure.

The most difficult part of their task now faced the crews of the two whale-boats. The *Dixie*, her engines turning at full speed, had swung quarterwise to the rough seas, so as to allow the boats the protection of her lee in "hooking on." An ensign was in charge of the other boat, and Jerry, out of courtesy,

stood clear. A stern line was passed to him, and as it was carried forward Dean took a turn with it through the painter ring, and they rode the seas, grateful for the respite from pulling. The search-light played fitfully from one boat to the other, and Dean heard a hearty cheer come down wind when its light showed that the quest had been a successful one.

In the meantime, in spite of the seas that dashed it against the *Dixie's* side, the other whaleboat hooked on well, and was hoisted to the davits. So successful was the maneuver that, to save time, Jerry received orders by megaphone to come to the dangling boat falls on the weather side. The stern line was cast off, and they fought their way up, foot by foot, to their position amidships.

A sea painter, to steady their bow, coiled through the air, and Dean made it fast about his thwart with a clove hitch. The blocks of the boat falls slatted and jerked through the air, banging against the *Dixie's* hull, a menace to the boat crew and elusive of capture as a sea gull. A giant wave heaved the whaleboat upward like a chip, and Dean heard a splintering sound.

The steering oar had broken under Jerry's frantic efforts to keep his boat from filling. She was yawing frightfully, and the painter was hastily paid off on deck to ease the strain. The *Dixie* was barely making steerage way in the face of the gale, and one of her heaviest rolls dipped the muzzles of the five-inch guns on the berth deck into the seething water.

Shuddering like a giant whale, she came to an even keel, then careened heavily to port. The sea painter jammed on deck, and as Dean looked up at her slanting sides the realization came, like the sudden thrust of a knife, that the whaleboat had drifted directly under one of the guns. The following roll to starboard would bring the muzzle crashing down into the boat!

He heard a confusion of shouts. The rail of the *Dixie* was black with gesturing men, and he saw the faces of the men in the whaleboat go white, the lips some moving in dumb terror. Would they ever clear the jam on deck?

The quick resource that had been with him that night solved the problem. He whipped the heavy clasp knife out from the end of his white lanyard and hacked viciously at the wet, tautened sea painter. He cut through a strand, then another, but still it held. He felt, rather than saw, the muzzle of the gun beginning its downward arc.

With his teeth gritted, and his face tense with determination, he never flinched. Another stroke, and the painter parted with a crack like a rifle shot.

The crew was moved to desperate action. With oar blades and boat stretchers they lunged at the dripping sides of the ship. Wind and wave were with them now, and when the muzzle buried itself it missed the bow of the whaleboat by a foot.

Dean Winslow had but a hazy recollection of what followed. He remembered, as in the first moments of sleep, that the *Dixie* had swung to a point where her hull caught the brunt of the wind's velocity. In her lee it was comparatively easy to complete the work. Then he had a vague memory that on the deck of the *Dixie* they were shaking his hand excitedly, and that an officer was pounding him on the back and expressing his feelings in the long-drawn "Yea—a!" that comes from the navy side of the field in a football game. Then he yielded to the stupor that crept over him.

IV.

WHEN Dean awoke it was daylight again. Through a deadlight, for he was in the sick bay, he saw blue sea, and, not far off, an island shaped curiously like a sugar loaf.

"We'll be making Rio by noon," a hospital apprentice informed him, smiling.

"But the *pampero*—when did we get out of it?" inquired Dean, as he looked on the smooth sea.

"We just hit the tail of it, and lucky we were. You went through a tough enough time, all right, for a new man."

"I feel all right now," returned Dean. "Can I get out of here soon?"

"The surgeon said he would discharge you as soon as you woke up. You were pretty well played out, but that's all."

A marine orderly stepped briskly into the sick bay.

"Captain's compliments, and he'll see Winslow in his cabin," was his message.

Dean got into his uniform with his head whirling. Ten minutes later he entered the captain's cabin, uncovered, and stood at attention. Senator Gordon was writing at the captain's desk, but he swung about in his chair for a quick, appraising look, then turned back to his writing with an inscrutable smile playing about the corners of his mouth. A moment later he handed a slip of paper to the captain, who read it deliberately, and Dean saw a similar smile on his superior officer's face.

"Winslow," the captain began, "I have a message—an important one—which I want sent from Rio Janeiro by cable. You will go ashore in the gig when it leaves the ship, and file it with

the American minister. You have never been ashore in Rio Janeiro, I take it?"

"No, sir; St. Lucia was my first foreign port," replied Dean, puzzled at the entire proceeding.

"So Coxswain Mapes informed me last night, among other things," was the captain's comment, and he exchanged a meaning smile with Senator Gordon.

"Suppose you read the message to us, so that there will be no mistake about its meaning," suggested the senator.

Dean opened the folded slip, and read:

SECRETARY NAVY, Washington: Request you order Landsman Dean Winslow return to Washington first available transportation. Have appointed him naval academy, subject examination.

JOHN GORDON, U. S. S.

Dean almost dropped the paper in his astonishment and overwhelming joy, and for the moment he was speechless.

"Never mind saying anything about it," said the senator genially; "we have only to look at you to know how you feel about it."

Timber Talk

NO other industry, perhaps, furnishes so many original, peculiar, and interesting words and phrases as the lumber industry of Canada. Timber tracts are divided into "limits" or "berths." The growing timber on a tract is "stand," and the contents of a "stand" are measured in "feet"—a "foot" being a board, one foot square by one inch thick, and not a cubic foot. To make a survey of a stand of timber is to "cruise" it; the man who does the work is a "cruiser," and his report thereon is a "cruise." Trees are "falled," and the man who "falls" them is a "sawyer." A man who works in a lumber camp is known as a "lumberjack" or "shantyman." When going up to camp, he speaks of going "up to the shanties." Timber tracts that have suffered the ill effects of forest fires, are said to be "brooly," which is, of course, a corruption of the French word "brûlé," meaning burned.

Wasted Effort

SHRIEKS rang out from the foaming breakers, and the throng on the beach gazed with horror to where a beautiful bather was struggling for life. Suddenly a middle-aged man plunged into the water, and swam with swift, steady strokes toward her. "Courage!" he cried. "I will save you!"

"My hero!" gasped the fair one, as she clung to his neck. "How can I ever repay you?"

"Sorry, miss," remarked the gallant swimmer, treading water; "but you can't work the 'she-married-her-rescuer' fake on me. I'm a married man with a family, you know."

"Wretch!" hissed the maiden, breaking away from him. "With all those nice young men on the beach, you must rush in and spoil a seaside romance!" Then, using a side stroke, she glided swiftly away.



A Mission Porch Lantern

When this lantern is made to burn oil or candles, the bottom is fitted with a metal cup, is hinged with two or three small brass hinges, and provided with two brass catches which slip over pins driven in the body of the lantern. This

together without glue, using screws altogether. The fitting of the parts together requires some skill, and not a little patience.

The crane should be carefully joined, and firmly put together, for it is to bear the constant swing and pull of the lantern, as well as the strain of adjustment by the chain and pulley. In Fig. 2 is shown the method of putting this crane together. The brace, or diagonal piece, should have the lugs cut in the ends as shown, otherwise it will be difficult to keep the crane from working loose. The wheel shown in plan may be of metal, provided such a one can be obtained from an old pulley, or otherwise it can be turned from hard wood upon the wood lathe. It may be of any convenient size, as the kind and size of chain used may also be a matter governed wholly by what is obtainable in the neighborhood. This wheel works upon an iron pin, shown in drawing. The position of the screws upon the plan show the manner in which they are put in. Holes should be bored for them; care being taken to countersink the holes for the flat-headed screws, and in not having these holes so large that the screws will not hold firmly in the wood. The bales for the lantern are of 3-16-inch brass or iron wire, bent, as shown in Fig. 2. These bales hook into screw-eyes which fasten the top corners of the lantern.

In Fig. 3 the method of making the lantern is shown. The body is com-

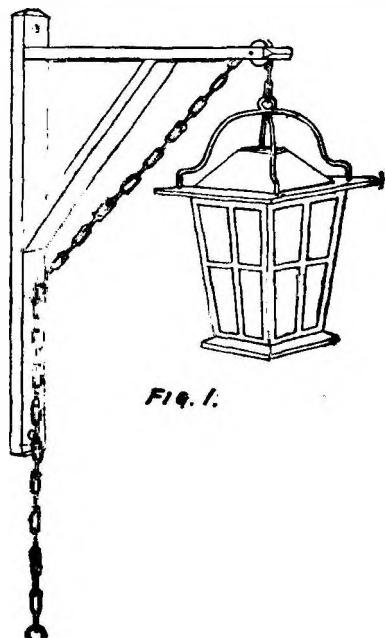


FIG. 1.

allows the bottom to drop down door-fashion to receive the lighting materials. For electricity, which also can be used, the bottom is screwed on permanently, and the electric bulb is dropped in from the top. The lantern can be put to-

posed of four 1-inch corner posts, upon which a latticework of 5-16-inch wood is placed, binding them together, and forming the body of the lantern. These 5-16-inch pieces are 1 inch wide where they cross in the center of the sides, and $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches at the top and bottom. These pieces are let into and screwed to the posts in the manner shown upon the plan. Where they cross in the center each piece is cut away as shown. The glass, which is represented by the heavy dark lines, is laid against this latticework, and two corner strips are placed over each piece, and tacked to the corner posts, as also shown in the plan view of the bottom.

The bottom is composed of a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch board, $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches square, upon which a $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch molding is screwed, leaving the center space $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches square. This molding is mortised at the corners, and, after being screwed in place, is beveled as shown. The top, also of $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch board, is provided with a $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch molding on its under surface, leaving a space

have already described the methods of attaching the bottom. The top is attached with four screw-eyes, which

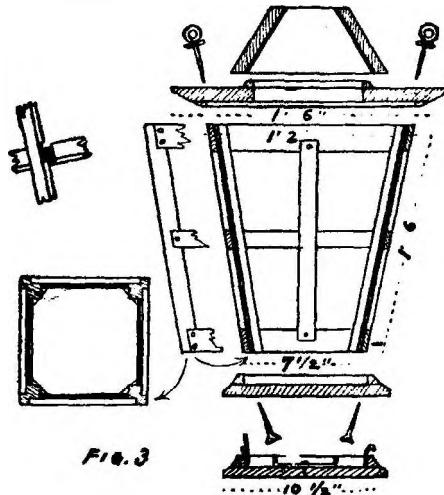


FIG. 3

screw into the tops of the four posts of the lantern body.

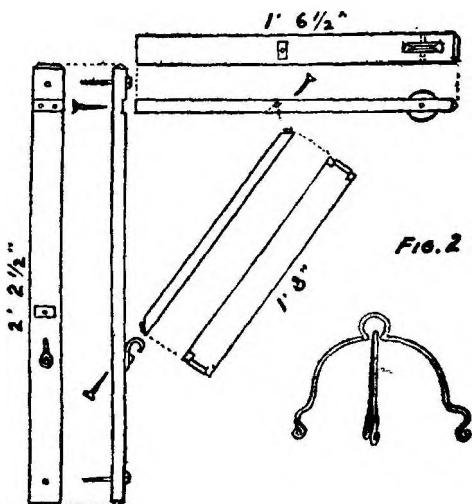
The stain to be used upon the lantern, as well as the color of the glass, is a matter of taste.



The Spinthariscope

Twelve thousand miles a second is undeniably "going some." Nothing in the way of velocity which we control, from express-rifle bullets to the electric current, can come within a pretty long distance of that sprint of old Mother Nature. It is needless to add that a body traveling at such a pace utterly escapes our vision, but by a simple and inexpensive process we can at least witness its effect. Briefly, the spinthariscope enables us to see what happens when radium rays going at twelve thousand miles a second hit a specially prepared target.

It is the first working radium machine invented, and is composed of a brass cylinder about the size and shape of a thread spool. At the top, *A*, in the illustration, is fitted a magnifying lens. At the side, *B*, is a small screw. As required, this screw elevates or depresses *C*, a needle, the point of which has



1 foot 2 inches square. This top is 1 foot 6 inches square, and has a square opening of 7 inches. Another $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch molding is put around this opening as shown. The cone is of $\frac{5}{8}$ wood, shaped as shown in the drawing; it is not fastened to the top, merely resting upon it. We

merely touched a tube formerly containing radium bromide. *D* is a phosphorescent screen coated with zinc sulphide, which serves the purpose of a target. When peering through the lens in a dark room at first the screen, *D*, appears to be luminous. But as the eye gains a proper focus, it will be seen that the screen or target is being subjected to a bombardment of flashing, scintillating particles such as no fortress ever received by human destructive invention.

As you gaze upon the phenomenon, it seems incredible that the amount of radium on the needle's point, so infinitesimal that no scientist could guess its weight or measurement, should possess the force to belch forth such a terrific bombardment for over two thousand five hundred years. Yet that is a scientific fact, subject only to the destruction of the

screen, which is demolished in about a year. But if replaced, the bombardment will continue, and burst forth again should some one insert a new screen two thousand years hence.

Any one who cares to possess a minute atom of radium—which has demonstrated that the transmutation of elements is no alchemist's dream, but a reality, and to-day impresses chemists as coming within range of holding the secret of life—can do so for a couple of dollars or thereabouts—the price of a spinthariscope.

You cannot, of course, see the bit of radium, but you can watch its power with no fear that it will give out until long after—well, a good many things may happen in two thousand five hundred years. What is more, no one has the least idea how it could be stopped or controlled. Discover that, and you have power at command to run the world for a million years at the touch of your little finger, for radium is

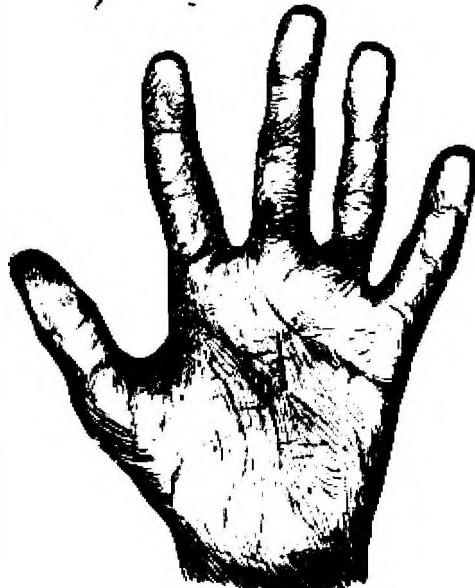
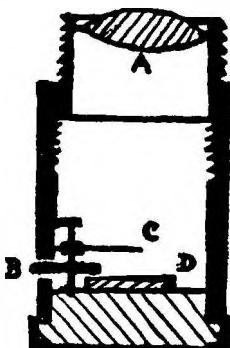
proved to be but the transmuted force of uranium with a power-holding record of seven and a half billion years, before which coal energy and all it signifies is a pitiful splutter. At least, such is the opinion of those who know the most—which is mighty little, they modestly allow—about radium. It is prophesied by them that perhaps from one to ten thousand years hence a future Edison will do with radium what the wizard of our time has performed with electricity, but to-day we stand wondering before it much as the stone-age man must have done when he discovered that by rubbing two dry sticks together he could kindle a flame.



Impressions of Hands

There is nothing more curious than a collection of imprints of the hands of one's friends. The pleasure in the quest of them is quite as great as in the collecting of stamps or coins, and without the expense of the latter.

The outfit necessary consists of a good grade of white writing paper, $8\frac{1}{2}$



by 11 inches, some paraffin, or a bottle of photo-negative varnish, and an ordinary kerosene lamp.

When it is desired to take an impression of a hand, bring forth the lamp, and remove the chimney. Turn up the wick so that it smokes like a locomotive; grasp the opposite corners of the paper, and move it rapidly over the smoking flame. Do not pass the paper too rapidly over the flame, or it will take a long time for enough carbon to be deposited on the surface to form a perfectly black coating; on the other hand, the movements must be rapid enough to keep the flame from burning the paper.

This done, lay the paper, with the blackened surface up, on a pad of half a dozen sheets of paper, and with thumb tacks, or pins, fasten to a smooth board.

The next step is the critical one. Press the hand firmly down upon the paper, being careful to have the fingers separated, and not to move them after they have come in contact with the

blackened surface. Press the ball of the hand down hard, and tap the fingers gently, to make sure that every portion of the palm has made contact with the paper.

Next, with a dull lead pencil trace the outline of the hand, being sure to hold the pencil perpendicular at all times. Now remove the hand carefully, when it will be found that every line and formation, however delicate, is clearly registered on the paper.

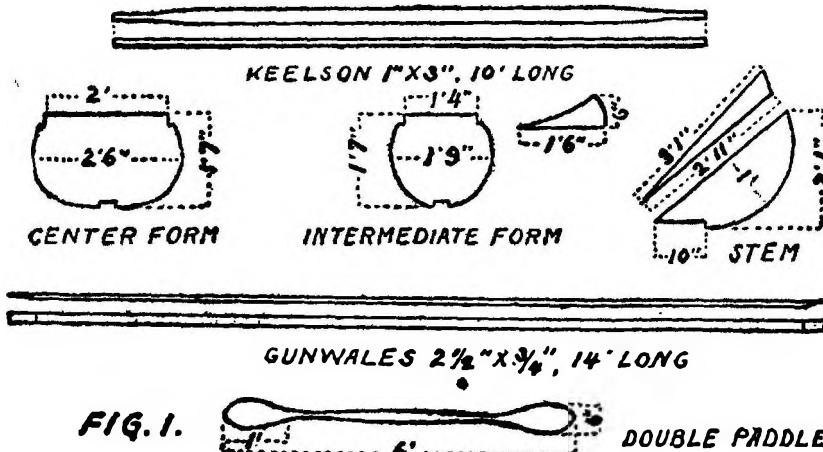
To fix the impression pour on one corner of the paper a teaspoonful of melted paraffin or of photo-negative varnish, and tilt the board to and fro so that the varnish will be evenly distributed over the impression. If this is done carefully it will not destroy the finest line, yet when dry it forms a hard, thin film that is as imperishable as the paper itself.



A Canvas Canoe

First make the important pieces shown in Fig. 1. The keelson, 1 inch by 3 inches, and 10 feet long, must be straight-grained and sound; the strength of the canoe depends upon this piece.

out a full-sized drawing of the stem pieces upon thick paper, just as they are shown in our small plan, then cut them from the paper as patterns for shaping the wooden parts. Also lay out another



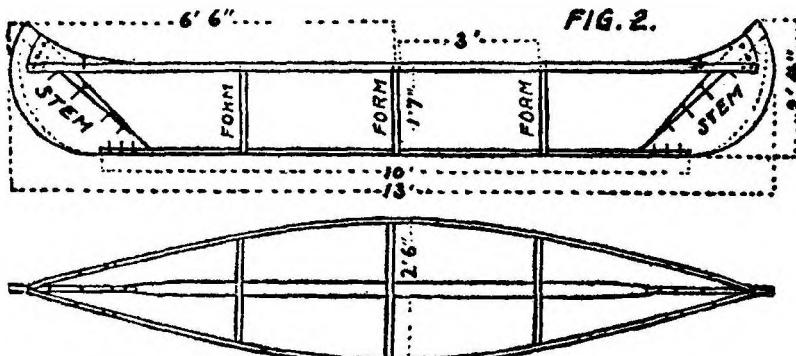
Spruce is a good wood to use for it. The gunwales, $\frac{3}{4}$ inch by $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and 14 feet long, may also be of spruce. They are soaked for twenty-four hours in water before being put in place. Lay

drawing of the forms. Cut and fold them to see that their two sides are alike. If they are not, trim them a trifle until they are, but not enough to reduce the measurements given.

The wood for the stems should be as dry and light as can be obtained, and 1 inch thick. It does not make much difference what the wood for the forms is, as they only remain in the canoe

and screwed to the stems, the gimlet being used as before.

The large, wedge-shaped pieces are next screwed upon the stems, and the smaller wedges, which are fastened to



while it is being shaped. They may be made of pieces put together with cleats.

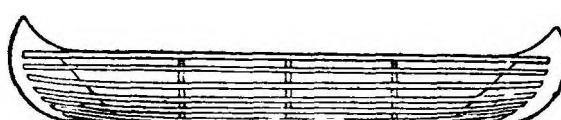
To make the skeleton frame shown in Fig. 2, first screw the ends of the keelson into the 1 by 10-inch jogs in the main piece of the stems. Brass screws 3 inches long are used, first boring gimlet holes so that the screws will not split the keelson or the stems. The center form is next nailed exactly in the center of the keelson, and the two intermediate ones nailed 3 feet on each side of it. All of the nails driven in the forms

both the gunwales and the stem, shaped with a drawknife to fit the contour of the flaring gunwales and screwed in their places. The work upon these small wedges should be carefully done, for they form braces, giving strength to the whole canoe.

Before the ribs and crossribs are put on they must be soaked twenty-four hours in water. Spruce is a good wood for both. The ribs are $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch by $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch, and 14 feet long. They are tapered at the ends to make them fit thinly against the stems, and shortened as required. They are screwed to the stems, as shown in Fig. 3, nails in the forms holding them an equal distance apart.

The crossribs, 1 inch by $3\frac{1}{16}$ inch, and of convenient lengths, are bent inside of the ribs and keelson and outside of the gunwales. Copper nails are driven from the inside through the ribs and crossribs where they touch, and clinched on the outside. The crossribs are 1 inch apart in the center of the canoe, gradually separated to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch apart at the ends. They are all screwed with brass screws to the gunwales.

The five braces shown in Fig. 5, and in detail in Fig. 3, must be made of



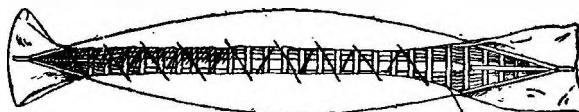
SIDE, SHOWING RIBS



SIDE, SHOWING RIBS AND CROSSRIBS

should have their heads left well out of the wood, so they may be easily withdrawn when the forms are finally removed. The keelson is now turned over, and the wet gunwales are bent on, as shown in Fig. 2. Their ends are tapered

sound, straight-grained wood, as the canoe should always be lifted by them. The tops are 1 by $\frac{3}{4}$ inch, and as long as the width of the canoe in the posi-

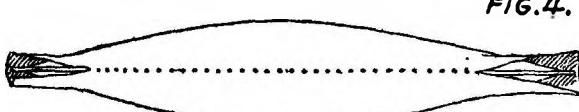


TOP, LACING. CANVAS ON FRAME

Slits are then cut 2 feet long in the ends on a line with the center of the keel. The canvas is then worked, one piece over the other, smoothly around the ends of the canoe, and tacked to the ends of the stems clear to the tops. The unnecessary canvas is cut away as the work advances, and paint applied freely to the lower canvas before tacking. One-inch copper bands are then screwed with round-headed brass screws around the cutwater, covering the cut parts of the canvas; paint is again applied under these bands. A bottom piece the same thickness, size,

and length of the keelson is slightly hollowed out to make it lay snug against the canvas; thick paint is applied to the lower side, then it is screwed over the keelson. The edges and ends of the bottom piece are then rounded and smoothed.

The canvas is next tacked to the gunwales, and half-round molding put on and bent, as shown in Fig. 5. Notches sawed halfway through the upper edge



BOTTOM, SHOWING CUT-OUT GORES

tion they occupy. When they are put on, the wedge pieces at the ends are first fitted; they are 1 inch thick, and nailed to the same 1-inch crossrib on opposite sides of the canoe; the short screws in this crossrib are then removed, and a longer screw sent through crossrib, gunwales, and into the wedges, thus fastening them securely to the sides. The top is then screwed both to the gunwales and the wedges. These

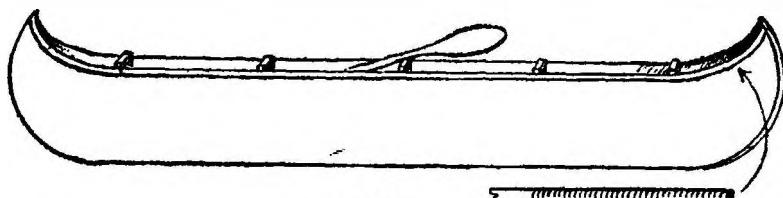


FIG. 5.

NOTCHES SAWED IN MOLD FOR BENDING UP THE ENDS.

braces are put on as the forms are taken out; each form is replaced with a crossrib and a brace.

The canvas covering is 13 feet 4 inches by 6 feet and is laced tightly from end to end, in the manner suggested in Fig. 4, the canoe being turned bottom upward, and placed upon supports high enough to protect the sharp ends of the stems. Every wrinkle must now be smoothed out, and the lacing tightened if necessary.

Copper tacks are driven in the keel, as shown, first applying a dab of wet paint to the place the tack is to occupy.

of the mold will allow it, when wet, to be bent in the way shown.

The canvas is first wet with water, and allowed to dry; then two coats of waterproof paint are applied, inside and out, and the canoe is completed.

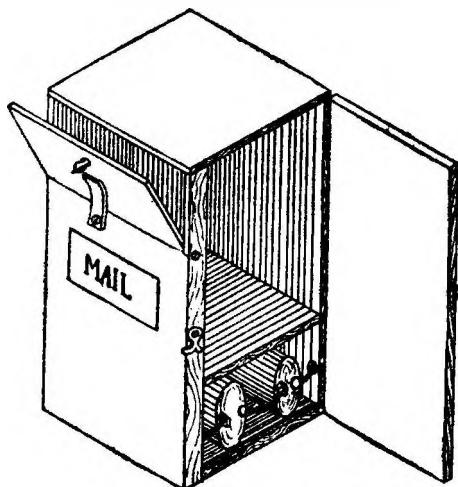


Mail Box With Electric Signal

A mail box so designed that when a letter is deposited therein a bell placed in the house will ring and give notification of the fact, is not difficult to make. The illustration shows a simple design, which may be elaborated to almost any

extent, the principle remaining the same, and the changes consisting mainly in making the box more ornamental.

The box shown is 1 foot square and



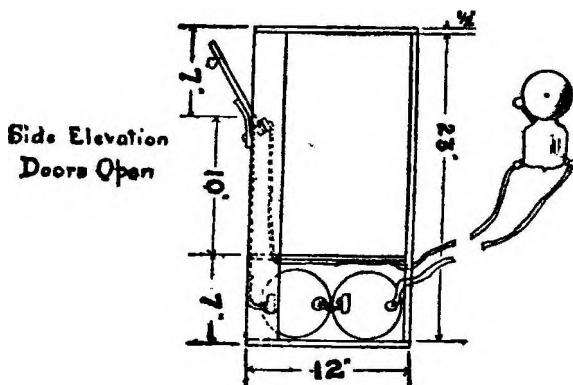
2 feet high, but may be made in any size desired, as long as sufficient space is provided for the reception of mail. It is not necessary to have the battery within the box. One battery will be enough if the bell is situated within a short distance; otherwise two cells connected in series will be necessary, the proper connections in this case being shown in the cut.

First cut out the top and bottom pieces, which are 12 inches square; these, as well as all of the other pieces, are cut from material 1/8 inch thick. The two sides which are left solid are each 23 inches long and 11 inches wide; the large door is 23 inches by 9 inches, and the smaller door 9 inches by 11 inches. The front of the box is 16 inches by 11 inches, and the side strip to which the large door locks, 23 inches by 2 inches. Having cut out these pieces, together with the shelf which covers the dry cells, and is 11 inches square, the box is ready for assembling.

The putting together presents no dif-

ficulties as far as the frame is concerned, and the large door is simply arranged to swing on hinges, and latch with a hasp and catch when closed. If preferred, it may be fitted with a lock, in which case mail cannot be removed from the box by any one, save the holder of the key, without ringing the alarm. The small door or letter slide, however, requires a special arrangement; it should be fitted into the opening so that 2 inches of the door projects down below the rim of the latter, and is hinged upon two screws passing, one on each side, through the side strip and into the door. The knob is then fastened on, to provide a handle by which the door may be pulled open.

For a reason which will appear later, however, it is necessary that this door remain closed except when mail is being put into the box. To accomplish this, procure a strip of spring brass 3 or 4 inches long and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide; drill through one end, and screw to the front of the box, as shown. If the door is set inside as described, this strip must also be screwed to the front from the inside.



It is to be noted that although this cover is shown open in both perspective and working drawings in order to show the construction, it would not remain in this position unless held.

We are now ready for the wiring, and to this end it is necessary to procure a sufficient quantity of bell wire, bell, battery, and two small pieces of thin sheet

brass. The latter, as well as the spring brass previously mentioned, may be obtained from any hardware dealer.

One wire runs directly from one terminal of the dry cell to a binding post on the bell; it is run in through a small hole in the back of the box. A short piece of wire is now run up inside of the box from the other terminal of the dry cell, and is fastened to the inner edge of the door by one of the pieces of brass and a screw; enough play should be allowed the wire so that the door will open and shut.

The second wire runs from the other binding post of the bell into the box under the partition, to the lower surface of which it is fastened with staples, and terminates under the other bit of brass fastened to the narrow side strip of the box. The plate should be so placed that

when the door is opened the brass comes into close contact with the other piece of brass upon the edge of the door. This done, your box is ready for the postman.

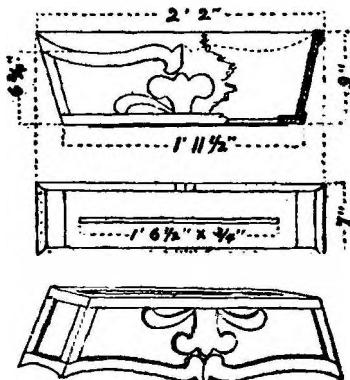
If properly made, the door is held closed by the spring, and when in this position the circuit is broken because the brass plate upon it is separated from the one fixed to the box. The moment that the slide is pulled down for the insertion of a letter, however, the two plates come into contact and the circuit is closed, ringing the bell; as soon as the handle is released, the spring closes the door, the circuit is broken, and the bell stops ringing.

This mail box is a handy and interesting little device. If the lumber is at hand, and only one cell used, the cost will be but about sixty cents.



How to Make a Window Garden

This window garden is 2 feet 2 inches long, $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches deep, and 7 inches wide. It is made of $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch pieces for the ends, and $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces for sides and bottom. Ornaments of $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch material are glued on at the ends and in front. The box is first made 9 inches



high, $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches wide, 2 feet $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches at the top, and 1 foot $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches at the bottom. Two pieces of $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch stuff, 4 inches wide, and 1 foot 1 inch long, are

tacked on top of each other in such a way that the nails used will not be in the track of the saw.

The scroll design—shown in half upon the plan—is then drawn upon the top piece, and all four sawed at one time with a jig saw. These pieces are then put in place, first applying wet paint under them.

The $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-wide pieces—the same width as the scroll at the ends and bottom—are then nailed on, with paint under them. The center ornament is made and put on in the same way. It will be found advisable to make this ornament in three pieces. The ends now have their ornaments put on. The top pieces are made 3 inches wide, to allow for cutting away in the center. The jig saw is now used to cut out the box part to match the scroll. A slit $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide and 1 foot $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches long is cut in the bottom, and the box lined with zinc or canvas, the former being soldered in the corners, the latter painted with three coats of paint. The whole box, of course, is painted.

Lefty o'the Blue Stockings—

By
Burt L. Standish



A SERIAL NOVEL)

CHAPTER I. THE UNLUCKY SEVENTH.

It was "Bush" Aldrich, of the Specters, who started the trouble by smashing out a two-base hit in the seventh. Bush was one of the latest acquisitions of that hard-hitting, snappy, scrappy, on-the-minute aggregation of big-league talent which had fought its way into the first division, and was giving last season's pennant winners, the Blue Stockings, a decidedly uncomfortable time holding their all too scanty lead.

Bush had already shown his ability to stay with fast company by getting two clean singles off Grist, the capable Blue Stocking twirler, but fast fielding had prevented either bingle from being effective. Now, however, with one out, and a man on first and third, with ability which would have done credit to the most finished veteran, he chose the psychological moment for causing a break in the hard-fought game.

Grist, sure that he had fathomed the youngster's weakness, tried his sharp outdrop, which had pulled the right fielder more than once before. This

time, however, Aldrich was ready for it. Poising a bat that was a bit longer than any he had used before, he stood close to the pan, and, as it curved beyond the rubber, he smote the ball a crack which brought half the spectators in the crowded stands to their feet with a concerted gasp of dismay.

As the sphere whistled out on a line, Larry Dalton, the Blue Stocking second baseman, flung up his hands in a ludicrous gesture of despair. Brock, the slim, speedy center fielder, had already turned his back on the home plate, and was flying toward the fence like a deer that had heard the whistling whine of a hunter's bullet. Unfortunately, the ball held up better than he expected, and, though he strained every nerve, he saw that there was little chance to make the catch.

With a last desperate spurt, he launched himself through the air like a catapult, both hands outstretched. The horsehide struck the ends of his fingers, and a despairing groan rose from the staring fans as it fell to the ground, and rolled to one side.

Brock snatched it up, and whipped it back into the diamond. Bugs Murray was just jogging over the plate, while

Logie, the Specter shortstop, had rounded second, and was flying toward third, urged on by staccato promptings from the coaching line. Aldrich was fairly tearing up the ground between first and second, and, as the sphere came whirling toward the waiting Dalton's eager hands, he flung himself headlong for the sack.

"Safe!" barked the umpire; and another groan arose from the stands, punctuated by protesting yells and bitter comment.

"They're gone!" shouted the Specter captain joyously. "They're up in the air! Hit her on the nose, Rowdy; you can do it!"

Kenyon, the visitor's clever second baseman, pranced, grinning, to the plate, seemingly inspired with new life. Grist caught the ball deftly, apparently undisturbed by the unfortunate break. As he paused to drive Logie back to third, however, he discovered that Carson, the new manager, had left the coaching line, and returned to the bench, from which he could get an accurate view of the entire field.

"He needn't worry," muttered the pitcher to himself, as he turned back to face the smiling batter. "We're still one run to the good, and this little flurry is going to have the kibosh put on it right here and now."

He had little fear of Kenyon's doing anything; so far Rowdy's hitting had been of a decidedly negligible quality. Perhaps it was this touch of unconscious carelessness which proved Pete Grist's undoing; perhaps it was due simply to the mysterious hitting streak which comes at the most unexpected times, and without apparent reason. At all events, after playing the waiting game to the last moment, Kenyon finally smashed a sizzler through the short field, scoring Logie, and himself reaching first by a great sprint.

Instantly the entire Specter visiting team began openly to rejoice:

"Up in a balloon!" "Got him going!" "Here's where we lock it up in a valise!" "Murder it, Ted, old man!" "Laminate it! Only one down, you know."

A low, concerted growl began to sound from the spectators who crowded the stands. Ready to shout themselves hoarse for a man pitching a winning game, their displeasure was even more swift, and quite without mercy. Here and there a shrill voice bawled admonition and biting criticism, which sounded above the barking chorus of the Blue Stocking infield.

"Get into him, Pete, old man!"

"Kill him, old boy! You can do it!"

"Warp 'em round his neck!"

A spot of red glowed dully in each tanned cheek as Grist dug his copper toe clip into the earth, and cuddled the ball under his chin. The sudden yelping from his teammates told the pitcher that they were not sure of him. They were yelling to brace him up, as if he had been a raw recruit instead of the bright particular star of the Blue Stocking pitching staff. Moreover his quick eye had not failed to notice the hasty appearance of two men from the sheltered players' bench, who loped off to the right, shedding sweaters as they went, and were swiftly engaged in warming up in front of the distant bleachers.

There are times when it takes very little to upset the equilibrium of the most seasoned twirler, and apparently this was one of them. For six innings Grist had pitched an almost errorless game, and there was every reason why he should do his best to finish it.

Dillon was laid up, Bill Orth had a bad shoulder, and both Reilly and Lumley were notoriously independable at a moment like this. There was Lefty Locke, to be sure, but the thought of this brilliant young southpaw who had, in a few short months, pushed his way upward until he rivaled Grist himself in the esteem of players and fans alike, made the older pitcher grit his teeth, and brought a dogged, determined expression to his face.

A moment later there was a crack, a yell of joy from the Specters, a groan from the despairing fans. In spite of his self-control, a smothered gasp of dismay burst from Grist's lips. Knowing Red Callahan's impetuosity, he had

tried to tempt him with a teasing out-drop. That he managed to connect with it was probably quite as much of a surprise to the sorrel-topped third baseman as to any one; but connect he did in beautiful style, smashing out a clean single which sent Aldrich across the rubber with the leading run.

Above the uproar of hoots and yells and catcalls from the stands, the new manager, half rising to signal Orth to go into the box, heard a sound he had rather been expecting for the past few minutes:

"Carson! One moment!"

It was the sharp, incisive voice of the Blue Stockings' owner, who sat with his daughter in one of the boxes just behind the bench, and there was an imperative note in it which brought the manager hurrying in that direction.

"Did you call me, Mr. Collier?" he asked, as he reached the box.

The tall, broad-shouldered, keen-faced man bent swiftly over the railing.

"I did," he replied, in a low tone. "Grist is going to pieces. Why don't you take him out?"

"I was just going to. I've had Orth warming up for three or four minutes."

Charles Collier frowned. "Orth!" he repeated. "But his shoulder's lame. This is no time to put in a cripple. Why don't you use your soulipaw, Locke?"

"He pitched a hard game yesterday and—"

"And won it," interrupted the owner swiftly.

"Quite so; but my idea was not to work him too hard," returned the manager bravely. "Of course, if you wish it—"

"I do. In my opinion he's the only man who can stop the break, and pull things together. By this time he's taken the measure of every one of these fellows. I don't think you need worry about three innings hurting his arm."

"Very well," said Carson. "I'll send him out there at once."

His expression was bland and pleasant, but the instant his back was turned he frowned. "Bunting in as soon as this, are you?" he muttered, striding to-

ward the bench. "Picked a favorite already, too. I s'pose Pete'll be sore as a crab now, but it can't be helped. Locke!"

There was a quick movement, and from the players' bench appeared a tall, lithe, cleanly built youngster of twenty-three or so, cap pushed back in a mass of heavy, dark-brown hair, and a look of inquiry in his keen, brown eyes.

"Want me?"

"Yes," said Carson sharply. "Get into the box as quick as you can. I meant to use Orth, but his shoulder's bad. You'll have to go in without warming up. And hold 'em, kid. We can't afford to lose this game, you know."

Lefty had already yanked off his sweater, and, as the manager finished, he flung it back to the bench, and caught the glove tossed out by the second catcher.

"I'll do my best," he returned, jerking his cap forward over his eyes.

An instant later he was loping across the diamond with a lithe, springy stride which told of splendid muscles under perfect control. And as he came into view of the grand stand, the hoots and yells lessened swiftly, merging with amazing abruptness into a shout of delight, accompanied by a thunderous stamping of feet.

"Oh, you Lefty!" shrieked the fans fondly. "Oh, you kiddo! Kill 'em! Eat 'em alive! Nothin' doin' now, Specters. Good night for yours!"

CHAPTER II.

STOPPING A RALLY.

By dint of playing for time, and putting over a couple of wide ones, Pete Grist had prevented Forbes, the Specter left fielder, from adding to the damage already done. Knowing that he would be taken out, he had the wit to seize every possible chance to delay the game, and thus run no risk of making any further errors.

He supposed, however, that his successor would be Orth, whom he had seen start to warm up a few minutes before. When Lefty appeared on the field amid the delighted roars of the

spectators, Grist's face turned a brick red, and for a second or two he looked as if he could have committed murder with the greatest possible enjoyment.

It is bad enough, in all conscience, for a pitcher to have to leave the box on account of bad control. But to be superseded by a youngster whose big-league experience is limited to a few months, yet who, in that time, has set the fans yelling for him as if he were a Mathewson, is sufficiently humiliating to stir the mildest man to wrath.

Mildness was not Pete Grist's long suit, nor was this the first time he had writhed in the grip of the green-eyed monster. As Locke reached him his face was like a thundercloud. He fairly flung the ball at the southpaw, and, without a word, turned on his heel and strode toward the bench.

Lefty stood for an instant staring after him, a touch of sympathy in his eyes, for he knew from experience precisely how the chap was feeling.

"Tough luck," he murmured, as he stepped swiftly into his box. "I don't blame him for being sore. I would myself."

Directly, however, he had thrust the disgruntled pitcher from his mind, and was bringing every bit of skill and cunning to bear on the task before him. As well as any man on the field, he knew the importance of winning the game to-day. It was one of those close seasons, with three teams fighting like bulldogs for first place and the championship.

At first the struggle had seemed to lie between the Blue Stockings and their old-time rivals, the Hornets. Well into July these two organizations had it nip and tuck, and the Blue Stockings had no sooner forged definitely ahead before they were menaced by the speedy Specters, who were playing this year as they had never played before. Back and forth they zigzagged, until at length the Blue Stockings, thanks in no small measure to the astonishing work of their young southpaw wonder, managed to accumulate a scanty lead, and hold it by the skin of their teeth.

If they could only manage to pull through this series in good shape, they

could afford to lose a game or two of the return series, and still enter on the last Western circuit with a slight advantage.

Lefty lined a few to Dirk Nelson, and, having found the plate, nodded to the batter, who stepped up to the rubber again. The Blue Stocking owner had been right in saying that Locke had taken the measure of the opposing team. He had—quite accurately; for the ability swiftly and accurately to size up a batter's strong and weak points, likes and dislikes, was something which had contributed as much as anything else to the southpaw's extraordinary success. He was quite sure he knew the sort of ball Forbes could not hit safely, and promptly, though without any appearance of haste, he proceeded to hand it up.

To the delight of the fans the batter missed. The second one he fouled, then let two go by, and finally missed again, having been fooled at last by a sudden change of pace and a slow drop when he expected speed. As he sauntered toward the bench in elaborate affectation of indifference, the spectators chortled gleefully, while a ripple of returning confidence swept over the Blue Stocking players.

"Never mind that!" cried Murray, the visitors' captain, from the coaching line. "Get off that hassock, Rowdy. On your toes! Now, Jim, let's have one of the old-timers mother used to make."

Donovan, the famous Specter twirler, was also a clever stickman. During the past season his hitting average had been little short of the three-hundred mark, and he was especially noted for helping along a streak of luck. He walked up to the plate, bat swinging nonchalantly, on his face that confident grin which few pitchers really enjoy, no matter how much they may pretend that they do.

Lefty eyed him coolly for an instant; then his eyes dropped to where Nelson crouched, giving a signal, and he shook his head. With some slight reluctance, the catcher responded by calling for another ball, and shifted his position the barest trifle. A second later the sphere

came whistling, with a slight inswerve, across the batter's shoulders, and Forbes' bat found nothing but empty air.

"Str-r-rike!" called the umpire.

"Look out for those, Jim," called Murray. "Make 'em be good!"

Donovan let the next one pass. It was a ball. Then followed a slow one, delivered with a swing and snap that fooled the batter into striking before the lingering, tantalizing horsehide was within reach.

Donovan frowned and regained his balance, annoyed slightly by the burst of raucous delight from the stands. When he faced the pitcher again the grin still curved his lips, but it had grown somewhat thin.

Silence settled over the field, and ten thousand straining eyes were turned anxiously on the quiet figure in the pitcher's box.

Lefty's hand drew back slowly, cuddling the ball for a second as he poised himself on one foot. Then, like a flash, his long left arm swung flail like through the air.

The ball was high—almost too high, it seemed at first. But suddenly it flashed downward past Donovan's shoulders, and across his breast. Too late the batter saw it drop, and tried weakly to hit. There was a swish, a plunk, and—

"Batter's out!" bawled the umpire.

CHAPTER III.

TIED IN THE EIGHTH.

PRETTY work," commented a blond young man on the reporters' bench, pushing back his rakish green hat. "There's one thing about Locke, you can always bank on his using his head. He certainly stopped that rally in great shape."

"Huh!" grunted the stout, bald man beside him. "I can't see anything very wonderful in that." He took off his glasses, and began to polish them. "It don't take any extraordinary amount of skill to outguess Forbes, and Donovan's never very dangerous to a pitcher who knows him."

"Oh, come now, Eckstein," protested the blond reporter. "Jim's no slouch at the bat, and you know it. What have you got against Locke, anyhow?"

Eckstein replaced his glasses, and yawned. "Nothing special, Dyer," he drawled. "I've been too long in the business, though, to lose my head over every infant phenom who butts into the big league. More than half of 'em can't keep up the pace they set themselves at first."

"I'll bet Locke does," Dyer said energetically. "He's got too much sense to use himself up the way some of the kids do. He plays the game for all there is in it, but he plays it with his head even more than with that corking portside hooker of his. Anyhow, he's the Blue Stockings' one best bet this season, take it from me, Eck. Only for him they'd be in the second division, with all this monkey business of new owner and new manager right in the middle of the season. That plays hob with a team even if the old manager's a bum, which Jack Kennedy wasn't, by a long shot. By the way, Eck, where's he gone?"

"Who? Kennedy?" grunted the stout man, his eyes fixed on the diamond. "Back to his farm, I reckon. He's got one somewhere in the Middle West. Pretty work, Jim. That's the way to pull 'em."

With a sudden flush at the realization that he had missed a trick, the young reporter hastily subsided, and turned his attention to the diamond. Whatever might be said of Jim Donovan's hitting ability, no fault could be found with his skill in the box. Encouraged by the success of the last inning, he evidently realized that it was up to him to see that the Specters kept their lead of one run, and the result was a brilliant exhibition of fast pitching.

Dirk Nelson, the Blue Stocking backstop, was beguiled into popping to second, and Jack Daly, unsurpassed as a third baseman, but an erratic stickman, fanned ignominiously. It looked as if Lefty would follow his example, but, with two and two called, he connected

with a tricky drop, and beat the ball to first by a hair. Taking a good lead, he went down on the second ball pitched to Spider Grant. It was effort wasted, however, for the Blue Stocking first baseman presently fouled out back of third, bringing the inning to an abrupt termination, amid much rejoicing on the part of the visitors, and low grumbling from the disappointed fans.

"Well," said Dyer defensively, "it was the tail end of the list, and, anyhow, Locke got a hit."

Eckstein chuckled. It amused the veteran newspaper man to note the violent fancies and prejudices of callow cub reporters.

"Still harping on the virtues of your miraculous southpaw?" he smiled. "I'll ask you just one question, Dyer: If he's such a triple-plated wonder, how did Jim Brennan, of the Hornets, come to release him outright? I never yet knew the hard-headed old scout to let any ten-thousand-dollar beauties slip away through his fingers."

"Still something to learn, Eck, strange as that may seem," drawled a voice, before Dyer had time to answer. "Squeeze up a bit, and give a chap some room."

A leg was thrust over the back of the seat, followed swiftly by another, and, as Eckstein's eyes lighted upon the tanned and freckled face of the newcomer, his own expanded in a fat smile.

"Well, well, well!" he chuckled, thrusting out a plump hand. "Back to the treadmill, eh? Have a good vacation?"

"Fine!" returned Jack Stillman, settling down between the two. "How are you, Dyer? Spent ten days up in the woods about a thousand miles away from anywhere, and then I began to get worried for fear this understudy of mine wasn't sending the dope in right. How about it, kid? Old man have any kicks?"

"A few," grunted the cub reporter. "He'd kick if he had the Angel Gabriel writing up games."

"You bet he would!" laughed Stillman. "Swell lot Gabriel knows about baseball. Did I hear you running down my friend Locke?" he went on, turning

to Eckstein. "Oh, I know you didn't mean anything personal. It's just your pessimistic mind, that can't see anything good in a youngster. Well, let me tell you what Jim Brennan said the last time I saw him, which was about three weeks ago. 'Jack,' he said—it was after that last game of the series with the Blue Stockings when the Hornets got the pants licked off 'em—'Jack,' he said, 'don't send this to your paper, but if ever there was a cussed ass manhandling a baseball team I'm it. I'd give any three of my best men to have Lefty Locke back again. If I hadn't been such a thick-headed dope as to let him go, the Hornets wouldn't be where they are to-day. No, sir! They'd be at the top of the heap, with that position just about nailed. That boy's a wonder, and it makes me sick at the stomach every time I think he might be on my pay roll to-day just as well as not.' That's going pretty strong for old sorrel-top, isn't it?"

"A trifle," Eckstein returned. "Well, why did he let him go? There must have been some mighty good reason."

"There was. A rotten sneak named Elgin—a Princeton man, by the way, and a disgrace to the college—had it in for Lefty, and turned every dirty trick he could think of to put Locke in bad with Brennan. He succeeded temporarily, but he got his at last. After Brennan released him Lefty went to the Blue Stockings, and of course the first time Jim ran up against them he realized how he'd been fooled. It all came out, and he fired Elgin. The sucker's back in the bush now, and it serves him good and right. By Jove! See that drop? Fooled him nicely, didn't it?"

If Donovan was on his mettle, the opposing southpaw was in equally fine trim. In the first of the eighth only four men faced him, in spite of the fact that the heavy hitters were coming up again.

"Don't seem to have lost any of his cunning," smiled Stillman, as the Blue Stockings romped in from the field like colts. "Things seem to have been didding while I was gone," he went on in a lower tone to Eckstein. "I knew Col-

lier was dickering for the team, but I thought he'd hold off till the end of the season. And what in thunder does he mean by canning a manager like Jack Kennedy?"

The stout man shrugged his shoulders. "Collier got the idea that the team wasn't pulling well. He seemed to think that was Kennedy's fault."

"Bah!" snapped Stillman. "What could Kennedy do with his hands tied? I know for a fact that when he wanted to get rid of a certain trouble maker who was keeping the boys riled up all the time, Beach, the old owner, put his foot down, and wouldn't let him. And what's MacLarson ever done, anyhow, that he should supersede an experienced man like Kennedy?"

"Not much," admitted Eckstein.

"Nor ever will. He's one of those promising characters who's always promising, and never making good. Collier has sure picked a lemon this time, and it wouldn't surprise me a lot if it cost him dear. Now, fellows, get busy, and hammer out a couple of runs. Only need one to tie, and two to win."

His remark was scarcely original. All over the great stands men were rooting for runs—begging, pleading, crying for them. As Donovan stepped into his box a perfect bedlam of hoots and catcalls arose, but he was too old a bird to be affected in the least by this sort of thing. To win the game it was only necessary to hold the Blue Stockings for this inning and the next, and the clever Specter twirler looked as if shutting out his opponents was, at this precise moment, merely a matter of time with him.

In baseball, as in a good many other things, it never pays to discount the future, which is just as well, for otherwise a good deal of thrill and excitement would be lost. The best of players are apt sometimes to make mistakes, and countless games have been won or lost by little slips, so small as to pass unnoticed by the bulk of spectators.

Rufe Hyland, well known as a "waiter," was the first man up. In spite of the frantic urgings of the excited fans to "Slug it out!" he delayed until he had three and two on him, and

finally hit the ball between first and second. He should have been an easy victim at first, but, for some unaccountable reason, Rowdy Kenyon juggled the ball, and then threw low, dragging Murray off the sack.

For a moment or two the entire infield resounded with sulphurous comment, and when Donovan faced the next batter his face was still flushed with irritation. He took his revenge by fanning Larry Dalton, but during that process Hyland managed to steal second, a proceeding which did not tend to increase the pitcher's good humor.

Nevertheless, he retained a perfect grip on his feelings, and exerted his skill so well that Herman Brock whiffed fruitlessly at three balls in succession.

It happened, however, that Joe Welsh, who followed, was one of the most dependable hitters in the Blue Stocking organization. His specialty was neither home runs nor three-baggers, but his skill at placing the ball had long been a source of comfort to his fellow players. As he toed the plate, Hyland edged off second as far as he dared, and when Joe connected with the third ball pitched Rufe shot down the line like a streak.

Due, no doubt, to Donovan's skill, this was one of the rare occasions that Welsh slipped up. He had intended to dump the pill into the diamond for a bunt, but he succeeded only in sending it spinning erratically just inside the third-base line.

Like a flash the Specter backstop raced out, snatched at it, fumbled horribly, and then, in an effort to get Hyland, threw four feet over the third baseman's head. By the time the left fielder, slow in backing up, had secured the sphere, and lined it back to the plate, Hyland had one hand on the rubber, and the delirious fans were shrieking themselves speechless.

CHAPTER IV. SOME PITCHING.

TALK about horseshoes!" grinned Stillman, when the first mad up-roar had begun to lessen. "That's the greatest ever. Looks as if the boys had

a mighty good chance of cinching the game now."

Manager Carson had emerged from the obscurity of the bench, and was on the coaching line again. Over by first base Captain Grant was capering about, a broad grin on his face.

"Going up, going up, going up!" he chanted to the air of a popular ditty. "Tied her nicely, but we won't stop there. You know what to do, kid. Beat it off that cushion, Joe!"

Kid Lewis hustled to the plate, and Welsh pranced away from the sack, ready to go down on the first slim chance. Unfortunately for the Blue Stockings, Donovan seemed unaffected by the general slump that had attacked the infield. Instead of going to pieces, he tightened up wonderfully, held Welsh at first, and fanned the batter with swiftness and dispatch.

As the Blue Stockings took the field with the opening of the ninth the fans were on tiptoe with excitement. If Lefty could hold the visitors down for this inning, there remained a chance for the home team to break the deadlock in the last half. But could he hold them?

Bush Aldrich was the first man up, and they remembered vividly what Bush had done to Pete Grist. Besides, the batters who followed were none of them slouches. As Locke walked briskly across the diamond the stands echoed with encouraging, beseeching shouts, then a sudden, tense silence fell upon the great inclosure.

Calm and steady, Lefty stepped into the box, paused for a second, his eyes on the batter, and then handed up a high one. Aldrich started to strike, but checked himself in time, and a ball was called. Then the southpaw tried an outcurve, but Bush still declined to bite.

"That's right, Bush," cried Murray. "Make him put 'em over. He's got to."

An elusive drop followed, which Aldrich barely missed. The next ball looked good, and he hit it. It was a line drive to right, which Rufe Hyland should have taken with ease, instead of miffing. Aldrich stretched himself, and reached the initial sack a second be-

fore the ball, quickly recovered and thrown by the discomfited fielder, spanked into Spider Grant's mitt.

There was a groan from the fans, a spasm of joy from the Specter coaches, and Rowdy Kenyon hurried to the plate. True to his reputation as a waiter, he prolonged the agony till the last moment, during which time Aldrich, upholding the reputation of his team for being "ghosts on the bases," got down to second. Then the visiting infielder hit a weak scratch between second and short, on which he reached first by great sprinting, and a wave of tense uneasiness swept over the field.

Lefty's eyes narrowed the least bit, and his jaw seemed to tighten. In a few minutes, through no fault of his, the situation had changed from easy security to uncertain hazard. With none out, and a man on third, every atom of judgment and skill he possessed was needed to save the day. Driving Aldrich back with a threatening motion, he turned his attention to Callahan, and the impetuous Specter Irishman, after fouling twice, failed to touch a speedy shoot that clipped a corner.

A gasp of relief came from the stands, but lapsed swiftly into tense silence; for this was an admirable opportunity to try the squeeze play, and evidently from the way John Forbes held his bat he meant to do his part.

The infield crept into the diamond, balancing on their toes, alert and ready. A moment later Lefty pitched, and almost as soon as the ball left his hand he was on the jump. Forbes shortened his bat, and chopped one down the foul line straight into the flying pitcher's glove on the first bound. Lefty Locke whirled and flashed it to third. But, for some reason, Aldrich had faltered, and now he dove back to the sack in time to save himself.

"Safe!" bawled the umpire.

The decision brought an avalanche of hoots and yells and taunting insults down upon his head, but he stuck to it; and when the fans settled back to take count their hearts sank within them. With bases full and only one out, the situation was not exactly hopeful.

Lefty made short work of Donovan. The visiting pitcher did not touch the ball once, and missed the last bender by more than a foot. As he strolled back to the bench, however, there were few sounds of rejoicing. The end of the batting list had been reached. The bases were still densely populated, and Dutch Schwartz, the mighty hitter whose average the year before had come close to equaling the amazing Wagner, was sauntering out with his war club.

Apparently he had no weaknesses with the stick, and his ability to out-guess pitchers had made him a terror throughout the big league. Cautious twirlers usually walked him when it was possible to do so at a dangerous time without forcing a run; but, even had he wished to do it, such a course was not open to Lefty now.

Whatever anxiety the southpaw might have been feeling, he faced the batter without a tremor. The first ball was a trifle close, and Schwartz let it pass without suffering a penalty. The next, delivered with a long side swing, came over at an odd angle, and the batter fouled it, thus evening up the score.

Lefty then tried an underhand rise that was productive of another foul. Then the big Specter center fielder refused to nibble at a cracker, which evened things once more.

"Two and two," muttered Stillman on the reporters' bench. "I wonder if he'll do it? By Jove! He's got to!"

With anxious, admiring eyes he watched his friend's cool, deliberate, yet not in the least dragging work. Lefty's perfect control enabled him to bend the ball over the rubber from any angle, and foul after foul resulted, with a nerve-racking regularity which brought the fans to the edge of their seats in tense, breathless suspense.

Three balls were called, but the struggle continued. With each swing of the southpaw's long arm, Schwartz swung his bat, and the ball caromed off in a foul. One could almost have heard a pin drop in the vast inclosure, for even the raucous voices of the coaches had been momentarily stilled.

The end came at last, and suddenly. When it seemed almost certain that Locke had exhausted every trick at his command, the pitcher, with his toe on one end of the slab, stepped straight out to one side with the other foot, and brought his arm over. The ball left his fingers at the moment when his hand seemed to be extended at full reach above his head. Apparently it was not a curve he threw, but from his extended fingers the sphere shot downward on a slant, to cross the outside corner of the plate.

Schwartz struck at it with a sharp, vicious snap—and missed!

CHAPTER V.

ONE FOR LEFTY.

THE roar which went up fairly shook the stands, and testified to a sudden slackening of the tension which had been gripping thousands of loyal fans for the past few minutes. Jack Stillman leaned back in his seat, and reached for his cigarette case.

"Pretty smooth," he said, proffering the case to his companions. "That's what I call pitching out of a hole, and Phil can sure do it to beat the ears."

"Phil?" queried the cub reporter quickly. "Oh, you mean Locke. I keep forgetting that isn't his real name."

"So do I, to tell the truth," returned Stillman, drawing in a lungful of smoke. "He took it on account of his father's prejudice against baseball when he started pitching in the bush last year. When I ran into him this spring in the Hornets' training camp it was hard as the mischief at first to get used to hearing him called anything but Hazelton. I got over that mighty quick, though, and now it's just the other way. Well," he went on, glancing at Eckstein, "if this doesn't stir the boys up enough to make them hammer out at least one run, they're not the crowd I take them for."

From the way things started in, it looked very much as if the newspaper man had gauged the Blue Stockings correctly. After having two strikes called, Dirk Nelson reached for one of Donovan's wide ones, and caught it on

the end of his bat for a clean single. The crowd roared, the coaches chattered, and Jack Daly pranced to the plate with every apparent intention of carrying on the good work.

Unfortunately for him, the Specter twirler was not quite ready for the stable. Coolly, and with the consummate skill for which he was famous, he lured Daly into swinging at a deceptive bender, fooled him with a wonderful inshoot, and then, when the batter, grown wary, refused to bite at the doubtful ones, Donovan wound himself up and sent over a curve which cut the heart of the plate.

With two and three called, Daly was determined to hit this one. He swung, with all his might, there was a sharp crack, and the ball sailed high in the air, a foul back of third base. Dillingham jerked off his mask, and started for it, but Red Callahan's spikes were already drumming the turf as he raced to get under it. Heedless of the shrill taunts and yells with which the fans sought to make him fumble, he fairly flew over the ground, both hands outstretched. An instant later there was a plunk, and Daly, flinging down his stick with a muttered exclamation of disgust, slouched crossly toward the bench.

"Never mind that!" cried Grant optimistically. "Only one down, boys. Now, Lefty, old man, get into him! We need a hit. Get off, Dirk! Get to going! Drift away from that sack, man! On your toes, now!"

During Daly's turn at bat Nelson had stolen second, beating the catcher's throw by a hair, and now he pranced off the hassock, taking every bit of lead he dared. Twice Kenyon darted behind him, compelling the runner to dive back to the cushion, but each time he was up and off again the instant the ball was returned to Donovan.

As Lefty stepped up to the plate, and stood swinging his bat gently back and forth, the shouts of the excited fans seemed faint and far away. In reality he heard them clearly, and was young enough to be stimulated a little by this evidence of faith in his ability, but he heeded them not at all. His mind was

occupied solely in trying to fathom what Donovan would be likely to pass up to him.

The first was an outcurve, and he let it pass. The second was high; evidently Donovan was trying to prevent a bunt. The third also seemed high at first, but Lefty's quick eyes saw it begin to drop as it neared the plate, and promptly he swung at it.

In spite of his swiftness, however, he was a fraction of a second too late. The ball hit his bat glancingly, caromed at right angles, and struck Locke's head with a force which sent him staggering backward, the stick slipping out of his relaxed fingers.

A sharp, hissing intake of concern swept over the crowded stands. As Lefty staggered back, catcher and umpire both leaped forward with outstretched arms; but their aid was unnecessary. The southpaw was conscious of a single brief instant of blackness, which passed like a lightning flash, leaving him a bit dizzy, but otherwise quite himself.

"I'm all right, Spider," he said quickly, as the Blue Stocking captain rushed up and slipped an arm about him. "It was only a glancing tap."

"Are you sure?" persisted Grant anxiously. "Hadn't you better lay off, and let me run some one else in to bat for you?"

Lefty laughed aloud, and took his stick from Dillingham. "Not on your life!" he retorted emphatically. "Think I'm going to quit *now*?"

As to prove that the accident amounted to nothing, he shook off the captain's detaining hand, and stepped quickly back to the rubber. The fans shouted their relief and their appreciation of Lefty's nerve in a burst of thunder. Donovan's face wore a slightly strained look. Though no stretching of the imagination could have laid a shred of blame upon his shoulders, the hitting of a batter is always likely to effect a pitcher's nerve. This may have had some effect on his next delivery, or may not. At all events, Locke swung at the ball in fine shape, there was a sharp, clean crack, and the horsehide

went humming into the outfield midway between Aldrich and Schwartz.

With a concerted yell, which eclipsed every other sound that had gone before, the great mass of men crowding the stands leaped to their feet, and followed with straining eyes the progress of the tiny sphere of white. Away it sped to the right of deep center, with both fielder-racing like mad to get under it.

Having a big lead to start with, Nelson was off like a streak of light for third. He had circled the base, and was being urged on down the home stretch before Schwartz snatched up the horse-hide, whirled, and sent it whizzing straight toward the plate, with that wonderful sweep of his powerful arm for which he was famous.

It was a perfect throw, and for a second or two a thousand hearts stood still, for fear it would be successful. Locke's brain and muscle had done its work well, however. An instant before the ball plunked into the catcher's waiting mitt Nelson flung himself bodily across the rubber in a cloud of dust, and the umpire shouted:

"Safe!"

CHAPTER VI.

A SUMMONS FROM THE MANAGER.

LEFTY, having rounded first, pulled himself up abruptly, and trotted toward the clubhouse, the whoops and yells of many thousand delirious baseball "fans" ringing in his ears. A wave of white-clad players surged after him, but Locke had almost reached the gate before the crest of it overtook him. An expression of happy contentment illuminated most of the faces, and "Laughing" Larry Dalton, the happy-go-lucky, brown-eyed second baseman, was grinning broadly as he flung one arm over the southpaw's shoulder.

"Pretty punk to-day," he chuckled. "Can't hit or put the ball over—or anything."

"Perfectly rotten, he is," chimed in Dirk Nelson, still breathing a bit unevenly from his rapid sprint to the plate. "Carson oughta tie the can on him for the rest of the season."

Lefty chaffed back, and the whole crowd, laughing and joshing like a lot of kids, pushed into the clubhouse. As they stripped off their soggy uniforms, and scrapped good-naturedly for the showers, they whistled and sang light-heartedly, living over between whiles the excitement of those last three innings.

There were one or two exceptions, as there always are. Some of the Blue Stocking old guard had viewed Locke's swift rise from the ranks with anything but favor. In their opinion it was up to the busher to scrape along in meek and lowly insignificance for a season or two before he leaped into such scintillating prominence in the galaxy of stars.

Lefty had upset every precedent, and at each added laurel won by the southpaw the old-timers shook their heads dubiously, declaring that such a pace could never last, that success would swell the youngster's head, making him impossible to get along with, and a dozen other pessimistic prophecies, none of which as yet showed signs of materializing.

With the bulk of players Lefty was on the best of terms. He found them a clean, decent crowd of young men, very much in love with their profession, somewhat addicted to draw poker and craps as a pastime, but temperate as a rule in most things, generous to a fault, and very likable. Three of them could write letters after their names as well as before, if they chose—which they did not. Some of the others were a bit rough on the surface, perhaps, but deep down underneath were made of the right stuff.

The long, grilling struggle, which lasted from the very opening of the season, had brought them all very close together, and when a crowd of men are fighting shoulder to shoulder day after day, having the same goal, and each of them giving the best that is in him to attain that end, they size up one another's good points and failings with a thoroughness possible under few other conditions.

The new southpaw stood the test well. In spite of his six generous feet

of lithe, well-muscled frame, he was still very much of a boy at heart, with a boy's adaptability for making friends and a boy's light-hearted, fun-loving nature.

This did not mean that he lacked the capacity for taking things seriously when the need arose, but he believed thoroughly in relaxing between whiles, and extracting all possible enjoyment out of life. This trait, helped on by a fine tenor voice, quick wit, the ability to "put it over" any member of the club with four-ounce gloves, and almost as great a skill in coaxing popular airs from the strings of a banjo, made him, within a month, the life of the bunch in Pullmans and hotels on the road, no less than at odd moments of relaxation in the clubhouse at home.

All this was, of course, of small importance compared with his performance on the diamond. After he had proved his efficiency there, however, by snatching victory from defeat in three or four close contests, the big majority of his teammates accepted him without question as one who would "do." The only exceptions were Pete Grist, whose fame as the most reliable member of the Blue Stocking pitching staff Lefty was rapidly dimming, and three or four old-timers who formed a little clique among themselves.

"Pipe the old crab!" commented Larry Dalton, as he and Lefty raced in from the showers, and began to get into their street clothes. "Some grouch there, believe me!"

Laughing Larry had stepped from a fresh-water college into professional baseball three years before, and, being a natural player, did not stay long with the minors. In Locke he found a kindred spirit, and the southpaw had not been more than two weeks with the Blue Stockings before the two were chumming it as if they had known each other since the bottle days of infancy.

At his friend's remark, Lefty glanced sideways at the scowling pitcher who was dragging on his clothes in taciturn silence, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Can't blame him much," he murmured. "If there's anything that makes

a fellow feelrottener than getting the hook in a game, it hasn't come my way yet."

"Especially if the man who's put in happens to be a guy that's made good in the same way before," Dalton grinned.

"Rot!" snorted Lefty, buttoning his shirt. "When Grist's right he can pitch the pants off any man in the club."

"Maybe." Larry's tone was decidedly skeptical. "I haven't noticed him putting anything much over you the last month or more. Trouble with him, he's worrying for fear he'll lose his reputation of being the one and only genuine old reliable; and when a guy starts in with that sort of ragtime, you can be pretty blamed sure— Well, colonel, what's on your gizzard?"

"Colonel" George Washington Jones, the Blue Stockings' negro rubber and general handy man, showed his ivories in a glistening smile.

"Mist' Carson says he done laik to see Mist' Locke in his office right smart, suh," he explained.

"All right, colonel," Lefty returned briefly from where he was struggling with a refractory collar button. "I'll be there in about three minutes."

"Some class there," Dalton murmured, as the darky hurried away. "When Jack wanted a man he'd stick his head in the door and make the fact known. Nothing like that for this bird, though. First thing you know he'll be having a bell boy in brass buttons, and one of those 'Private-no-admission-except-by-appointment' signs on the door."

From which it may be gathered that the new manager and his methods had not scored any great hit.

Lefty nodded agreement, and went on tying his scarf. From the first Carson had not appealed to him. The man knew baseball from the ground up — there was no questioning that fact. His ability at handling men, however, was much more doubtful.

Most professional ball players have to be managed with infinite tact and judgment, and, though he kept his

mouth shut on the subject, Lefty held the opinion that the qualities which had made Jack Kennedy so successful were lacking to a conspicuous degree in his successor. So far there had been no apparent let-down in the club personnel, but Locke had noticed a number of insignificant straws, some no greater than the remark of Laughing Larry, which pointed the direction of the wind pretty accurately.

"I'll wait for you," Dalton said, as Locke slipped into his coat and gave it a settling shake. "Cut it as short as you can, and don't forget we've got tickets for the theater to-night."

The southpaw nodded, picked up his hat, and, a moment later, left the dressing room. As he walked briskly toward the manager's office he was wondering with no little curiosity what was wanted. Carson could scarcely mean to put him into the box to-morrow, after having pitched him ten innings yesterday and three to-day; and aside from that Lefty could think of nothing which would require a special interview.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The next section of this serial will appear in the September TOP-NOTCH, out August 1st.

Freak Restaurants

THERE is in Berlin a certain café where rudeness is the keynote of the waiting staff. Every patron who enters the restaurant is hustled roughly into a seat, abruptly interrogated as to his wants, and finally has to submit to seeing his food thrust before him with as little ceremony as one might show to a stray dog.

This café is, of course, one of the many "freak" restaurants which abound on the Continent, and the entire scheme of rudeness is simply a device to attract customers in search of a new sensation, which undoubtedly they secure.

Tourists who "did" the sights of Paris a few years ago will probably remember the amazing "convict" café, where every waiter was garbed like a felon, wearing the hideous uniform of the French convict. Chains, handcuffs, and other grim reliques decorated the walls of the extraordinary restaurant, and the plates on which the food was served were models of prison dishes. The owner of this freak café no doubt amassed a considerable fortune.

Paris is undoubtedly the parent of weird cafés. Near the Boulevard Mont-

martre there stands the famous Cabaret de Néant. The entrance to the café is through a small opening in a black shutter, and once inside the visitor is appalled by the gloom of the room. Lighted by flickering tapers, its walls are hung with pictures representing skeletons in various forms of activity. Food and drinks are served on coffins, and the waiters are garbed like undertakers.

More cheerful are the restaurants of the Isle Robinson, a summer resort near Paris. These restaurants are suspended from the branches of huge trees, and amid the leaves and branches of magnificent oaks and beeches patrons eat their food and sip their summer drinks, music being provided by a special "band" of feathered musicians.

A "silent" café was inaugurated some years ago in Paris, probably to cater to votaries of the "rest" cure. Not a word was permitted to be spoken above a whisper, and even the orders to the staff had to be given in writing. The strange venture only enjoyed a brief life, and soon faded into still greater silence.

His Dreaded Possibility

TOM: "I hate to hear the toot of a motor horn."

Dick: "Why so?"

Tom: "Well, a man ran off with my wife in a motor car once, and every time I hear a toot I fear she's coming back."

Old Nick's Pocket ~ Barry Wolcott



(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I. SMOKING OUT.

OLD Saul Perrine was running, coatless and hatless, through the woods; his brier-torn clothing in tatters, and a look of wild terror on his kindly, foolish old face. For Sheriff Fanwood and a posse were close behind him. Saul knew of no reason why he should be thus pursued. As a matter of fact, there was no good reason, but if there had been Saul would have been the last to know what it was.

There were not many things that poor Saul's mind could compass. To him the sheriff had ever been the embodiment of an unhallowed power which manifested itself chiefly by putting people into the "jail house."

Saul had been on his way to Pod Willis' store, in front of which there was an unaccustomed gathering of armed men. He had seen Willis, standing by the door, reach behind it, and bring forth a rifle, while pointing a pudgy forefinger at him.

"That's the man!" Pod had yelled, in his squeaky voice. "Thar he comes! Right thar!"

Saul thereupon halted in his tracks, staring in stupid amazement.

"Stop!" cried Fanwood, the sheriff. Now, Saul already had stopped, but the command galvanized him into hysterical activity. He turned and fled.

Instantly two shots cracked. The first was from Fanwood's pistol, and, dead shot through the sheriff was, the bullet whined harmlessly toward a fluffy cloud. The other bullet, from the rifle of Pod Willis, was sent with deadly intent, but too late. With instinctive cunning, like that which a woodcock will show when pressed, Saul had placed a clump of brushwood between himself and his enemies, and the bullet missed. There was nothing to do then but follow.

No difficulty did the posse meet in keeping the trail. A frightened bull could hardly have left a plainer one, both in sounds and signs. It led over a series of thickly wooded hills that defined one side of the valley, down the farther side, and toward the edge of a wide, open glade, studded here and there with great trees, and ending at a frail footbridge that spanned the distance between the edge of a cliff and a little, rocky island, which seemed, when first

seen by the posse, to float in a lake of air that reached to the horizon.

"He's makin'—fer Devil's Pocket. We got him—now l!" puffed Fanwood.

No one answered him; no one else had the breath to spare. At that moment their quarry broke cover, and ran heavily across the glade.

"Halt!" the sheriff managed to bark.

Saul increased his gait in a last, despairing spurt, his arms working like those of a swimmer.

"Halt! Halt, or I fire!" called Fanwood again.

He did not fire, however. A gigantic oak, lightning blasted, and slowly dying, stood in Saul's path. He dodged behind it. A moment more, and the posse stood around it, panting. But Saul was nowhere to be seen. Fanwood pointed, with the toe of his boot, to a cleft near the roots.

"Ducked into a burrow, like a cotton-tail," said he, with something like compassion in his tone. Then he kicked on the hollow trunk.

"Hi, Saul!" he called. "Might as well come out now, an' save trouble. 'Twon't do ye no good to be hidin' in tha!"

There was no reply. Again and again Saul was summoned to surrender, by single voices and in chorus, and still without result.

"Consarn his thick head!" exclaimed Fanwood, half laughing at his own predicament. "There ain't no use in anybody goin' in tha after him; Saul could clip him on the head with a dornick before he could turn round, and would be just fool enough to do it, scared like he is now. It'd take a day to chop that tree down, and we ain't got no axes, at that. Boys, it looks to me like we'll have ter wait till he gets good an' ready to come out."

"Light a fire, tha in the holler," Pod Willis suggested.

Fanwood turned upon him angrily.

"That ain't been nothin' at all proved agin' Saul yet," said he. "An' even if there was, 'twouldn't be bad enough hardly to burn him alive."

"Aw, who wants to burn him alive?" squeaked Pod. "Smoke him out, that's all—jus' like a squirl."

After some debate, this suggestion was adopted. Indeed, it seemed the only thing that could be done. A little fire of rotten wood, carefully dampened with moss, was lighted in the hollow. Soon smoke began to pour from the lower crotch of the great tree, where a fallen branch had left a vent. Anxiously the posse watched, but watched in vain.

"Put more wood in," said Pod, after a little. "There ain't smoke enough tha to make him sneeze!"

"He ain't sneezin' none, so's you could notice," remarked another. "Maybe it's because he can't. For the love o' Mike, boys, look there!" And as he spoke he pointed to a tongue of flame that licked upward through the crotch.

The sheriff turned pale, and his mouth set. A young rancher pulled off his leather jacket, and sprang toward the tree, rolling the garment into a ball.

"Stop up that hole below; I'll 'tend to the upper one!" he called. Fanwood laid a hand on his shoulder, and restrained him as he was about to swarm up the trunk.

"No use, Monty," he said sadly. "It's too late—even if 'twould ha' done any good in the first place. Look!"

There was no occasion to tell them to look; every eye was fastened upon that tree. The decayed interior of its hollow trunk had caught, and it was blazing upward like a volcano. That any living thing which might be caught within would be doomed to a horrible death was plain to all. Each face turned as pale as the tan upon it would allow, save one. Podmore Willis grinned.

"Saves trouble, anyhow," he said triumphantly.

Fanwood turned upon him furiously.

"I wish your carcass was in tha, Pod Willis, 'stead o' that poor, half-loco ga—bo—Saul's," he cried, with deep sincerity.

"Well said!" cried a voice from behind the group, hitherto unheard. "Don't make a move toward your weapons, gentlemen. And stay where you are. I won't say what will happen if you don't, but you might guess, if you tried hard."

CHAPTER II.

CHANGE OF SENTIMENT.

AT the first word every one whirled to face the speaker. None of them ever had seen him before—a lithe young fellow, with face tanned as brown as any of those which looked upon it. But his speech proclaimed him from the East as plainly as theirs betrayed their Western origin.

He was lounging easily against a rock near the far end of the footbridge, and the short-barreled, automatic Remington that lay across his knees, ready for instant use, suggested strongly what would happen should any one reach for a weapon. But no one did.

Now that they were so near the bridge, its span could plainly be seen to stretch from the edge of a high cliff to what originally had been a part of that cliff, but which, by some convulsion of nature, had been split away to stand alone; a flat-topped pinnacle, springing from the green valley below.

"I don't know who you are, stranger, and I don't care," growled Fanwood, breaking the astonished pause which followed the young man's words. "And I'll allow that you've got the drop, all right enough. But you'll find it no jokin' matter to interfere with an officer in discharge of his duty."

"Like cooping men up in a hollow tree, and roasting them there?" asked the young man, with a smile that showed his white teeth.

Fanwood winced, and the young fellow hastened to go on.

"But I understand," he said; "and I may as well tell you that Saul isn't there, and hasn't been since the fire."

"Where is he, then?" asked Fanwood, staring about him. "And who may you be, anyhow?"

"My name's Tremaine—John Tremaine, junior, if you care to know. Saul is safe; never mind where, for the present. And I'm not interfering with an officer. Not that I'd care if I was, under the present circumstances, but I'm not. I'm out of your county—the line just clears the edge of the cliff. You're Sheriff Fanwood, aren't you?"

"I reckon I am," replied that official.

"Good! Then I'm going to tell you something. You can correct me if you find that I'm wrong. Saul Perrine is wanted on a warrant sworn out by Podmore Willis—a warrant for felonious assault."

"Robbery, too," supplemented Fanwood.

"I didn't know that," said Tremaine. "That's just a little frill that your friend Pod Willis stuck on to trim things up. The truth is— No, don't go, Mr. Willis. I may want you to offer those honorable scars of yours in evidence."

Pod had turned and was sliding unobtrusively away. Tremaine still smiled, but the gun's muzzle had been shifted ever so little; so that it bore full upon the storekeeper's ample body.

"This ain't no court," whined Pod, returning.

"It's enough of one to serve its purpose," returned Tremaine, and the posse did not dispute him. It was becoming interested.

"Go on; let's hear," said the young ranchman, impatiently voicing the desires of all except Pod.

So Tremaine went on:

"It isn't a long story, or a pretty one. About ten days ago Saul Perrine went to the store of this man Willis to buy supplies for Professor Drake. You all know the professor, boys, for what he is, a kindly, gentle old scholar, with more learning in his head than the bunch of us here could gather in a hundred years, and not enough sense where the ordinary, everyday things of this world are concerned to keep food in the mouths of Saul Perrine, that half-witted dependant of his, and his daughter. It wouldn't have been so hard to keep from starving, perhaps, if the daughter, Maisie, hadn't been as beautiful as she is. Her beauty made it worth while to Mr. Willis to make it hard. There was some reason, Willis, in your thinking that the poor girl would do almost anything rather than see her father starve—even go so far as to marry a thing like you. And for your satisfaction—the last bit of satisfaction you're likely to have for some time—I'll own that

provisions were mighty scarce, Willis, after you refused to let Saul have those supplies, until I happened into that little house down there in Devil's Pocket. I'm the old professor's nephew, and Maisie's cousin—the only relative they have in the world."

"Ain't I got a right to sell my own goods as I like?" demanded Pod, driven to defense by the looks he saw on the faces about him.

"We won't dispute it, anyhow," was the reply. "We won't even dispute your right to use a political pull in order to hurry the tax sale, so that you could ~~law~~ in that valley, which is the only bit of property Professor Drake had left in the world. But when you swore out a warrant for old Saul, who wasn't within five miles of—"

"Who robbed me, then? Who beat me up?" shrilled Pod, breaking in.

"Nobody robbed you; that's your lie. I licked you, and I did it good and plenty."

"You!" cried Fanwood, in astonishment.

"Yes, I. Listen, boys: I went to this man's place and called him downstairs. I took him and tied him, face down, over a barrel. Then I all but used up a good black-snake whip on him, and left him. I did this because, not content with his other persecutions of this young girl and her family, he deliberately circulated scandalous stories about her, trying to blacken her name, so that no man would want her. That's the reason he's wearing those scars of which—"

With a snarl, the same young ranchman who had started to climb the tree sprang toward Pod, his fist drawn back for a blow. Fanwood threw himself between them. Tremaine smiled indulgently.

"From your actions, I take it that you're Montgomery Marston, of whom I've heard Maisie speak so much," he observed. "Let that fellow alone, and come over here for a minute, won't you, Monty? I want to talk with you. You too, Fanwood, if you'll be so good."

Monty turned and walked across the bridge. After an instant of hesitation,

Fanwood followed him. For five minutes or more the three stood talking in tones so low that the words were inaudible to those who were on the far side of the chasm. Then the conversation ended in a burst of laughter, and the sheriff returned to the edge of the pinnacle's flat top.

"Boys," he said, a broad grin still overspreading his good-humored, determined face, "me an' Monty has a little somethin' we wanter talk over with Mr. Tremaine. There ain't no need o' you fellers waitin'. But treat Pod tender. I mean that. There's a use for him, though maybe you wouldn't think it. So long."

Following the other two, he walked around the rock against which Tremaine had been lounging, and out of sight.

CHAPTER III.

DEEPENING MYSTERY.

SAVE Pod Willis, no one cared to leave. There was a mystery about the whole affair that piqued their curiosity. They respected the sheriff, as was shown by the fact that when Pod started to leave them, he was allowed to do so unmolested, except for one mighty open-handed slap, which, falling upon those "honorable scars," caused him to wince and hasten his steps.

The posse sat and talked; not about the late happenings, however, which, by a sort of tacit consent, were barred. It was the older members of the posse who did most of the talking, while the youngsters listened to tales of the cliff-bound, horseshoe valley that lay below them, and how it got its name of "Devil's Pocket" in the old steamboat days, when the river, a glimpse of whose sunlit surface appeared in the distance, ran into the valley on one side of a sugar-loaf hill that stood between the places where the heel calks should be, and out on its other side.

They told how the *Prairie Queen*, one of the steamboats which plied on the river in those days, had been wrecked in the upper entrance, and how her carcass had caused the passage to silt up, so the river made a cut-off, which it had been

using ever since, and which left Devil's Pocket entirely outside its scheme of things. The *Prairie Queen* had been swallowed up, and was never found.

They told of the coming of Professor Drake, and of the enterprising land shark who had sold him the valley at several times its value—if, indeed, it had any value, which they doubted. They talked while the sun traveled far on its westward way, and until the shadows grew so long that one of the men voiced the uneasiness that beset them all.

"I wonder what's gone wrong with Fanwood an' Monty?" he said. "We ain't hearin' a peep outen 'em for the best end o' three hours, I reckon."

"Le's go'n see," suggested another, of a more venturesome disposition than his fellows.

"An' get half a dozen charges o' buckshot outer that there young Gatlin' what that Tremaine galoot's a-toin'. Not any!" declared the first speaker, with great decision.

"Rats!" exclaimed the venturesome one. "If this feller is ol' Jack Tremaine's boy, which seems likely, he won't fire on no unarmed man; not without warnin'. I'm a-goin'! Who's with me?"

Now, in the lifetime of John Tremaine, senior, his name had been a household word in that part of the country, when politics or finance of the more strenuous sort were matters of discussion; and he had held always the enviable reputation of being a square man.

Partly assured by the possibility that young Tremaine might be his son, which was the fact, and partly because the others were ashamed to remain behind, they followed their self-appointed leader across the swaying bridge.

No one challenged them. Except for themselves, there was no human being there on that little plateau. Its surface was rock strewn, as though the giant workman who had made it and its parent cliff, had shaken his apron, wherein many chips had gathered, after finishing his work. But still, the place was hardly more than a hundred feet in diameter, and it did not take long for that posse,

nearly forty strong, to search it. But of Tremaine and Fanwood no sign could they find.

They had swept the little plain, as though a seine had been drawn over it, and, having finished, they were about to scatter and do it again, when the voice of one of their number, raised in warning, rang out:

"Run, boys! Run, if ye wanter git back! Quick!"

Without stopping to question, they ran. The frail bridge swayed threateningly under the pounding of their feet, but it held, and passed the last man over. Hardly had he set foot on solid ground when the fire-eaten oak collapsed. A great branch came crashing down, and, falling across the bridge, carried it away into the abyss below. The last man shuddered.

"Fanwood an' Monty is likely to stay thar now," said he. "Anyhow, till we c'n rig up some sort o' contraption t' get 'em back over here."

"They ain't there," objected the first man who crossed.

"They ain't nowheres else," retorted the last. "An' if they ain't there, where are they?"

The question was unanswerable. Puzzled, and vainly trying to hit upon some theory which would coincide approximately with the facts as known, they waited for a little, then for a little more, and so on, hoping against hope that each minute might bring some token of the missing men. At last they departed, and returned sadly and wonderingly to the little town whence they had come.

CHAPTER IV.

A TRUMP CARD.

THEIR way led them by the door of Pod Willis' store. They were passing it in order to gain the more congenial atmosphere of the Blue Eagle Hotel, when suddenly each man stopped short, as though a voice which came from the store had been an invisible barrier against which he had run. For the voice was that of Fanwood.

"No use, Pod," the sheriff was saying laughingly. "You thought you was

mighty smart, buyin' up Devil's Pocket at th' tax sale, but a mineral claim makes that title o' yourn look like a last year's bird's nest; an' that's what yer up against."

"Mineral! In Devil's Pocket?" scoffed Pod shrilly. "Why, there ain't nothin' thar outside o' malpai rock—only river silt."

"Does this look like river silt?"

Thi-time it was Tremaine who spoke. The posse stampeded into the store, and arrived in time to see Saul Perrine smiling fatuously at Pod; to see Fanwood and Tremaine also smiling at Pod, as Tremaine, taking a canvas bag from his pocket, poured its contents out on a counter. Without stopping to question, all the posse crowded about that little pile of what looked like coarse, reddish-brown sand.

There wa- hardly one of those present who did not have a touch of the gold fever in his blood; hardly one who did not know more than a little of practical mining. Several were experts. It was one of the oldest of these who first spoke.

"Why, this ain't no natur'l ore," said he. "It's free-millin' concentrate; an' mighty high-grade concentrate at that, if I'm any judge."

"It came out of the mine as you see it," said Tremaine.

"It came outer th' *arrastre* that way, maybe," whined Pod, who himself was a miner of no mean skill.

"Have you seen any *arrastres* in Devil's Pocket?" asked Fanwood jeeringly. "I tell yuh, ol'-timer, I was thar when that little bag was filled."

"You gotter prove it, an' prove it good an' plenty!" insisted Pod. "D'you think I'm gonter sit down an' let yuh swindle me outer land what I paid for, by saltin' a hole in river silt, an' claimin' you have a mine thar? You gotter show me, I say! An' don't forget thar's a warrant what ain't served yit."

"The one fer Saul? That won't stick; not with such a witness as Mr. Tremaine in court. Y'u'd know that, if ye had th' sense ye was born with, Pod," said the sheriff carelessly.

"Then I c'n swear out one fer this

here man Tremaine, can't I?" asked Pod.

"Yes, Pod, you can. But you won't!"

"Why won't I?"

"Because, Pod, you'd ruther have them scars than t' have one—just one—round yer neck. We don't like men what lie about women, Pod. Now, you see, I'm sheriff. I couldn't have nothin' to do with no lynchin'. But there's others that ain't sheriffs, an' I'm strong under th' impression that the reason that you're allowed t' live is because seein' the ol' professor gettin' rich from this here mine will punish you worse than hangin' could. D'you get me?"

Pod comprehended. He did not lack quickness of perception, and a man would have been dull, indeed, not to have understood the growl of assent with which Fanwood's words were greeted by the others. Still, he ventured a question.

"Whar is this mine?" he demanded incredulously.

"It has a sort o' double entrance, Pod," answered Fanwood. "One mouth is right under the place where that oak was, an' that's where we came out. T'other is on that little mesa that th' bridge led to."

"I'm goin' t' have a look at th' inside o' that shaft," said Pod.

"Yes, you are—not l!" cried the sherriff.

Then, to the astonishment not only of Pod, but of all the posse, Fanwood threw back his head and laughed. Tremaine joined in, and Saul snickered foolishly in sympathy.

But all, and especially Pod, were fated to be puzzled still more in the days that followed.

Pod was a storekeeper only, it was said, because he could not bear the thought that had he not been an occasional wandering dollar might have escaped him. His real business was that of a speculator in mines, and at this he was most successful. When Fanwood mentioned the mental suffering which would beset the man upon learning that this mine, which he had missed only by the power of an overriding mineral claim, was enriching its possessor, the

sheriff had in no way exaggerated the facts.

Pod's store was left to the mercy of underlings, while its owner haunted the guarded mouth of the shaft in frantic but vain quest of information as to what lay below.

As to the nature of the shaft itself, he was sure; it was simply a blowhole in the volcanic rock, of which there were many in those cliffs, as in nearly all others of a similar nature. Another blowhole, he supposed, opened upon that pinnacle, its mouth concealed by some clump of brushwood or fragment of rock, which connected with the first.

Both of these blowholes, he fancied, had been discovered by Saul Perrine. For Saul, like many half-witted people, was eternally wandering about the country, investigating each stick, stone, or stump in an aimless sort of way.

Thus far Pod felt that his suppositions were substantially correct, and, as a matter of fact, they were absolutely so. But farther than this he could venture only wild guesses.

Despite the old proverb which says that "gold is where you find it," Pod could not imagine how ore of any sort ever came to be found in Devil's Pocket. It was against all rule and precedent. And another source of keen sorrow was the way that the mine was being worked. No improved machinery was to be seen — no machinery of any sort. Sacks of ore were dragged from the mouth of the pit, packed upon burros for transportation to the railway, and shipped. Pod's health actually began to fail under the strain.

CHAPTER VI.

GONE EAST.

ONE morning, for the hundredth time, Pod sought the shaft where Fanwood was seated, a sawed-off shotgun across his knees. The burro train had been gone for some time, and the sheriff was lonely. Pod hoped.

"I hear tell that th' perfessor has gone East," he ventured to remark.

"Yes," replied Fanwood, "he's went. Him an' Tremaine, an' Maisie, an' Saul.

An' Monty went, too. I reckon there'll be a weddin', maybe, before they git back."

"I reckon so," said Pod, much encouraged; for it had been long since Fanwood had spoken with him to this length. "Who's in charge of th' mine, now that Tremaine has gone?"

"Me," replied the sheriff tersely.

"Fact?" asked Pod deferentially.

The other did not answer in words, but, pulling a paper from his pocket, handed it over. Pod unfolded it and read, his eyes growing bright with hope as he did so.

"But this is a power of attorney!" he cried. "He wants you t' sell it for him."

"I know," said the sheriff. "That's what he wants. But I'm afraid to; that's a fact."

"Afraid?" echoed Pod, with a puzzled frown. "Afraid o' what?"

"Well," mused the sheriff, "the title's th' trouble. I ain't so blamed sure that th' perfessor can give one. I'm beginnin' t' fear that he ain't quite right, Pod."

"You mean——" cried Pod, pointing to his own forehead.

Fanwood nodded.

"But what's he done to make you think that?" cried the other.

"It ain't so much what he done," replied the sheriff judicially. "No, not so much what he done as what he wants me to do; about sellin' this here mine, I mean."

"Well, what does he want?"

"It's like this: The perfessor, he comes to me an' says that she's peterin' out. Now, I don't say he's wrong; I think very like he's got the right of it. But that ain't here nor there. He says it is, like I said, goin' to peter out, an' he don't want no one to get stuck in buyin' no mine o' his. So he won't let me take no more than he paid fer Devil's Pocket when he bought th' land; before he got stuck fer taxes, an' you bought it."

"That was eight thousand!" cried Pod eagerly.

"Eight thousand it was," agreed Fanwood. "Now, you know, Pod, an' I know, that when a man won't take no

more'n eight thousand, when he could git —"

"That's just because he's an honest man!" cried Pod, with virtuous indignation at the implied slur on the professor's sanity that was beautiful to see. "Ain't you got none o' th' finer feelin's, Fanwood?"

"Guess not," replied Fanwood, shaking his head.

"Who've you offered the mine to?"

"Nobody. I'm afraid to, like I said."

Pod entertained no fear. He would take the risk of the title being attacked on the ground of the old professor's insanity. He would give the eight thousand, cash down, and so secure the mineral claim, as he already held the title to the rest of Devil's Pocket. And Fanwood at last consented. His instruction forced him to, he said.

News of such a transfer travels fast. In some unexplained way most of the town had heard of it by the time the transaction was completed. And practically all of the town accompanied the owner and Fanwood as they returned to the shaft, and followed them into it.

It was not easy going. It was long and steep, and frequently so small that a man could hardly squeeze through. But the men, driven by curiosity so long restrained, did not mind that.

After they had traveled what seemed to be a mile or more, the natural tunnel ended suddenly in a chamber of consid-

erable size. With a curious smile upon his face, the sheriff held up his lantern and turned to the purchaser of the mine.

"Well, here she is, Pod," he said.

Not only Pod, but all, looked around them curiously. No one ever had seen a mine timbered as this one was. It even was floored, and the roof beams were upheld by knees, such as are used in shipbuilding.

A light of sudden comprehension came into the face of one of the older men. Taking the lantern, he held it so that its light fell upon a mass of broken and rusted machinery. Then he roared with laughter.

"It's th' wreck o' th' long-lost *Prairie Queen*!" he shouted. "The place is rightly named. Old Nick just took that ship an' put it in his pocket. Why, boys, she was loaded with concentrates from th' Nigger Ben Mine when she struck an' went down, an' got buried up in that thar silt. I'd plumb forgot it till now. Why, there must be nigh onto half a million—"

He stopped and looked about him. None of the concentrate was to be seen. All had been swept clean.

Smilingly Fanwood looked at Pod.

"There was half a million, Pod," he said softly. "Yes, there was! But there ain't no more! Old Saul Perrine and th' professor found it first, an' Mr. Tremaine came to help get it out. You see, it don't pay always to be so smart, Pod Willis!"

Difficult Shopping

HE walked slowly up to the counter in the great emporium, and stammered something about lace to the man behind the counter.

"Lace, sir?" said the salesman. "Certainly, sir. We have the largest stock in the city. Will Valenciennes lace do you? Jones! Valenciennes forward!"

"But I only—" began the shopper.

"Or, perhaps, some point lace? Our lace trade revolves very largely on the variety. Smith! Lace forward!"

"Well—er —"

"We have every variety, sir, don't you worry. We shall be able to suit you."

"I know, but —"

"Here is the Valenciennes. Not what you require? Then what lace would you like, sir?"

"I want a shoe lace, please!"



The Red Goblin

By J. Aubrey Tyson



(A COMPLETE NOVELETTE)

CHAPTER I.

AN UNKNOWN GUEST.

ROUSING himself with a start, as he stood at the door of the music room, George Hamilton glanced sharply at the face of his wife, who had spoken to him quietly. Following the direction of Mrs. Hamilton's glance, her husband's gaze rested on a tall, grave, clean-shaven man of about twenty-six, who, immaculately clad in evening dress, was looking thoughtfully toward a little group that surrounded a well-known prima donna whose voice soon was to be heard by the guests at Mrs. Hamilton's reception.

"Who is he, George?" Mrs. Hamilton repeated, as her husband continued to gaze at the stranger.

Frowning slightly, Hamilton shook his head.

"I don't know the man," he said. "If you did not invite him here, he probably is some friend of Estelle's."

"No," replied Mrs. Hamilton decisively; "Estelle has told me that she does not know him, and that she has no recollection of having met him before."

Hamilton shrugged his shoulders, and was about to turn away when his wife went on thoughtfully:

"He certainly has the appearance of a gentleman, but a gentleman does not visit a house at such a time as this without an invitation. Then, too, there is something strange in his conduct. He does not appear to know any one, though I have observed several persons looking at him curiously. Twice I met him face to face, but each time he was careful to avoid my glance. With his hands clasped behind him, he's been wandering through the halls, and only five minutes ago I saw him coming out of the library."

Again Hamilton shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, that is not strange," he said. "He probably went in there to have a smoke, and—"

"But if the man's a stranger—"

"I'll speak to him," Hamilton interrupted impatiently.

Still watching the object of her curiosity, Mrs. Hamilton moved slowly away, leaving her husband standing where she had met him.

A few moments later a man and woman approached the door of the music room. The man was tall, robust, and handsome, somewhat under middle age, and wore a black mustache and goatee. Hamilton nodded to him genially, and laid a hand on one of his arms.

"Count," he said confidentially, "your knowledge of Washington society is rather better than mine, so perhaps you can tell me the name of that chap over yonder?"

Count Probinsky glanced carelessly at the man his host had pointed out to him. He shook his head.

"No, no," he drawled. "I'm afraid I—"

He stopped suddenly, and Hamilton saw him give a little start as he regarded the stranger more searchingly; then the color left his face, and his eyes grew wider. In a low voice, he muttered something that escaped the ears of his host.

"Ah, you do know him, then?" said Hamilton, with a smile.

"But what the deuce is he doing here?" growled Probinsky, as if speaking to himself.

Mrs. Lorisford, who had accompanied Count Probinsky to the door, had turned aside to speak with a friend who was passing. She now approached Hamilton, and laid a hand on his arm.

"Who is that good-looking man over there, Mr. Hamilton?" she asked pleasantly.

"That, my dear Mrs. Lorisford, is the question I have just put to the count," said Hamilton.

Probinsky frowned, hesitated, then addressed the young woman.

"I am compelled to ask your indulgence for a few moments, Mrs. Lorisford," he said gravely. "It is necessary that I should have a word with Mr. Hamilton."

Smiling graciously, the young woman bowed, and moved away.

"Hamilton, what is that fellow doing here?" Probinsky demanded curtly, drawing his host to a position outside the door.

Hamilton shrugged his shoulders.

"Hang me if I know, count," he answered carelessly. "From what I have said, it should be clear to you that I do not even know his name."

"But he is your guest," Probinsky protested.

Hamilton shook his head.

"No," he replied. "So far as I have

been able to learn, he came here uninvited. He is unknown to both Mrs. Hamilton and my daughter."

The expression of gravity on the count's face grew deeper.

"Who is he?" Hamilton demanded abruptly.

"Stalkenberg."

"Indeed! And who is Stalkenberg? I am scarcely wiser than I was before."

Frowning again, Probinsky regarded his host incredulously.

"Come, Hamilton, don't tell me that," he grumbled. "You are too well informed concerning movements on the chessboard of diplomacy to be ignorant of this fellow's name, at least."

"I know nothing of the man or his name," Hamilton replied, looking at the count steadily.

Stepping to the door again, Probinsky directed another searching glance at the tall stranger.

"Yes, it is the same," he muttered. "He wore a pointed beard when he was in Europe last winter, and he now appears to be much younger than he was before. But it is Stalkenberg. Hamilton, there is something afoot here."

Hamilton's eyes narrowed. "Well, count, you still have me guessing," he said irritably.

"The fact is, I'm doing some myself," Probinsky replied abstractedly. He paused a moment, then went on: "The man, as I have said, is Stalkenberg. The name means nothing so far as his nationality is concerned. He may be French, English, even American—I don't know. There is no doubt, however, that he is a secret agent in the service of some powerful government, and that in his peculiar sphere of usefulness he is without a peer. So far as I can learn, he has made only two appearances. These were in Paris last winter. There he slapped the face of Baron Vonderhusser, who was supposed to be in possession of certain information that had to do with a secret treaty between the United States and England. Vonderhusser had to challenge, of course, and—"

Hamilton gave a little start. "Ah, I remember now!" he exclaimed. "They

fought in Belgium, and Vonderhusser was shot."

"True," assented the Russian. "And Vonderhusser's secretary immediately and mysteriously disappeared."

"And you say that Stalkenberg appeared again?" Hamilton asked.

"Yes. Certain documents disappeared from the office of the Japanese minister to France shortly after the minister had seen Stalkenberg passing through one of his halls. How the fellow had entered the place no one was able to explain, but there is little doubt that he was responsible for the loss."

"What was the nature of the documents?"

Probinsky hesitated. "They were supposed to be copies of important notes written by the United States secretary of state to the French minister of foreign affairs relative to the relations of the United States, France, and Russia in the Far East."

Hamilton, toying nervously with his watch fob, nodded abstractedly to one of his guests who had bowed to him.

"And that's all you know?" he queried, moodily addressing the Russian.

"That's all," answered Probinsky. "There is little doubt in my mind, however, that he is here for some purpose other than meeting your guests. Some sort of trouble is brewing—that is certain. Fortunately dueling is not in fashion over here. He has a way of compelling diplomats and secret agents to fight him, and he is as expert with the sword as with the pistol, they say."

Turning abruptly, Count Probinsky gave his arm to Mrs. Lorisford, and, nodding to Hamilton, entered the music room, from which the mysterious stranger had disappeared.

It was in the hall, about three minutes later, that Hamilton finally discovered the man he had been told was Stalkenberg. The stranger was about to re-enter the music room when Hamilton tapped him on the shoulder.

Turning deliberately, Stalkenberg looked at his host with an expression of grave interrogation, and Hamilton saw that the gray eyes of the stranger were as cold as steel.

CHAPTER II.

A DOUBTFUL SITUATION.

WE have not met, I think," said Hamilton, smiling faintly, as the stranger glanced thoughtfully toward the rapidly filling music room. "Your name is Stalkenberg, I believe?"

The gaze of the stranger fell, but in a moment he looked up again.

"You have been misinformed," he replied coldly. "I am Lyndhurst—of the army—Lieutenant Lyndhurst."

Hamilton nodded, but a strange pallor overspread his face as he slipped a hand under one of the arms of the man with whom he was speaking.

"Let us smoke—in the library," he said, with an effort at cheerfulness.

Without further speech, the two men slowly ascended the stairs, and entered the sumptuously furnished library on the second floor. Hamilton wheeled an easy-chair toward another that stood beside a table.

"Will you be seated, Mr.—Lyndhurst?" he asked.

Nodding curtly, Lyndhurst leaned against the table.

"There are cigars in a box beside you," Hamilton went on easily, as he sank into one of the chairs.

Without speaking, the uninvited guest took a silver case from one of his pockets, and drew out a cigarette. Hamilton lighted a cigar. He was the first to speak.

"The fact that I have spent several years abroad will account for my not being as familiar as I might be with the army list," he said suggestively. "Despite my ignorance concerning your identity, I made every reasonable effort to correct it. When I saw you here tonight, I naturally inferred that Mrs. Hamilton had the pleasure of your acquaintance, but—"

"I regret that I never have had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Hamilton," Lyndhurst interrupted quietly.

"You accompanied one of the invited guests, perhaps?"

"No, Mr. Hamilton, I came alone."

"May I ask, then, what your motive was in coming here?"

Lyndhurst, sitting on the table, was swinging one foot idly as he puffed easily at his cigarette. His gaze was resting on the floor.

For several moments Hamilton waited for an answer to his question; then, as this was not forthcoming, he crossed the room, and halted in front of a bookcase. From one of the shelves he took a cloth-bound volume, and quickly turned its pages. At length he turned to Lyndhurst.

"Your name does not appear in the army register, sir," he said sharply. "Well, why do you not speak? Who are you? Why are you here? If you do not answer me at once, sir, it will be my duty to detain you here while I summon the police."

"That is precisely the course I should advise you to pursue, Mr. Hamilton," the strange visitor answered carelessly.

An expression of wonder settled on Hamilton's face.

"You would advise me to send for the police?" he muttered incredulously.

"That is a question which you may easily decide for yourself after an inspection of your safe," answered Lyndhurst.

"My--my safe!" gasped Hamilton.

His glance darted in the direction of a large safe that stood in one corner of the library. In another moment the safe door was open, and its owner was peering inside. The face he turned to the still calm Lyndhurst was livid.

"What devil's work is this?" he demanded, in a shaking voice.

Lyndhurst shrugged his shoulders. "It is for the purpose of identifying that particular devil that I am here," he said.

"It's you--you!" cried Hamilton, in a strident voice. "You are the thief! The count was right. You are Stalkenberg, and--"

"Ah, it was Probinsky, then, who recognized me?" the stranger muttered.

Hamilton went on:

"You have appeared here under an alias, but the power that protected you in Europe will not avail you here."

Trembling violently, the angry man rushed toward an electric button on the

wall. Before he reached it, however, Lyndhurst, darting toward him, grasped his wrist.

"Stop!" the younger man commanded calmly. "Upon reflection, I should advise against summoning the police."

CHAPTER III.

A CHANGE OF FRONT.

FOR several seconds each looked into the eyes of the other; then, with an effort, Hamilton seemed to regain his self-control. His pale features assumed a haggard expression, but his eyes grew clear and cold.

"It is better that we should speak quietly," Lyndhurst said.

"Well, release me, then," Hamilton replied.

"Of course," said Lyndhurst. "And, with your permission, I will close the door."

Without so much as a glance over his shoulder to assure himself that he was not threatened with an attack from behind, Lyndhurst briskly crossed the room, and closed the big door that communicated with the hall. This done, he returned to the table on which he had been sitting a few minutes before.

"Yes, Hamilton, it is far better that we should speak quietly," he said. "Now, sit down."

There was something compelling in the manner in which the last words were uttered, and a faint tinge of color stole into Hamilton's cheeks. He hesitated; then, moving slowly, returned to his chair, and seated himself.

"You want to be sure that your confederate has sufficient time to get away, eh?" he muttered. "Well, an hour or two will make little difference to him--or me, I guess."

"The person who made off with the contents of that safe was no confederate of mine, Hamilton," Lyndhurst explained. "The safe had been rifled before I reached it."

"That was most unfortunate for you, wasn't it?"

"You are right. It was most unfortunate."

"You will admit that you came to"

this house for the purpose of opening that safe?" demanded Hamilton.

"Yes, I will admit all that," answered the man, after a pause.

Some of the light in Hamilton's eyes went out.

"And why?"

"Because, as a member of the military department of secret intelligence, I sought a certain paper which was stolen from the office of the secretary of war at eleven o'clock this morning."

For a moment the older man seemed to be on the verge of collapse.

"Indeed I!" he murmured, in a quavering voice. "And have you any idea what that document might be?"

"Yes. It was a formula for compounding a preparation which must be known only to certain officials of the United States government—a preparation which is called 'Explosive G'—the most powerful explosive known to science."

"What reason have you for supposing that document was in my safe?" demanded the host falteringly.

"I have no reason for *supposing* it," the other retorted curtly; "I have information on which to base positive knowledge of the fact."

"Ah!" Hamilton gasped. "You have a spy among my servants, then?"

"That suspicion is tantamount to a confession of guilt, I think," laughed Lyndhurst.

"You lie!" fairly shrieked Hamilton, as he staggered to his feet. "I know nothing of the existence of any such document, nor do you. My safe has been robbed—robbed of money, jewels, valuable securities. You and one or more of your confederates are the perpetrators of the crime. As you have said, it is a matter for the police, and I shall summon them."

With a shrug of his shoulders, Lyndhurst settled farther back on the table, and clasped one of his knees.

"Well, let us have the police, then," he said resignedly.

Again Hamilton started in the direction of the electric button. He had taken only a few steps, however, when

he stopped, and turned his haggard face toward his visitor.

Lyndhurst smiled grimly as he marked the hesitation of his host.

Hamilton eyed the man irresolutely; then, with a muttered exclamation, he strode to the door, and locked it, leaving the key in its place, however.

"Lyndhurst, have you lied to me, or have you spoken the truth?" he demanded hoarsely.

"I have told you nothing but the truth," the man replied calmly. "I have informed you that a valuable document was stolen from the office of the secretary of war this morning, and that it is known to have come into your possession. It is imperative that this document be returned to the proper authorities without delay. The task of recovering it has been assigned to me."

"What reason have you for asserting that the document came into my possession?" Hamilton asked.

"That is my affair," said Lyndhurst shortly. "Under the circumstances, we will have time to consider only what may have happened to the document since its arrival in your house."

"Before we proceed further, you will have to prove to me that it really was brought into this building," Hamilton retorted.

"That is quite unnecessary," said Lyndhurst irritably. "I shall only take time to say that when you entered this house, a little after five o'clock, the paper of which I have spoken was in a black wallet that you carried in an inside pocket of your coat. At fifteen minutes after five you entered this room, took out your wallet, and, after placing the paper in an envelope, put it in a secret drawer of your safe. For the next half hour you were occupied reading and writing letters at your desk in this room. You then went to your sleeping room, and dressed for dinner, which was served at ten minutes before seven. Owing to the fact that preparations for Mrs. Hamilton's reception tonight still were incomplete, you and Mrs. Hamilton dined hurriedly, both rising from the table at half past seven. You at once went to the library, where,

after lighting a cigar, you walked the floor for several minutes, pausing once in front of the safe in order to assure yourself that it was indeed locked. You will admit, I think, that all this happened in the manner in which I have related it."

Clearing his throat, Hamilton leaned forward. "At what time did you enter the house?" he asked, in a rasping voice.

"Three minutes after nine."

"And you came at once to the library?"

"No. You and three others were smoking here at the time. It was not until twenty minutes later that, finding the apartment unoccupied, I made bold to enter."

"You opened my safe, then?"

"Yes."

"You found it unlocked?"

"I did."

"You were prepared to open it in the event of finding it secured by the combination lock?"

"I was."

"Did you have the combination?"

"No."

Again Hamilton sank weakly back into his chair. "Ah! Safe breaking appears to be one of your specialties, I see," he sighed.

"I open safes only in the interests of justice and the national welfare," Lyndhurst replied calmly.

Hamilton passed a shaking hand over his eyes. At length he roused himself with a start.

"Well," he said impatiently, "you found the safe door unlocked, you say—did you make an examination of the interior?"

"Yes. I found that all the safe contained had been removed. I examined the secret drawer also, and found it empty."

With a groan, Hamilton hid his face in his hands.

"Come!" exclaimed Lyndhurst sharply. "Already I have told you enough to convince you that until I opened the door of that safe I had not been working in the dark. It is up to you now to—"

"You have lied—lied—lied!" cried

Hamilton shrilly. "You have had me watched by one of your confederates—one of the servants in my house. I did put an envelope in the secret drawer, but what it contained was not—"

He paused abruptly as Lyndhurst held up a warning hand. The knob of the locked door that communicated with the hall was moving. The face of Lyndhurst paled slightly as he listened breathlessly. The newcomer apparently was not to be denied admittance, for the knob and latch were rattled more vigorously. In a few moments the rattling ceased; then there fell on the door a series of sharp knocks.

Hurrying to Hamilton, Lyndhurst laid a hand on one of his arms.

"He must not find me here," he said quietly.

"There—there—through that door!" Hamilton directed, pointing to a large portiere at the farther end of the room.

Snatching aside the heavy curtain, Lyndhurst saw that it concealed a door. In another moment he had this open and passed into a small apartment, which apparently was a study. In partly closing the door, he left a space of about half an inch through which he might peer into the library and thus obtain a view of the person who was about to enter it.

As Lyndhurst watched, Hamilton, moving toward the door, disappeared from the range of his vision.

For several moments all was still; then the knocking was resumed, and now it was louder and more imperative than before.

"Why the deuce doesn't he open it?" Lyndhurst grumbled, after he had waited for nearly a minute.

As he continued to listen, it suddenly occurred to him that there was something sinister in the silence that had fallen upon Hamilton. At the risk of being seen by the person who was demanding admission, Lyndhurst opened wider the door behind which he had been standing, and thrust his head into the library. Scarcely had he done so when there fell from his lips a half-sighed exclamation of astonishment and horror.

Across a couch lay Hamilton, whose head and extended arms were moving spasmodically. A grayness had settled on his face, and on his white shirt front was a rapidly widening crimson stain. From the discolored bosom protruded something which glittered ominously.

It was the jeweled handle of a little dagger which Lyndhurst had seen only a few minutes before among the paper knives on the library table.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MESHES OF SUSPICION.

A FEW rapid, noiseless steps took Lyndhurst to Hamilton's side. But death moved more quickly. As the man bent over the master of the house, Hamilton's eyes were glazing, and his heart ceased to beat.

Breathing quickly, and with throbbing temples, Lyndhurst drew back. The knocking on the door had ceased. He listened for a repetition of the sounds, but the stillness was unbroken.

With the horror that overcame him now was a suddenly awakened feeling of apprehension. Scarcely more than a minute before George Hamilton had been a man in perfect health. Now, locked in a room with a stranger in the house, he lay with the blade of a dagger through his heart. The blood of Lyndhurst grew chill as he thus found himself so suddenly entangled in the meshes of circumstantial evidence. Before, he had been engaged on a case of the greatest international importance—a case which required the utmost secrecy, for it was one in which the peace of nations might be involved. Now, not only was he face to face with failure in his effort to recover secretly the document which meant the superiority of American arms in warfare, but he was confronted by a situation which threatened to brand him with the crime of murder.

In that fateful moment there came to Lyndhurst a realization of the fact that one of the requirements of the military department of secret intelligence was that its representatives must at all times be prepared to sacrifice personal

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interests and personal safety to the welfare of the service and the nation at large. If discovered in the course of an attempt to filch some state secret from a foreign power, it was essential that these official spies—some of whom were officers of high rank in the army and navy—should sacrifice life itself rather than reveal the fact that they were working under government direction, for in some cases such a revelation might result even in war.

For two minutes he waited; then, moving stealthily, he slowly made a circuit of the room. As he did this, carpet, pictures, chairs, and bookshelves were swept by his penetrating gaze. It was not until he came to the big fireplace that he halted. In this a gas log was burning brightly. The presence of andirons and a fire screen indicated that wood might sometimes give place to gas, and, stooping, he leaned into the fireplace, and glanced up the chimney. His face was pale and tense as he retreated, and stood upright again.

Lyndhurst had just glanced at a superbly wrought onyx clock on the chimneypiece when his attention was attracted by something which stood a few inches away from it. This object was of blood-red opaque glass, molded in the form of a goblin, the figure being about fourteen inches in height, and broad and squat in appearance. The left arm of the figure was behind it; the right was extended, and the hand seemed to be beckoning some one to approach. On the bearded, grinning face was an expression of impish mischief.

For a moment the man looked at the red goblin abstractedly; then, shaking his head moodily, he muttered:

"It's no use. With Hamilton dead, it will be possible to find a clew only by—"

The rest of the sentence died on his lips. While speaking, he had picked up the glass figure, and was regarding it idly. He now saw that the left hand of the goblin—the one that had been at the back of the image—was missing.

Moving toward the light, Lyndhurst examined the figure critically. He now

observed that with the hand had disappeared part of the left forearm, and that at the point of severance the glass had been slightly splintered. Glancing next at the base of the image, he saw that it was open.

Frowning slightly, Lyndhurst took a pencil from his pocket, and thrust it up through the figure. A tinge of color came into his cheeks as he returned the pencil to his pocket, and stepped again toward the chimney piece. On the mantel he found several grains and two splinters of crimson glass.

Having replaced the red goblin on the mantel, Lyndhurst glanced again toward the lifeless figure on the couch; then, after a brief period of hesitation, he walked softly to the door. Against this he pressed one of his ears, and listened. Stealing through the house came a succession of low, birdlike notes. The famous prima donna had begun to sing in the music room below.

Moving cautiously, Lyndhurst laid a hand on the key, and turned it noiselessly. Then he opened the door. As he peered out, he saw the hall was deserted.

He acted quickly now. In another moment he was in the hall, and the door was closed behind him. The key still was in his hand, and he locked the door from the outside. This done, he hurried along the hall. As he reached the head of the staircase, however, his luck deserted him, for he came face to face with Count Probinsky.

The count halted abruptly, stiffened slightly, then extended a hand.

"I think we have met before, Monsieur Stalkenberg?" he said gravely.

Regarding the speaker coldly, Lyndhurst shook his head.

"I think not," he replied. "The name you have mentioned is not mine, sir."

Smiling grimly, Probinsky bowed; then, with a little shrug, passed on.

Lyndhurst slowly descended the stairs. His pale, calm face effectively masked the tumult that was raging in his mind, for his sensations were those of a man walking to the place of his execution. Scarcely less calamitous than

the death of Hamilton was this meeting with Probinsky.

Upon reaching the first floor, Lyndhurst made his way to one of the doorways of the music room. The prima donna still was singing, and the throng of listening guests extended into the drawing-room. With searching eyes, he scanned the faces of the men present. At length his gaze rested on a tall, robust man about sixty years of age—a man with a grim, determined, florid face, bristling mustache and eyebrows, and bushy white hair. It was General Huntacre, of the army.

For more than a minute after Lyndhurst had marked his presence, the general seemed to be absorbed by the singer, then his wandering gaze fell on the pale face of the man in the doorway. As their glances met, Lyndhurst raised a hand, and appeared to be readjusting his cravat. Huntacre rose deliberately.

In a dimly lighted alcove under the big stairway, the two men met.

"What now, Darrow?" General Huntacre demanded brusquely.

CHAPTER V. THE RIGOR OF THE GAME.

THE worst that possibly could happen," the younger man replied gloomily to the question of the general. "You have found no clew as to the person who opened the safe?"

"None."

A darker flush overspread the florid features of the old soldier.

"Well, that is bad enough; but what the deuce has upset you so?"

"I've been putting the thing up to Hamilton."

"Did you tell him who you were?"

"I told him I was Lieutenant Lyndhurst, of the army, and in doing so I also revealed the fact that I was connected with the military department of secret intelligence."

The general frowned. "Was it wise to make that clear so soon?" he asked thoughtfully.

"I thought so."

"Well?"

"Well, while we were talking, Hamil-

ton locked the door of the library, in which we were standing. I had just put the original theft of the formula up to him when there was a knock on the door. I concealed myself in an adjoining room. While I was there, Hamilton stabbed himself with a dagger that had been lying on the library table."

"Great heavens!" exclaimed the general, in accents of dismay. "Is he dead?"

"He died almost instantly."

Beads of perspiration began to gather on Huntacre's forehead.

"Darrow, there is something almost uncanny in the manner in which death comes to the fellows you go after!" Huntacre growled. "These infernal coincidences, taken in connection with those duels you fought abroad, have given you a reputation which—" He paused, then added thoughtfully: "But there may be a way out of it if no one saw you leave the room."

"Probinsky met me as I was coming downstairs."

The brow of Huntacre grew dark again. "The deuce he did!" he muttered. "But he did not recognize you, of course?"

"On the contrary, he addressed me as Stalkenberg."

General Huntacre's face began to twitch nervously. The fingers with which he was tugging at his mustache were shaking.

"Under the circumstances, the sooner you get out of this the better, Darrow," he growled. "Make a break for it now."

"You cannot forget that the formula for 'Explosive G' has not been found," the young man said grimly.

"Neither can you or I forget that, should you be charged with the murder of George Hamilton, the rules of the service will prevent you from testifying that you were here in the interest of the government," the general said. "How, then, are you to explain your presence in this house?"

"I have made my report, sir," the man answered coldly. "Unless I am ordered specifically to leave this place,

I will remain here until the missing formula is found."

Huntacre shrugged his shoulders irritably.

"Darrow, you're a fool!" he muttered. "There is no use in staying here and inviting danger when it is apparent that your continued presence in the house will lead to nothing."

"I am convinced that the missing formula still is in this house. I have two men watching the doors. Three blasts of an automobile horn will notify me when one of the guests makes an attempt to leave. It is probable that the person who had the formula will be the first to go."

"Well, take your stand outside, then. Every moment that you delay leaving here will subject you to more suspicion and expose you to graver danger."

"I stand by the game," replied Lyndhurst firmly.

"But if you have no clew—"

"I really am not certain that I have not," said Lyndhurst. "I am beginning to suspect that part of the mystery of this affair lies in the hand of a red goblin—"

As he paused, an expression of perplexity entered Huntacre's eyes.

"In the hand of a red goblin!" he muttered. "What the deuce do you expect me to understand by such gibberish as this?"

"Be careful, general," Lyndhurst cautioned quietly. "The singing has stopped, and the guests are beginning to leave the music room in their search for fresher air."

Glancing over one of his shoulders, Huntacre saw that this was true. Then, with a muttered imprecation, he turned, and strode away.

Lyndhurst retreated farther into the shadow, and, with an affectation of indifference, viewed the men and women who filed by him on their way from the music room. Suddenly he gave a little start. His eyes now were turned toward a singularly handsome young woman, who undoubtedly had Spanish or Italian blood in her veins. Clad in a gown of scarlet and black, she was

leaning on the arm of a young naval officer.

Lyndhurst was quick to recognize one of the noted beauties of the national capital—Señora Valdorez, the young wife of the elderly minister of a South American republic.

Scarcely had the beautiful woman passed Lyndhurst when a hand fell on one of the latter's shoulders. Turning sharply, he looked into the eyes of Count Probinsky.

"A word with you, monsieur," the count said.

CHAPTER VI.

A RED COMBINATION.

DESPITE the sensation of a suddenly sinking heart, Lyndhurst surveyed Count Probinsky with an expression of mild interrogation.

"I have been to the library in search of Mr. Hamilton," the count went on.

The heart of the younger man was beating rapidly, but he smiled. "Indeed?" he said.

"The door was locked," explained Probinsky.

"Well?" asked Lyndhurst.

"When I met you a few minutes ago, I fancied that you just had left Mr. Hamilton. In fact, I saw you going upstairs with him shortly before the singing began in the music room.

Lyndhurst nodded. "That is true," he said. "I was in the library with him only a few minutes, however."

"Did you leave him there?"

"I did."

"Were you aware that he had any reason for locking the door?"

"No. There was something in his manner, though, that impressed me as being a little singular. He seemed rather abstracted, and a little agitated, perhaps."

"Ah!" the count murmured thoughtfully.

Looking sharply at Probinsky, Lyndhurst saw that, though his pale features were imperturbable, there was a feverish light in his eyes. It seemed clear enough that the count suspected that something serious had happened to his

host. Was it possible that Probinsky had been in league with Hamilton in the theft of the formula from the office of the secretary of war?

Suddenly dominated by a new impulse, Lyndhurst stepped from under the stairway, and looked along the hall. Scarcely had he done so when Probinsky, following him, laid a hand on one of his arms.

"It is strange, is it not, that I should have made that mistake on the stairway to-night?" he drawled. "Why I should have mistaken you for Stalkenberg, my dear sir, I do not—cannot possibly—understand."

But the words thus spoken seemed to come to Lyndhurst from a distance. At the end of the hall, near the door that led to the street, Señora Valdorez was receiving from a maid her mantilla and cloak. And now every nerve of Lyndhurst's body began to tingle. It was becoming clear to him that Count Probinsky, having marked his interest in Señora Valdorez, was attempting to distract his attention from her while she was preparing to leave the house.

Lyndhurst laughed quietly as he turned to the count.

"That you should mistake me for Stalkenberg?" he said. "Why, yes, count, it was strange—stranger, indeed, than you know. The fact is—but let us speak of that matter later. It is Mr. Hamilton who concerns us now. The door of his library is locked, you say?"

"Yes. Twice I attempted to enter the room for the purpose of speaking with Mr. Hamilton on a matter of some importance, but each time I failed to receive a response to my knocking."

"I, too, am rather anxious to see him, count," the other said meditatively; and as he spoke his gaze wandered to the beautiful South American again. "Shall we go to the library together?"

"It will give me pleasure to accompany you, monsieur," replied the count, as he slipped a hand under one of Lyndhurst's arms.

Side by side, the two men passed through the hall and ascended the stairway. As they moved along, Lyndhurst saw Señora Valdorez flash in the direc-

tion of Probinsky a quick glance, in which anxiety and amusement seemed blended. The count appeared not to notice her. The right hand of Lyndhurst was thrust into a pocket of his trousers, and his fingers were toying with the library key.

When the door of the library was reached, Lyndhurst turned the knob.

"It is still locked," he said.

He knocked thrice; then, leaning closer to the door, he let his right hand fall to the knob again. In another moment he had slipped in the key. As he turned this, he muttered:

"Ah, he is unlocking it now."

The door moved inward.

"After you, count," said Lyndhurst, with a bow.

As the count crossed the threshold his companion followed him. Just inside the door the younger man halted. The horrified gaze of Probinsky already was resting on the figure that lay sprawling across the couch. And now Lyndhurst spoke again.

"Count Probinsky, the death of George Hamilton and the rifling of his safe were your work," he said. "And here, at the scene of your crime, you will remain until my return. I will be back within half an hour. Meantime, attempt to leave here if you dare!"

With wide, staring eyes and clenched hands, the astonished count confronted the calm and resolute man who stood just inside the door.

"You—you mean—" Probinsky stammered.

"I mean that you will wait here for—Stalkenberg!" Lyndhurst replied grimly.

Stepping back quickly, Lyndhurst passed through the doorway. Again he closed and locked the door, and dropped the key into one of his pockets. At the head of the stairway he saw a large vase filled with American beauty roses. Before this he halted, and from the vase he took one of the roses. With this in his hand, he descended the stairs.

For more than three minutes Señora Valdorez was undergoing one of those forms of martyrdom which is so often exacted by popularity. Around her was

a little group protesting against the earliness of her departure, and assuring her that with Washington's most charming dancer absent the ball which was to follow the musicale would be merely a perfunctory affair. Step by step, she had worked her way toward the door; but each moment there was another hand to be shaken, another compliment to be acknowledged, and now her little hand lay in the big palm of one of her elderly admirers—General Huntacre.

It was while Huntacre was speaking that her smile seemed to freeze on her face, for, glancing toward the stairway, she saw a handsome, resolute man descending with a red rose in his hand. In the gaze which he was directing toward her was something that seemed to put her under a spell. A frightened expression crept into her eyes.

Moving nervously, the young woman again tried to free herself from Huntacre's grasp, but the old gallant still had more to say, and was not to be denied the privilege of saying it. He was still speaking when the little group parted and Lyndhurst approached and halted beside her. Huntacre's gaze followed the direction of her startled glance. As the general recognized the newcomer, he dropped the young woman's hand, and regarded Lyndhurst wonderingly.

Holding the rose toward Señora Valdorez, the young man bowed, and said quietly:

"Will the lady in red permit me to offer this in the name of the goblin in red, and allow me to relieve her of the goblin's hand she has in her hair?"

With a little gasp, Señora Valdorez stiffened suddenly, and recoiled from the speaker. Her face grew pallid, and, breathing quickly, she raised a hand to her bosom. Lyndhurst, with the rose still extended toward her, continued to regard her steadily.

From the little group around them came low exclamations of wonder and alarm. The eyes of Huntacre were bulging from their sockets, and the color had left his cheeks.

For several moments the man and the beautiful woman stood motionless.

Strike as she would, Señora Valdorez was unable to avoid the compelling gaze that seemed to dominate her will.

"Yes," she gasped weakly, and held out her hand to take the rose.

"I'll see you to your car," said Lyndhurst brusquely.

As he offered his arm, she slipped her hand beneath it. Then together they left the house, and went down the steps to the street.

At this moment there sounded three toots of an automobile horn. It was the signal which was to inform Lyndhurst of the departure of the first guest from the house.

As the young woman was about to enter the waiting automobile, Lyndhurst gently grasped her arm.

"And now the hand of the red goblin, please," he said.

With a little choking murmur, she raised a hand to her hair. A moment later Lyndhurst received from her the missing portion of the little image in the Hamilton library.

"Wait," the young man directed, as, moving toward the front of the machine, he bent down before one of the glaring lamps. From the hollow glass hand and forearm he drew a small piece of paper. This he examined critically.

"Thank you, señora," he said, with a bow, as he returned to her side. "Shall I help you in?"

The young woman drew back, and looked at him wonderingly.

"Did Probinsky confess to you?" she asked unguardedly.

"Not yet—but he will," Lyndhurst answered.

"But—but if he did not—if he said nothing—how did you know—"

"The stain on your white glove betrayed you, señora," Lyndhurst explained. "When you broke from the glass goblin the hand which contained the paper that had been placed there by Probinsky, you were so unfortunate as to cut yourself. Even this fact might not have been sufficient to enable me to identify you were it not that the count's anxiety to keep me engaged until you left the house flung more fuel on the fire of my suspicion. I was

right, then, you say, in assuming that it was indeed Count Probinsky who opened the safe and placed the stolen paper in the hand of the red goblin?"

Realizing that she had been tricked into admitting the guilt of herself and her confederate, the young woman turned from Lyndhurst, and, with a little moan, lurched into the automobile. He stepped in after her.

"We shall be arrested now?" Señora Valdorez sobbed, as she sank back in the seat.

"Not if you reveal the name of the country in whose interest you attempted to secure the paper."

There was a long pause; then the young woman whispered the name of a certain European power almost inaudibly.

"For two weeks Probinsky attempted to get possession of the formula; but he failed," she explained. "In some manner, he discovered that Mr. Hamilton, in the service of another nation, was working to the same end. Through connivance with an employee in the war department, Mr. Hamilton got the paper this morning. Probinsky learned of this. The count, like most other government secret agents, is able to open safes in a mysterious manner. He took advantage of this ability to-night. In order to make it appear that the work was done by a professional burglar, he removed from the safe other papers and some valuables that it contained."

"How did he get all that material out of the room?"

"He tied it in a coat, and threw the bundle out of the window, where he had arranged to have it picked up by one of his confederates."

"But why did he hide the paper in the hand of the red goblin?"

"He feared that the bundle might fall into the hands of some stranger, and also that he might be detected before his task was complete. To guard against a possible loss of the paper, as a result of being searched, he thrust it into the arm of the goblin, from which, in accordance with his plan, I was to take it some time in the course of the evening.

But how was it you knew that I had concealed the paper in my hair?"

Lyndhurst smiled slightly as he answered:

"Well, I reasoned that you were not likely to thrust into the bosom of your dress that which had cut your glove and hand."

"And, now that I have told you all, you will not arrest us?" the young woman pleaded.

Lyndhurst shook his head.

"No," he answered gravely. "In these unfortunate diplomatic affairs, strict secrecy is always desirable—so long as threatened evils are averted. In this case, the lost formula has been restored. The matter now will be dropped by my government. Good night."

A few minutes later he reentered the house. In the hall, groups of guests still were discussing the singular manner in which Señora Valdorez had left with the man who was a stranger to them all. General Huntacre, tugging fiercely at the ends of his mustache, shot a questioning glance at Lyndhurst. The younger man stroked the hair at the back of his head, and the action spoke a language that the old soldier understood, for his features brightened. He knew that the military department of secret intelligence had scored another triumph in the field of diplomacy.

Without pausing, Lyndhurst made his way up the stairs and to the door of the library. Unlocking this, he entered. Probinsky, with arms crossed on his breast, was leaning against the table. He straightened himself quickly as Lyndhurst confronted him.

"Well?" he demanded hoarsely.

"Well, count, with the exception of having made you indirectly responsible for the death of a spy, your night's work has gone for naught," Lyndhurst said. "Lest you have a false impression concerning the manner of Mr. Hamilton's death, I will explain that immediately prior to his suicide he had learned that not only had he lost the paper which he had stolen, but that the original theft of the document had been traced to him. It is unnecessary that any one should

know that I was in the adjoining room at the time he took his life—at a time when I believed him to be on his way to unlock the door for the purpose of responding to your knock."

"What is the paper of which you speak?" demanded Probinsky nervously.

"The formula which you took from the secret drawer of that safe, and which Señora Valdorez took away with the hand of the red goblin—the paper which she only a couple of minutes ago returned to me."

Breathing heavily, the count leaned back on the table again.

"You have talked with Señora Valdorez?" he asked.

"Yes; and in her interest and yours she has told me all."

There was a long pause; then the count asked thickly:

"Well, what is it you want me to do?"

"Merely to represent yourself as the discoverer of this tragedy. You must say that, having entered here only a few moments ago, you found Hamilton's body lying on that couch, and that life was then extinct."

Count Probinsky nodded.

"I will now cause it to be known that Mr. Hamilton is dead," Lyndhurst said, and left the room.

On the afternoon of the following day Lieutenant Darrow, who had been variously known as Stalkenberg and Lyndhurst, was summoned to the office of the secretary of war. There he was informed that, having been advanced ten numbers on the list of lieutenants, he now was eligible to the next vacancy in the list of captains of the army.

"But," continued the secretary, "I regret, for your sake, to say that this department finds it inconsistent with the interests of the service to relieve you from your assignment to the department of secret intelligence. In denying your earnest requests for such relief, we are confronted with our inability to find a man who is sufficiently competent to take your place."

Just Like That

By
John D. Emerson



CHAPTER I. GLAD TIDINGS.

APROACHED the house, blithely whistling a popular waltz, and feeling unusually gay; but my wife met me at the door with an announcement which at once drove all the joy from my soul.

"Andrew," she said, in a whisper, "I've got some pleasant news for you. Your Cousin Hiram is here."

"Gee whiz!" I exclaimed, turning pale. "That is indeed unpleasant tidings."

"I said *pleasant*, dear. But that isn't the worst," she went on, with an expression of gloom. "Cousin Maria and their three detestable—I mean delightful—kids are with him, and they say that they've come to us for an indefinite stay."

I groaned. "Heavens! This is awful—awful. Hiram all by himself would be bad enough, but the prospect of having to entertain Hiram and his whole d—entire family for days—perhaps weeks! Oh, help, help!"

I ran my fingers through my hair, as I had seen them do on the stage.

"I thought you would look at it in that light," said my wife. "Something

has got to be done, Andrew. They're your relatives—not mine; and it's up to you to hit upon some way of getting rid of them. It makes me shudder to think of having them on our hands for the next few weeks."

The poor girl did not express this pessimistic view of the situation without thorough justification.

If there is another man upon this earth who is as much of a bore as my Cousin Hiram, I'd like to see him. No, I mean I pray that I may never come across him. And Cousin Hiram's wife Maria, is not only a bore, but is also the crankiest of mortals—one of those sour-di-positioned, nervous women it is impossible to please, no matter how hard you try; always looking for trouble. As for their three children—they are the most spoiled, mischievous, ill-natured youngsters I have ever had the bad luck to meet.

Hiram and his family live on a farm, somewhere in the wilds of Pennsylvania. They seldom visit our city, but when they do, they always quarter themselves upon us, without hesitancy or apology. Their previous visits had been so pleasant—for them—that when we moved to our new house we carefully refrained from sending them our new address.

But this precaution had proved futile. I turned to my wife with a doleful countenance.

"How on earth did they manage to find us?" I asked.

"Too easy," she sighed. "They looked us up in the directory. If only we had been sensible enough to keep our name out of the new book."

"It's a wonder Hiram had enough sense to consult it," I said. "He is becoming alarmingly keen-witted. How long have they been here?"

"About three hours, and already their awful children have broken all of our dear children's toys, Maria has complained that our dining room is drafty, and Hiram has smoked six of your best cigars."

"Confound him!" I muttered. "Why did you let him have them? Those cigars cost fifteen cents apiece."

"I had no say about it," replied my wife. "He spied the box on the side-board, and helped himself, without bothering to ask permission. Very bashful man, your Cousin Hiram."

"Well, he shan't have any more," I declared. "I'll lock that box away, and put a box of Wheeling stogies in their place; he'll never know the difference. By the way, where are we going to put him and his family? The spare bedroom is too small to accommodate the whole bunch of them."

"Oh, they haven't waited to be put. They've appropriated our bedroom for themselves, and taken their baggage up there. I suppose we'll have to sleep in the spare room."

"Hang their impudence!" I ejaculated. "Where are they now?"

"Maria is upstairs taking a nap. She complained that riding on the cars gave her a nervous headache. Hiram has taken his kids for a walk—to show them the sights."

"I've half a mind to bolt the door, and not let them in when they return," I said darkly. "Stern measures are necessary when it comes to dealing with Hiram."

"Oh, you couldn't do anything as mean as that, Andrew," my wife protested. "After all, he is your relative,

and we must not openly insult them. Besides, you are forgetting that Maria is still in the house. We couldn't lock Hiram and the children out without also locking her in. You must devise some means of getting rid of them all—some way of getting them to go, without openly insulting them."

"I might explode a stick of dynamite in their bedroom," I suggested, with a sardonic grin. "That's about the only kind of a gentle hint Hiram would appreciate. But, seriously speaking, my dear, let them sleep here overnight, and to-morrow I'll think out some way of getting them out."

"I do hope you'll be successful," said my wife wistfully. "I'm sure the cook will give notice if they stay."

CHAPTER II.

JOY UNCONFINED.

HIRAM and his offspring—two freckled-faced boys, aged six and five respectively, and a red-haired girl aged four—returned home about an hour later.

"Hello, Andrew!" cried my cousin effusively, gripping my hand with an intensity which made me wince. "Glad to see you, old top. Ain't you glad to see me and Maria and the kids? You're going to see a whole lot of us, this time, for we're here for a good long stay."

I scowled—not only because his words confirmed our worst fears, but because the wretch, as he spoke, was puffing away serenely on one of my choice Havanas.

"Glad to see you've already made yourself at home," I remarked, with a dismal smile.

"Oh, you refer to the *seegar*, eh?" he replied, noting the direction of my indignant gaze. "Yes. I don't believe in standing on ceremony with you, Andrew. Not a bad smoke, by the way."

"It ought to be pretty good!" I growled. "They cost me fifteen cents apiece."

"As much as that, eh?" he replied coolly. "I'd never have guessed it. I supposed they were three for fifteen at the most. Imagine a man paying so

much for a single smoke. What extravagant chaps you city fellers are! Well, now that I know the price I shall enjoy them all the more. I expect to help you do away with quite a lot of them while I'm here."

"Not if I know it," I resolved inwardly.

"By the way," he went on, "our walk has given me and the kids a splendid appetite. You'll be pleased to see the justice we do to your supper, Cousin Jane. Perhaps you recollect that what Maria and I like best of all is lamb chops."

"I'm sorry I haven't chops for supper to-night," replied my wife apologetically. It was not in her nature to be rude to anybody. "Not remembering your preferences I ordered steaks, and they're on the stove."

"Well, I guess steaks will do us all right to-night. We're hungry enough to eat an elephant," our guest was kind enough to assure her.

Maria awoke from her nap in time to come down for supper. She greeted me somewhat languidly, and as she took her seat at table she imparted to my wife the pleasing information that there were mice in our bedroom, and that she had found the mattress of our best bed "uncommon hard."

At home, on the farm, Maria was in the habit of sleeping on a mattress that was about as soft and comfortable as if it had been stuffed with iron filings; but we accepted her criticisms meekly and in silence, although inwardly my blood was beginning to boil.

Hiram and his family ate so much at supper that my wife and I and our two boys left the table almost as hungry as when we sat down.

After the meal was completed, Hiram led the way into the parlor, where uninvited he sat down at our new grand piano and began to bang out rustic airs with his strong right hand. He was a self-taught musician, and had never been able to master the art of playing with both hands.

While he was engaged in thumping out "Old Lang Syne" with a vim and lack of harmony which set our teeth on

edge, his eldest son occupied himself in the pleasant pastime of whittling one of the legs of our piano with a pocket-knife.

My wife uttered a scream of dismay as she discovered the damage the young imp had done, and I was so angry that I lost control of myself, and soundly boxed his ears; whereupon his mother informed me in unqualified terms that I was a brute, and that she despised me, and, taking her yelling offspring in her arms, indignantly stalked off to her bedroom.

Hiram was kind enough to regard this incident good-naturedly.

"Sorry the boy has damaged your pianny, Cousin Jane," he remarked to my wife. "That little chap is real smart with a knife. He's going to be a great wood carver when he grows up. And as for you, Andrew, I hope you ain't riled by what Maria says. She gets all het up when anything happens to them kids, and says things she really don't mean. You must not take notice of her at such times."

His words instilled within my breast a new hope. I fancied I perceived a solution of the problem of how to get rid of our delightful guests.

CHAPTER III. DOWN TO DEFEAT.

AFTER Hiram and the rest of his family had followed Maria's example, and gone to bed, I confided my plan to my wife, expecting her enthusiastic indorsement; but to my surprise she indignantly disapproved of it.

"Do what you want to the parents, but spare the little ones," she exclaimed. "The idea of being unkind to innocent little children! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Andrew Brown, for suggesting such a brutal plan."

"But those brats are by no means innocent little children," I protested. "Think of your ruined piano, my dear, and let that terrible recollection steel your tender heart. Of course, I don't intend to inflict physical cruelties upon those kids; but my idea is a good one, I'm sure."

Despite my wife's dissenting voice, I began to put my plan into operation the very next morning. I sternly forbade Hiram's children to make the slightest noise around the house. I objected vigorously to whatever they did. The poor little youngsters soon became so scared of me that they did not dare to speak above a whisper when I was around, and it was not long before they would howl with terror whenever they caught sight of me.

Secretly, I felt mean and heartily ashamed of myself for thus distressing them, for I am naturally fond of children; but I steeled myself with the reflection that I was pursuing this course as a matter of policy, and that the end thoroughly justified the means.

But to my disgust Maria did not take open umbrage at my severity toward her children and quit my house in a huff, as I had confidently expected. She tolerated my sternness toward her youngsters with heroic fortitude, and revenged herself by soundly slapping my children on the slightest provocation, and often without any provocation whatever.

As for Hiram, he assured me, with a good-natured smile, that he heartily approved of my methods of raising children.

"I'm afraid I ain't strict enough with them kids," he confessed. "I'm inclined to spile them, and they need a strict fellow like you to keep them within bounds. Maria and I can notice a marked improvement in their characters since they've been under your roof, and I feel very grateful to you for the interest you take in them."

And to prove his gratitude, he followed his sweet wife's example, and cuffed my youngsters unmercifully whenever their parents were not around.

When I discovered this I became absolutely vicious, and determined to force matters by endeavoring to stir up strife between our respective offsprings.

"If the children don't get along together," I argued mentally, "Maria may take hers away in disgust."

With this object in view I told my

eldest son, Willie, who is six years old, that I would give him a bright new quarter if he could defeat his Cousin Frankie—Hiram's eldest boy, who is just Willie's age—in a fistic combat.

Willie had no particular grievance against his cousin, for the children got along well together; but he is a plucky little chap, and my offer was quite sufficient to rouse him to action.

The fight took place in the back yard, and, unknown to the combatants, I watched it from a rear window of the house, eagerly hoping that Hiram's first born would go down to defeat, and that as a result of the combat our unwelcome guests would depart from our home in anger.

But did anything of the kind happen? Well! In the first round Hiram's red-headed son knocked our Willie down, started the claret, blackened his eye, and drove him yelling from the field of battle.

Hiram, when he heard of the fight, was very proud of his son, and, dangling the little demon on his knee, and affectionately patting his fiery head, assured me with a grin that he thoroughly believed in boys being encouraged to fight, and was sure that it made them hardy and self-reliant.

As for me, I quailed beneath my unfortunate Willie's mutely reproachful gaze, and felt like a criminal every time I looked at his blackened eye.

After that I abandoned the idea of endeavoring to get rid of Hiram and his family through the agency of the children, and decided to try other measures.

CHAPTER IV.

A DESPERATE MOVE.

I PURCHASED a particularly abominable brand of cigars and offered them to Hiram, thinking thus to hurt his feelings and cause him to leave our house. When he smoked them the stench was so awful that my wife and I had to flee from the room; but Hiram calmly puffed away, and assured me that they were a very fine smoke—much better, in fact, than the "fifteen-centers."

Then I tried another scheme. Remembering Maria's aversion to drafts, I wickedly left windows slightly open all over the house. As a result of this, my wife caught a bad cold in the head, I had a severe attack of rheumatism, and our youngest boy got a sore throat; but Maria and her family continued to enjoy the very best of health.

At this point I gave up the struggle in despair, and for two weeks permitted Hiram and his family to live under our roof, without making any attempt to oust them. They owned the house.

There seemed to be only one way to get rid of them, and that was to ask them point-blank to go, and either lack of moral courage or my natural good breeding prevented me from taking this discourteous step.

One day, however, my gaze happened to fall upon a paint box belonging to my eldest boy, and there was immediately born within my brain a brilliant idea. At the earliest opportunity I took my wife aside, and confided the new inspiration to her.

This time she was enthusiastic, and that night, while our two boys were peacefully sleeping, we stole softly into their bedroom, and proceeded to carry out our plan.

In one hand I held my boy's paint box, and, smearing the brush with red paint, I knelt over the bed, and, taking care not to wake them, dexterously applied the brush to the faces and arms of our two sons.

When I had finished the result was an artistic triumph. Our two boys were covered with little round red spots. I looked at my wife proudly, and she returned me a glance of admiration.

"Now I guess Hiram and his family will move out," I whispered confidently.

"I don't see how the scheme can fail to work," she assured me, with a sigh of joyous expectancy.

The next morning, when Hiram came down to breakfast—he always arose ahead of his family—my wife and I received him with sad faces.

"What's the matter? Anything wrong?" he inquired.

"Yes," I groaned. "I've got some

bad news for you. Our boys have contracted the woozles. When I went into their room this morning to wake them up, I discovered that their faces and bodies were covered with little red spots."

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Hiram. "That's tough luck; but I wouldn't worry if I was you, Cousin Andrew and Cousin Jane. It's lucky that Maria and I are here. We was thinking of going back to the farm in a few days, but of course that's out of the question now. We're going to stay here and help you. It's our duty, considering how good you've been to us. Maria is an excellent nurse, and I can make myself useful running for the doctor and the like."

"No, no!" I cried. "We couldn't dream of permitting such a sacrifice. You must go at once. We shall be sorry to see you leave, of course, but since—"

"Oh, we wouldn't dream of leaving now, while you are in such trouble," declared Hiram. "I know what it means to have sickness in the house. Jane will have her hands full. It is only right that we should stay."

"I couldn't dream of permitting it," I said firmly. "I appreciate your unselfishness and generosity, I assure you, but we must think of your own dear little children. It wouldn't be fair to them to keep them in this house a day longer. As you must know, the woozles are contagious, and your children must be taken away at once, before they catch it."

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Hiram, plainly discomfited by the argument. "I was forgetting about our own kids. They've never had the woozles, and they'd be likely to catch 'em if we stayed. I guess you're right, Cousin -Andrew. We'd better pack up and go at once. But are you sure just what it is that your boys have got?" he added, almost wistfully. "Perhaps you may be mistaken, you know. It may be only a rash from overheated blood, or something like that."

"Oh, no! It's the woozles, without doubt," I assured him. "You can come up and take a look at them, if you like."

I added, confident that my work had been done so artistically that it would defy detection.

He accompanied me upstairs, examined the spotted faces of my two boys, and was convinced.

"I guess it's the goods, all right," he declared gloomily. "There ain't no mistaking them red spots. I'll go upstairs right away, and tell Maria to hurry up and get our kids dressed. I'll get our trunks packed, and we'll get out of here quick. I hate to leave you in this abrupt fashion, but, as you say, we must think of our children's welfare above all things."

He went upstairs to his bedroom, and I went downstairs to my wife, and we were congratulating ourselves upon the success of my scheme when Hiram suddenly entered the room, a look of excitement on his round, red face.

CHAPTER V.

HIRAM EXPLAINS.

WE'RE too late!" Hiram cried. "Our kids have caught them pesky woozles already. Come up and take a look at them. Their faces are all covered with red spots, just like your children."

"What!" I cried in amazement. "Do you mean to tell me that your children have caught it from ours?"

"Yes. Ain't it too bad? I guess they'll have to stay in bed here for weeks to come. I understand it takes a long time for the disorder to run its course."

There was only one thing to do, and I did it. I rushed hastily to my boys' bedroom, seized a sponge, and hurriedly washed the red spots from their faces and bodies. Then I ran downstairs again.

"I've made a mistake," I said to Hiram. "My boys haven't got the woozles,

after all. Those spots have disappeared as suddenly as they came."

"I'm mighty glad to hear that, old man," said Hiram heartily. "Excuse me a minute while I run upstairs and see how my boys are getting along. Naturally I feel very anxious about them."

In ten minutes he returned, with a surprised look on his face.

"Here's a funny state of affairs," he said. "My kids ain't got the woozles, either. Them red spots have disappeared from their faces, too. Must have been some newfangled sort of rash, I guess. I'm mighty glad we was both mistaken."

After that I gave up trying to get rid of Hiram and his family. They stayed with us another three weeks, and then left of their own accord. When they got back to the farm, Hiram sent us the following letter:

DEAR COUSIN ANDREW AND COUSIN JANE:
This is to thank you for the good time you gave us and the hospitality you showered upon us. We really didn't intend to stay with you so long, but you made us so very welcome and showed you was so glad to have us that we just couldn't tear ourselves away. Again thanking you for all your kindness and for the hearty welcome you gave us, I remain, your affectionate cousin,

HIRAM.

P. S.—Of course the above is meant sarcastic. Maria and I saw from the start that you wanted to get rid of us, and we was on to all your schemes to drive us out; but we made up our minds to hang on, just for spite.

Them red spots was a clever trick and almost fooled me. I wouldn't of guessed the answer if I hadn't happened to notice the paint box lying on the table in your boys' room, with the red paint thick on the brush. Then I was on to your little game and decided to paint my kids' faces the same way.

It was a good thing you changed your mind in a hurry about them woozles, for I was determined my kids should have 'em for just as long as yours did. By the way, what is the woozles?

"Stung!" I exclaimed.
But we didn't care. They were gone.

Worthy of His Hire

STRANGER: "Boy, will you direct me to the nearest bank?"

Street Gamin: "I will for a quarter."

"A quarter! Isn't that too much?"

"Bank directors always get big pay, mister."

Bumble

By
Arnold Hoffmann



(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I. THE MAN OF POWER.



ERIC SEFFLING, ESQUIRE, bank president, was exceedingly busy, and in an irritable humor when a visitor succeeded in entering his private office unannounced. Not only that, but the visitor had the audacity to speak before being spoken to, and actually addressed him by his first name. With flaming face and glaring eyes, he whirled savagely upon the intruder, and his indignation knew no bounds when he beheld the culprit—a shabbily dressed, round-shouldered little man with a cabbage-shaped head too large for his body, a small, weak nose, and great ears that stood out from his head like a pair of wings.

"I don't suppose you remember me, Eric," said the seedy little fellow quietly, his faded blue eyes widening in astonishment at the other's wrath. "I went to school with you once for about two years out in Yonkers when we was kids. I'm the guy you nicknamed Bumble. Now can you place me? The name's stuck to me ever since."

"No, I don't place you," lied Seffling. "What do you want?"

"I want you to remember me first,

please. Don't you remember the time me an' you picked the lock on Berger's little candy store, an' swiped all the sweet stuff in sight? I wanted to give that teacher somethin', an' I never had nothin' to give her, so I thought I'd swipe somethin' for her; an' you helped me because you knew how to pick the lock, an' you sold your share of the boodle for thirty-five cents; then they suspicioned me, an' I confessed, an' they came near sending me to the reform school. But I didn't snitch on you because your people was big bugs in the town, an' respectable, while I never had no folks, anyway; an', besides, I was always getting caught at everything I did, so it didn't make much difference noway. Remember me now, Eric?"

The big, healthy, well-groomed bank president winced imperceptibly, and his thin lips curled in an ironic smile. He remembered well the dull little waif whom, with his ready wit, he had dubbed "Bumblebee" because of the boy's large head, winglike ears, and slow ways. The name had soon been clipped down to "Bumble," and in this form stuck to the boy for good. Seffling remembered also the incident which Bumble had just recalled, and to be thus reminded of it fanned his already glowing temper to a white heat.

A more sagacious man than Bumble would have been more decorous, would have sought to establish his identity by citing a more pleasing incident out of the past; but Bumble was not that kind of a man. He nearly always did the right thing in the wrong way, or else did the wrong thing altogether wrong, and he was too naive to realize that a broad gulf—the vast and insurmountable difference in their stations in life lay between him and Seffling.

To Bumble, Eric Seffling, the powerful banker, was just Eric, the precocious boy of childhood days, grown into a bigger bulk. Bumble did not stand in awe of him. Not that he was imbued with any socialistic principles, but simply because he had not stopped to think the matter out, and could not see why the years should make any difference.

"Well," said Seffling finally, after he had surveyed Bumble in silent contempt for some time, "suppose I do remember you—what about it? How did you get into my office, and what do you want? Don't you realize that I am a very busy man, and that my time is valuable?" Even as he spoke, Seffling wondered why he did not follow his inclination to dismiss Bumble with a kick, and slam the door after him.

Bumble, on the other hand, was confused by the many conflicting questions hurled at him all at once, and did not know just how to begin, or what to answer; so he began at random, and talked away in his rambling manner:

"I had to talk to a few of the gents out there, an' they kept sending me on to the next one until I see your name on the door, an' then I didn't stop to jaw no more, but beat it straight for the sign, an' here I am. Now, what I came to see you about is this, Eric: Down where I live every one is in the same fix I'm in—poor as poverty—an' I don't know nobody that's any better off. I only make about a dollar a day, an' Gerty—that's my wife; an' we have two little girls—Gerty, she used to help along by takin' in washin'. She never was strong, Gerty wasn't, an' she pitched in an' tried to do too much, an' when she was just about all in she

took down with pneumonia, an' me away workin' all day, an' only the little kids to care for her. I tell you, it wa' a hard pull.

"Gerty never would have lived," he continued, "if it hadn't been for the doctor—a mighty good man, that doctor. He kept comin', though he knew we never could pay him. An' the druggist has been good, too; he's done as much as any one could expect of him; but we owe him ten dollars now, an' he won't let us have any more medicine until we pay him what we owe him. Gerty is over the worst of her sickness, but she's far from well yet; she's so weak she can't walk; can't even raise her arm. She needs medicine; she needs a tonic to build her up, an' I can't get 'em for her anywhere; there ain't no other druggist that'll trust me. I've just got to have ten dollars, an'—"

"And so you have hunted me out?" Seffling broke in sharply. "And because in the remote past I had the enviable good fortune of being a schoolmate of yours you are now going to do me the honor of begging the ten dollars of me."

"No, I ain't goin' to beg!" retorted Bumble quickly, and threw back his shoulders in a grotesque way that brought an involuntary smile to Seffling's lips. "I've never begged in my life, nor I never will."

"Well, then, call it borrow—with no intention of ever paying back," sneered Seffling.

"Yes, borrow; but borrow on security," answered Bumble stoutly.

"Ah, security!" echoed Seffling, with beautiful sarcasm. "That is different. What is your proposition?"

Bumble fumbled around in his pocket, and drew forth a gold-plated watch.

"This is it," he said. "A fellow gave it to me once for pulling him out of the water. It keeps good time, an' a jeweler down on Houston Street told me once that it was worth fifteen or twenty dollars; but the pawnshops will only let me have a dollar and a half on it. That ain't enough; I've got to rake up ten dollars. I didn't know what to do; then I see your name an' picture

in the paper, an' I remembered that we used to know each other, an' that you, with your money, was just the man to help out a guy in my fix; so I come right up here during my lunch hour to ask you if you couldn't let me have ten dollars on this timepiece."

"So you have the idea that I am running a pawnshop, have you?" asked Seffling wrathfully. "Well, you are sadly mistaken. Why is it that when a man lifts his head out of the rabble and makes something of himself, all the weak good-for-nothings expect him to fight their battles for them? Why don't they use some of the time they kill in asking for help by working for themselves? Answer me that!"

Bumble listened patiently to what he considered a lecture, taking it to be the close of advice which usually accompanies a small deed of generosity. But Bumble got the wrong idea, as usual.

In the midst of the indignant outburst the telephone jingled. Seffling answered it, and instantly became oblivious to everything else, while Bumble stood aside and waited quietly.

Presently, with a sharp *thud*, the receiver was replaced, and Seffling pounced upon a bundle of papers which he examined with intense haste and anxiety. From these he turned to a blank pad upon which he jotted down a profusion of figures. Other papers were consulted, new figures jotted down, while from time to time he called a number into the telephone, and gave short, positive commands, or asked anxious questions.

Though filled with eager expectation, Bumble stood by silently, and waited until his lunch hour was over; then, driven to desperation, he ventured to speak again:

"Excuse me, Eric; it ain't myself I'm thinking of—it's Gerty. She's in a bad fix; she's got to have it; it's for Gerty's sake that I'm asking you to—"

Seffling looked up with an expression of blank astonishment, and flushed with anger at finding Bumble still standing there. He had completely forgotten about the man, and now that he was reminded of the other's presence

he was too much preoccupied even to remember what the fellow had come for.

"How long are you going to stand around here?" he growled, in exasperation. "Can't you see how busy I am? Get out!"

Tears sprang to the shabby little man's eyes, and he left without a word.

To Seffling, Bumble's visit was of no more moment than if the wind had blown to the floor one of the papers he was examining—extremely annoying for an instant, but immediately forgotten. To Bumble it was a bitter tragedy. While Bumble, completely crushed, was finding his way down to the street once more, Seffling was losing himself deeper and deeper in the piloting of a gigantic scheme which was to double his already large fortune. But there were dangerous rocks ahead, and the treacherous, turbulent current, which, once having entered, he could no longer stem, was carrying him at a rapid rate. He knew that he could hope for no halfway results. The ultimatum would be either a brilliant victory or absolute destruction; but Seffling, feeling himself the master, steered on in perfect confidence.

CHAPTER II. DOUBLE HARNESs.

THE wonderful house of bank notes which Seffling was building for himself out of other people's money tumbled about his ears just as he was preparing to nail on the flagstaff, and crashed down with a din that echoed far and wide.

The next morning small tradesmen were wondering how they were going to meet their bills; self-supporting women were crying their eyes red; thousands of thin hands were knotted into revengeful fists, clamoring for the pittance which they had saved in years of toil.

Then, just as Seffling was about to flee from the disaster he had caused, he felt the restraining hand of the law upon his shoulder.

There were trials, much arguing, and much money spent; but all in vain.

Seffling was sentenced to five years in State's prison. Then one day Seffling's immaculate white cuff was pushed up a trifle to make room for a narrow band of cold steel.

Handcuffs! He, Eric Seffling, bank president, a member of the most exclusive clubs, handcuffed!

The horror of the thing caused the blood to freeze in his veins. He had never dreamed such a thing possible; he could hardly realize it now. The sharp click of the closing handcuff was to him like the crashing of a bullet through his heart. The cold pressure of the steel about his wrist seemed to be strangling his soul.

Presently he heard a similar click, and felt himself linked hand to hand with another lawbreaker. Seffling, whose horror had up to this time made him totally oblivious to his surroundings, now partially roused himself, and shot a quick glance at the man fate had allotted him as traveling companion on the way to the penitentiary.

It was Bumble.

The little man was hollow-eyed, and looked very sad; but he smiled sympathetically when he saw that Seffling recognized him.

"This is bad, ain't it, Eric?" he said pathetically. "I feel sorry for you."

Seffling gritted his teeth, but made no answer. His indignation was too profound for words. Of all the disgrace that had been heaped upon him, this last thrust cut deepest. Was there, then, no difference between him and Bumble? Did these confounded officers of the law lose all sight of the past once a man was condemned? Was he to be shown no consideration?

The very sight of Bumble, with his woefully worn clothes and straggly hair, filled Seffling with loathing. He felt that the disgrace of being chained to so miserable a specimen of humanity as Bumble was more than he could endure; but protests availed him nothing. The two were led into the smoking car, and ordered to sit down in the first vacant seat.

Seffling, man of affairs, accustomed from childhood to every luxury, every

11B

advantage that education, money, and social position afforded; Bumble, down-trodden, dull, uneducated, accustomed to contending with pain, sorrow, and disappointments; they sat side by side —a thoroughbred and a mule in double harness.

They were silent for a long time, watching the scenery as the swiftly flying train carried them on to their gloomy destination.

After a time, Bumble ventured to speak again: "I heard something about your trouble, Eric. How many years did they give you?"

"Five," snapped Seffling.

"Same here," sighed Bumble.

"Impossible!" gasped Seffling. "What in the world did you do?" And the emphasis he placed on the pronoun implied that he did not deem Bumble capable of doing anything worthy of a five-year sentence.

"I swiped ten dollars," answered Bumble. "Gerty had to have her medicine, and there wasn't no other way. They found me out; I might have known they would. Luck was against me, as usual. You see, I robbed the cash drawer of a little grocery store. It was real late at night, but the grocer lives above the store, an' he heard me somehow, an' sneaked down, an' caught me red-handed. He was a big fellow, an' I didn't know what to do to make my get-away, so I grabbed a revolver I see behind the counter, an' pointed it at him. I was all excited, an' so scared I was just shivering; then all of a sudden the blame pistol went off somehow, an' hit the old man in the shoulder. He dropped, an' I beat it as fast as I could. It took them three days before they got me, but they did, all right. I knew all along that I'd never get away from the bulls, 'cause I always get it in the neck no matter what I do."

He lapsed into gloomy silence, while Seffling looked down at him in amazement. Seffling felt that he was indirectly responsible for Bumble's having been sentenced to the penitentiary, and he knew that Bumble must feel it; yet the queer little man seemed to hold no grudge against him. Seffling had con-

sidered himself a martyr—a Napoleon sent into exile; but now, for the first time, he began to realize that he was a criminal.

As he looked again at Bumble, he saw that the man was smiling.

"Say," said Bumble, "you should have seen Gerty's face when I walked in with a bottle of medicine the doctor had ordered, an' a big armful of good things to eat! Did you ever have a woman laugh an' cry over you all at the same time? Gee, it's great! It's worth going to prison for, ain't it?"

But Seffling had never had such an experience. He did not know.

CHAPTER III.

AN AWAKENING.

AT the prison there was no distinction made between the two. Both wore striped suits of the same material, ate at the same long table, were ordered about like herded cattle, and worked side by side in the same shop, making chairs.

As the months dragged by, Seffling's aversion to Bumble lessened by degrees. He began to study his patient comrade as a man studies the curious objects in a museum, and in time he unconsciously learned things from the queer little man which gave him a broader and deeper understanding of life.

At first Bumble's attempts at conversation aroused his anger; now he was glad to exchange a few words with him. Day by day the hardships which they endured in common drew them closer together, until finally they began to talk freely of their past and of their hopes for the future.

Bumble never tired of telling of his Gerty: of how he had sought out the river one gloomy evening, with the intention of ending his life, and had accidentally come across her on the bank, where she, driven by starvation and despair, was on the point of committing suicide. And of how these two wretched waifs had found new strength and hope in each other's weakness, and resolved to resume together the unfair struggle for existence. He told of their

marriage, of their children, of the one great dream of his life—to be able to live on a small farm, where the work, though hard, would be pleasant, and his wife and children could be free and happy and healthy.

When Seffling came to talk of himself, he found that he really had nothing to tell. There was no plot to the story of his life; it had been merely the solitary, brilliant flight of a meteor across the heavens. No great difficulties, no hardships, no heartaches, no love, no family. His brain was a wonderfully intricate piece of machinery that spun plans for making money; his heart was a great muscle that pumped blood to his brain.

Late one afternoon, as the two worked busily at their bench, there suddenly arose the wild cry of "Fire!" A defect somewhere in the insulation of the heavy wires that supplied power to the machinery in the shop had started a blaze which spread extensively before being discovered.

Now, as the cry of warning fell upon the startled ears of the workmen, they turned to see the flames already shooting up around the narrow doorway—the only means of escape.

Instantly the air was filled with discordant shouts and imprecations as the men made a mad stampede for the exit.

Seffling sprang up, and fought with the others for his life, pushing, trampling, giving and receiving blows in this terrific battle of men, who in their mad panic fought with each other like wild beasts.

With a short, shrill cry that arose above the tumult, some one at Seffling's side went down. Instantly he crowded himself into the advantageous gap where the unfortunate man had struggled, and pushed on until the mad rush of humanity carried him stumbling through the doorway. He was saved!

He threw back his head, and heaved a great sigh of relief and gratitude. Then he thought of Bumble, and glanced about anxiously. The little man was not among those who had escaped.

With a strange mixture of emotions tugging at his heart, Seffling watched

and waited until the last fortunate man had rushed out through the flaming doorway. Still Bumble did not appear, and Seffling all at once experienced a greater sense of loss than he had felt when his millions were swept away.

Once more he cast a hopeless glance at the doorway, from which the smoke was pouring in great choking clouds. There was no time to lose. Without a word of warning, Seffling set his strong jaws, and dashed for the perilous entrance.

A guard, thinking that Seffling had suddenly gone mad, and was about to commit suicide, placed himself directly in his path; but the desperate man bowled him over as though he had been a tenpin, and rushed on into the blazing building.

Gasping, choking, his eyes smarting like balls of fire, he groped his way through the dense smoke, now and then calling out: "Bumble! Where are you, Bumble?" But there was no answer.

The heat was terrific. The dense smoke began to muddle his senses. He staggered, dropped to his hands and knees, and pressed on as rapidly as possible. He feared his strength would be exhausted before he could reach Bumble.

It seemed an eternity before his hand touched a soft, still object, and he knew that he had arrived at his goal. With a thrill of joy and triumph, he lifted the small body of the unconscious man in his arms, and began to retrace his steps. But the flames were leaping up all around him now, and he dared not breathe, for fear of sucking in the fire.

With every step his strength waned, his knees bent under him, his legs felt as though they were made of rubber. Bumble's insignificant weight gradually became tremendous; a dreamy desire to give up the struggle was gradually overpowering him.

But, with a supreme effort of his great will power, he pulled himself together, and, straining every nerve, every sinew, every fiber to its utmost, continued to fight his way through smoke and flame.

With his hair and eyebrows burned off, his clothing on fire, his eyes closed, he finally staggered out into the open, bearing the limp little man in his arms.

Such a cheer as went up the walls of that prison never heard before or since. But Seffling did not hear. He and Bumble lay on the ground, an insensible heap.

CHAPTER IV.

NEW IDEAS.

WHEN Seffling regained consciousness, he found himself in a neat white cot, with his face and some parts of his body swathed in bandages, and a strange man leaning over him.

He closed and opened his eyes in a dazed fashion for a time; then he asked of the man: "Is it all up with me, doctor?"

"Not at all—not at all, my brave man. A few burns, rather painful, but not serious."

"And the little fellow?"

"Here," answered Bumble for himself from a neighboring cot. "I've got a couple of ribs stove in, they tell me, an' I'm burnt a little; but I'm all right."

Seffling made an attempt at smiling through his bandages which naturally was a failure; then no more was said for an hour or so. When they were alone Bumble, with the tears rolling out of his dim eyes, said, with an effort:

"They told me all about it, Eric. Say, Eric, you are the finest man on the face of the earth, you are! Me an' Gerty an' the kids won't forget this if we live to be—." He got no further. The rest of his sentence was swallowed up in a convulsive sob more eloquent than words, and silence again reigned in the room where the two men lay. Both were struggling with a flood of strange emotions, the result of an experience entirely new to each; he who never before had given aid to a fellow human being, and he who had been helped for the first time.

It seemed to Seffling as though something had given way within him. A great dam filled with sunshine seemed

suddenly to have burst in his chest, and the cold, intricate, calculating machinery of his brain began to run riot, swirled, and was drawn down into his heart, and swallowed up like a boat in a maelstrom.

It was Neffling who broke the silence next.

"Bumble," he said, "we'll be out of here in a fairly short time now; but we are both marked men; the world will have little use for us. You probably will not be able to get your job back, no matter what it was, and men will no longer trust me in any responsible position. The narrow-minded will shun us, but we still have a lot to live for in this world. When my financial crash came

I lost about everything I had. The people had to have their money back, and they got it—every penny. But I've got a little bit tucked away that doesn't belong to any one but me. It isn't much, but it's enough to buy a nice little farm out West somewhere; and I want you and your wife and the children to come out on that farm with me. You see, I'll need a man, and some one to keep the house in order. I'll pay you good wages. What do you say to my proposition, Bumble?"

But after several unsuccessful attempts at speech, the best the little man could do was to sob out:

"Bless you, Eric! Bless you! You're a--a fine man, Eric!"

Unwelcome Luxuries

WHAT is more delicious than the odors of flower extracts and rare perfumes? Yet they are abominated by the men at the docks and elsewhere who work in an atmosphere that is impregnated with them. Delightful though they are to the stranger, they produce headache and nausea in those who breathe them hour after hour.

To some gardeners the odors of certain flowers are no less detestable. That from a variety of violets, indeed, is positively harmful, and there have been many cases, it is known, of illness due to this and other flowers of the same species.

Onion peelers equally dislike the pungent odor of the bulbous roots they handle, not, however, because it affects their health, but because it clings to them as the limpet to the rock. In one district where many women are employed in peeling pickling onions this tenacity is curiously manifested. If some of the women go to a concert or other

entertainment, the odor of onion soon becomes well-nigh overpowering, notwithstanding that the peelers discard their working clothes hours previously.

Fish fryers are troubled in much the same way. Some of those who live away from their shops make the best of things by never introducing their working clothes into their residences. They have an outhouse, in which they change before going to, and on coming from, business. But at best the odor of fried fish is troublesome, while in some circumstances it is a positive nuisance. Everything smells of it, and unless special precautions are taken milk, butter, and the like taste of it.

Sailors dislike many odors which are not objectionable to ordinary folk. Their chief abomination, perhaps, is a cargo of coffee, which makes a ship hateful. The odor becomes a burden, and gives the flavor of coffee to nearly everything on board. Even the very water tastes of coffee.

Frank Opinion

WIDOWER, to his daughter, aged ten: "Dora, do you know that Susanna, our housekeeper, is going to be married?"

Dora: "Oh, I'm so glad we're getting rid of the old pelican! Won't it be jolly? But who is going to marry her?"

Father: "Well, I am!"

The Dormitory Tragedy

By
Patrick B. Prescott, Jr.



(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

A MORNING SURPRISE.

WE had arisen at the usual hour—Jason Craig and I—and were lounging about our sitting room, awaiting the summons to breakfast. Craig had been looking out the window across the campus, when suddenly he turned about, and said, somewhat irritably:

"Harding, no Latin for me this morning."

I glanced up from my newspaper in surprise. "And why, may I ask?"

"Because I don't know anything about the infernal rot, and—don't care to! What's the use of it? A hopeless waste of valuable time and energy."

I threw aside my paper. "But, Craig," I remonstrated, "think of the general culture, of the training of the judgment, of its being the basis of good English."

"Judgment—tommyrot!" he retorted, with a snap of the fingers.

I smiled, but said nothing. As if to emphasize his disgust, Craig leaned toward the bookcase, took up a volume on the "Philosophy of Kant," and in a few moments was lost to the world.

The silence that ensued was broken

abruptly. There came a sharp tug at our bell.

"Rather unseasonable hour for a visitor," grumbled Craig from behind his pages.

"It is surely," I agreed, turning the knob.

Like a terrified animal, there rushed past me the wild, disheveled figure of our friend and classmate, Harold Bronson.

"Fellows," he cried out, "Blanding's murdered!"

"What—Horace Blanding!" Craig and I exclaimed simultaneously.

Bronson nodded, and went on wildly: "I spent the night out, and when I returned this morning I found him huddled in his chair, a big blue hole in his head. Oh, that sight!" He spread his hands over his eyes as if to shut out the scene.

There was naught save the silent voices of amazement and horror spoken from our eyes to break the dramatic stillness of the next moment.

Craig first regained his composure. "And you spent the night where?" he asked, in his peculiar way that inspired confidence.

Bronson's pale face colored; his eyes drooped beneath Craig's steady gaze;

and, after the slightest possible hesitation, he answered:

"At Westman's, in South End."

I must confess that in the excitement of the moment this incident passed me almost unnoticed, but there is no telling what impression it made upon my companion's keen mind.

"Did he have any enemies?"

"Not that I know of."

"Robbery, then?"

"I don't know. I was too excited to see if anything was taken; I came right over."

"Any one been in the room yet?"

"No one's astir yet. I just reported it to the dean as I passed."

"Hurry, then, Harding," said Craig, turning to me, and at the same time slipping on his coat; "we must see for ourselves." And as we burst past the door he whispered to me, in an enigmatical tone: "I was right. There'll be no Latin—or any other book studies for me to-day."

CHAPTER II.

FINE-SPUN THEORY.

THE dormitory, which was not more than ten minutes distant from our apartments, was typical of that class of buildings—long, narrow, built of red brick, with white-stone trimmings. It was three stories high, with broad halls running through the center, and rooms on either side. The room occupied by our ill-fated friend, on the second floor, about three rooms from the north end, had two large windows facing the east, one of which opened directly upon the fire escape. We made our way up to the chamber of death, and Bronson showed us in.

The sight that met our eyes was sufficient to shake the strongest nerves. Before us, on the right side of the room, sat the huddled form of Horace Blanding, his arms hanging limply over the sides of his chair, an ugly blue hole just in front of his right temple.

Through the window there came a flood of sunlight in which a myriad particles of dust chased each other playfully; now that golden bar marked one

bright path across the floor; now it zigzagged the rounds of the chair; now it described a hyperbola across a certain knee; now perpendicular it rose up the breast until at last, coming to the horrible climax of its course, part formed a sickly combination of gold and venous blue, part fell squarely into the half-opened eyes of the dead man, and gave them that wild, unearthly stare of night-seen cat's eyes. These done, it spent itself across the room in an attempt to blind the newcomers.

We stood in silence. Craig's head was bowed in pity and reverence; I, more emotional, was almost overcome by that tender regard born of college comradeship; Bronson, in the throes of his agitation, was pitiable. Instinctively I looked to the maturer nature of my companion to break the nerve-snapping inactivity of that period. Already his lips were pursed tightly, and his face set with the expression of a man resolved that his sentiments shall not run away with his intellect.

He moved close up to the figure of the murdered man, and, with gentleness yet deftness, went through the pockets. When he had finished he held in his hand a plain handkerchief, a heavy gold watch bearing the engraved monogram "H. B.," and a purse containing a few of Blanding's own visiting cards, nearly fifty dollars in notes, and a single other visiting card bearing the inscription:

**MISS YOLAND HARRISON,
Salem.**

Surely robbery as a motive was out of the question.

Craig next examined the wound minutely. "Rather a remarkable blow this is," he commented. "The frontal bone is crushed as if it were an eggshell."

"It is indeed!" I said, bending over and examining the flat circular hole, nearly two inches in diameter.

My companion's scrutiny circled the room, finally settling itself on the mantel. A low exclamation of surprise escaped him. "Hello, what's this?"

He was holding carefully in his right hand the tiny stump of a cigarette and

the charred stem of a match, and pointing with the other to the end of the mantel. I shuddered as I looked. It was the impress in the summer dust of a monstrous right hand—nearly twice as large as that of the average man—and looked as if it might have belonged to some huge mythological giant, or to an oversized gorilla, but never to a man.

Craig's look was reassuring. He dismissed the hand mark, and turned to Bronson, who had dropped in a nearby chair and was staring out the window with unseeing eyes, unmindful of our doings.

"I thought Blanding didn't smoke, Bronson?" He held up the cigarette stump.

Bronson recovered from his abstraction with a start. "He didn't," he answered.

"Do you?"

"Cigars and pipe; never cigarettes."

"That is important," Craig whispered to me. "This is merely the stump of a common 'twenty for five'; yet upon it and this match stem hinges one of the most important points of our investigation."

He whipped out his pocket lens, and made a minute inspection of the mantel and floor. With his tape he measured along the floor certain marks that were quite invisible to me, then walked to the window which let out on the fire escape. I could see from the drawn, eager expression of his face and the flaming brilliance of his dark eyes that he had discovered something startling.

"Ah, through the window—both ways," he muttered; then to me: "Look here, Harding; what do you make of this?" He passed his lens to me, and pointed to a place where the gummy coat of scum on the window sill had been disturbed.

I looked for a minute. "I see nothing unusual, except that the sill has been gripped by a powerful pair of hands, but certainly different from the one on the mantel—not nearly so large."

"Oh, look again," he snapped, with some impatience at my dullness, "and

note the second finger of the right hand."

I obeyed. "Why, it's twice as large as the rest!" I exclaimed.

"Exactly. And it means that—"

"That it was bandaged?" I ventured, more in a tone of query than of affirmation.

"Fine!" patting me on the shoulder. "You're getting on, old chap. It means incidentally that our field of inquiry has been very much limited by this lucky chance. Come; we have about all the data we can find here, and, I think, all that we need."

While it may seem longer to the reader, it was in reality not more than ten minutes that we had been in that room. We were none too soon in finishing, however, for no sooner had Craig slipped his lens into his pocket than the appearance of two important-looking personages in loud clothes and wide shoes, and accompanied by the dean, showed that the law had arrived. It took but a minute to explain that our knowledge of the tragedy was not more than thirty minutes old, so that, leaving Bronson to explain what he knew, we went away. For my part, I was truly glad to breathe the open air once more.

"Craig," I said, as we struck the street for home, "you remarked that the cigarette stump and charred match stem had an important bearing on the case. What did you mean?"

"Why, the weapon used," he answered, quite innocently, as if I must surely follow him.

"Surely!" I returned, with a sneer. "For instance, a man who smoked a 'twenty for five' would use a monkey wrench for killing, while a man fortunate enough to have a clear Havana would use an air gun."

"Well, not so strong as that, Harding," he said quietly, with a smile; "not so strong as all that."

"But surely, Craig," I urged, still incredulous, "surely, no matter how strong your theory, you would not try to convince a hard-headed jury of anything on such flimsy evidence as this."

"Unfortunately in this day and time, no. The time must soon come, how-

ever, when much of our criminal jurisprudence will hinge on just such fine points. But what can be of more practical importance to us than these? As I have said, they indicate the weapon used, and the weapon may—will—lead us to the culprit. Now you must let me develop my theory, my boy, before I waste time in explanations. Be patient."

CHAPTER III. AN ITEM OF NEWS.

THIE quiet self-assurance and masterful manner of Jason Craig were impressive—so much so, indeed, that I now began to feel a revelation of powers in him that hitherto had been unsuspected. And the thrill of such a revelation! To be ushered into the presence of a man of rare and remarkable powers may inspire awe, but to know a man, to believe him to be of about the same mental capacity as one's self, then to see his first flash of greatness inspires incredulity, awe, reverence.

Up to this time I had known Craig not longer than two years, and had shared rooms with him only during the present session. His keen observation had been proverbial among the college fellows. Often had he shot bolts of knowledge at us the origin of which we did not know. But I do know that these bits of knowledge which always served my companion so well were attributed often to shrewd guesswork.

Now, on this bright spring morning as our nostrils sniffed the subtle fragrance, and our soles struck the dewy grass, all of this came back to me, and so acutely befuddled was my mind that for the remainder of the journey home my companion had no complaint about my breaking in upon his thoughts.

"I may not return until late—perhaps not before morning," he told me a while later, after we had partaken together of our belated breakfast. With this he was gone.

When he returned it was nearly three in the morning. I had gone to bed, but my sleep had been of the broken sort—

by turns, a quiet doze, a weird dream, a fitful start—so that no sooner had his quiet tread reached the sitting room than I was wide awake and staring at the doorway.

"Harding!"

"Yes?"

He thrust aside the portières, and switched on the electrics. "You recollect the name on the visiting card?"

I felt a thrill through my brain and a tingling of blood in my cheeks. "Yes—Yoland Harrison; I knew her personally," I said.

"Dead—stabbed above the heart!"

"No!"

"Horrible—pitiable—but true. I have the Saturday morning paper here."

He drew the folded edition from his pocket. I sat up in bed cross-legged, dropped my elbows on my knees, my chin in my hands, and stared gloomily across at my companion.

He read first the flaring headlines, then the body of the article:

"For the second time in two days Salem has been shaken by crime. Last night Miss Yoland Harrison, daughter of one of the best-known and most highly honored families in the city, was found dead under circumstances that leave little doubt of murder.

"Last evening Miss Harrison and her mother attended a reception in honor of a friend. They returned home together, and Miss Harrison in the best of spirits, bade her mother a cheery good night, then repaired to her own room. About ten o'clock Mrs. Harrison, desiring to have a word with her daughter, went to her room. She called, but received no answer. The room was in darkness, so she turned on the light and was horrified by the sight of her daughter stretched across the bed, a wound above her heart. She was still in her evening dress, only the glove on her right hand having been removed.

"Mrs. Harrison immediately gave the alarm, and the housemaid was aroused. When the police arrived they found that the drawers of the dresser had been ransacked and things were strewn about the floor. In the middle of the floor was found a gold pocketknife bearing the engraved initial B. One blade was open and stained with crimson. There was much jewelry in the dresser, yet nothing was found to have been missing. The remarkable thing is that the ring which Miss Harrison always wore upon her right hand, the one ungloved hand, is gone. It was a treasured gift, being a birthday present from her father, and she was known never to be without it.

'The room in which Miss Harrison was found has long French windows, and is easily accessible from the garden. There were no men in the house at the time. Miss Harrison's father is dead. Mr. William Harrison, her brother, is in Europe on business. The police feel certain that the crime was committed for some strange personal motive. They have valuable evidence which must be suppressed at present, and which points to a connection between this and the tragedy at Hamlin Dormitory."

"Craig!" I clenched my fists in impotent rage. "This is fiendish—diabolical! What can be done?"

"Just now—nothing."

"You knew," I said excitedly, "that Blanding was deeply interested in Miss Harrison. I didn't mention it at the time of the discovery of the card, because I thought it of no importance."

"Facts apparently the most trivial," was the comment, "are often the most suggestive." He dropped into a nearby chair, then added, with eagerness: "I did know something of that affair—no details, however. Tell me."

"Well, to begin at the beginning, the Harrison and Bronson families hold a friendship dating back to the early eighties, so that when Harold came here to school in the fall of nineteen hundred and five it was only natural that he was thrown in contact with Miss Harrison. The pair sought each other's company much, and the impression was that between them there was a greater warmth than mere friendship. Some time during the spring of nineteen hundred and six Bronson effected an introduction between Blanding and the girl.

"Now, I might mention that Miss Harrison was a delicate, high-strung, determined girl, rather inclined to the romantic. Already you know that in spite of his recklessness Blanding was a likable fellow. There was something even of a charm, it seemed, about his dash and wild abandon. You can guess the drift. On a high tide of romantic love, as it were, he towed her into port. But Blanding was rather too much of the cosmopolite for the mother. She had heard something of his high steppings, and as soon as she noticed his attention to her daughter she forbade his further coming to the

house. I fear she was too late, however, and that the matter had gone too far. I believe that with all the intensity of his reckless nature he loved her, and—she loved him.

"While I do not know, I hardly think Bronson's attention was any more than friendship. I do not believe that there was any understanding between Miss Harrison and him, except one of friendship. At any rate, as far as any outsider has ever been able to learn, Bronson and Blanding remained the same friends as ever."

My companion had listened with unusual interest.

"Humph!" he grunted; then, rising: "Odd how facts run. You'll be amazed to know that Bronson's statement about spending the night at Westman's was a fabrication."

"Craig!" I recalled Bronson's hesitancy when Craig had questioned him as to his whereabouts.

"Quite so. I telephoned Westman last evening, told him of the tragedy, and of Bronson's agitation. Of course, I knew it would be only natural for him to mention it if Bronson had spent the night with him. You may guess that I was a little taken aback when he expressed his pity, and said that he hadn't seen Bronson for two weeks."

I sprang to my feet. "Craig," I said brokenly, "you don't think—Bronson—had a hand—in this affair—do you? Is there any connection—between these two crimes?"

"Evidently there is some connection between the two," was the reply; "but I suppose the police refer to the visiting card. As yet the whole affair is not clear to me. Before I say more I must know about the setting of the ring Miss Harrison wore. I must get a glimpse of her face, and know exactly how her hands were gloved the evening of the crime. Now, old scout, try nature's restorer; you look fagged. You must begin to rise above external influences over which you have no control. It's a lesson you've got to learn if you don't want your mental equilibrium always upset; the sooner the better. Good night."

Peeping between the portières, I was aware that Craig himself had no intention of retiring. There beneath a small light in that chamber of shivering shadows he sat in luxurious relaxation. Against the opposite wall of the room stood his shadow, weird, ominous, gigantic; and even as my eyes caught the dark silhouette of his hand my imagination in some vague way connected it with the huge impression on Blanding's mantel. Now, as I looked, my companion's fingers plowed slowly upward and back through the dense mass of hair, and from his lips came nebulous rings of cigarette smoke, floating upward through an atmosphere of silence. I knew that his precise mental mechanism was at work.

A while later, when I awakened sharply from a dream, there he sat, still in that same luxurious fashion, patting the arms of his chair in quiet satisfaction. The cigarette was gone; instead, from his lips there wafted a low, soft, whistled strain of "La Sorella." As I listened, it grew fainter and fainter, yet sweeter, until at last, as a lullaby to a weary child, it soothed me to sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SHADE OF PROBABILITY.

AFTER the long, deep sleep that follows absolute mental exhaustion, I crept lazily out of my bed. Jason Craig, like the wise early bird, had departed into the morning, and had feasted his soul upon its glorious golden outburst; so I betook myself to a solitary breakfast, read with fresh horror an account of the strange double tragedy, and repaired to my room, there to grope about this labyrinth of mysterious sequences in search of a clew.

I pondered over the huge hand on the mantelpiece, over the pair of hands on the window sill, and over Craig's remark of the importance of the match stem and the cigarette stump. I sought to connect the Harrison mystery with the one at the school, to explain my companion's desire to get his three peculiar yet apparently minor points of information, and to understand Bron-

son's fabrication. In other words, I juggled, rejuggled, then juggled again all the facts at my command, until at last, in despair, I dismissed the whole problem as insoluble to me, and as requiring a mind of far more penetration than my own.

Something past midday my companion returned, as genial and kindly as usual, even softly humming the snatch of a ditty as cheery as the sunshine. But presently, upon shedding his coat for his dressing gown, he once again dropped into that luxurious repose which I was beginning to associate with mental abstraction.

"Whatever may be said of walking as a healthful exercise," he explained, in answer to my inquiring glance, "it is certainly not conducive to immediate deep thinking. It stimulates the muscles when they ought to be in a state of perfect relaxation—and I want to think." He passed his hand over his eyes as if to wipe away any previous impressions, then plunged into such a state of profound self-absorption that I felt any desire on my part to approach the subject that weighed upon my mind effectually blocked.

Presently Craig himself broke the silence.

"Old man," he said, "I think I have cleared up at least one end of this mystery."

"You have!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, and I'll tell you a few things. But please don't ask me to mention any names that I seem to omit. Now, it happens that I was at the end of my first quest when the facts of the Harrison mystery became known to me. Bronson, of course, was unfortunate enough to be in the track of wrathful circumstances. Up to this morning I wondered why he had not been suspected or taken into custody.

"But I met Charlton, and he made it clear. He, Bronson, and Williams went out Thursday night for a gay evening. It was an infraction of the rules, of course, and while, in a way, we are Bronson's friends, we can hardly be called confidential ones, so that he evi-

dently thought it none of our business when I asked of his whereabouts.

"Of course, his mind was innocent of any connection with the crime. But when the police asked him, his position became clear to him, and he told the truth, thus establishing a perfect alibi. Then, too, his modest, retiring manner, and his being a minister's son, by no means helped him toward confessing to us that he had painted the town three different colors."

Craig leaned over, and took his Kant from the center table, where it had lain since the previous day, then plunged into his coat pocket for his cigar case.

"Now for the starting point of our whole investigation," he began between puffs. "I remarked yesterday that the cigarette stump and charred match stem indicated the weapon used, and you scoffed at me. Well, to be precise, they showed an absence of premeditation; and this fact in turn pointed strongly to the weapon. I knocked out the intermediate step for purposes of mystification.

"Really, Harding, you must admit that it would be a rather remarkably cool criminal who would deliberately plan a murder, then in the presence of his victim smoke a cigarette and twirl the lighted match in his fingers—all just before doing the deed."

"But—"

He waved me to silence. "Kindly hear me through, then challenge. As I was about to say, premeditation means the selection of a weapon some time before the commission of the crime; absence of premeditation means the selection of a weapon on the spur of the moment. The result is that if absence of premeditation is established we must seek the weapon among those effects within easy reach, or among those things ordinarily carried by the culprit.

"Now, the flat circular hole in Blanding's head showed that he was killed by some blunt circular missile; and the balance was against there being any premeditation. Could the missile have been something lying near at hand? The thin coat of dust over everything showed

that nothing had been disturbed. Then it must have been carried by the murderer.

"Now, Harding, let us take the most common class of round missiles—stones. Could it have been that it was done with a stone? Carrying a stone meant either premeditation or defense. Again the mute evidence of the smoked cigarette was against the former.

"As for defense, it is not likely that in this day and time of firearms any one entering another man's apartment and *expecting* bodily harm would go armed with a stone. He might use it as a weapon of premeditation, reckoning on taking his victim unawares; but hardly if he himself expected bodily harm.

"No; everything was against a stone having been used. Then what? Think as much as you will, and you will finally come to the conclusion that no other missile is so likely to be carried at this season of the year as a baseball. When you add to that an impression that might easily have been made by a baseball mitten, what was already an excellent clew becomes practically a certainty."

CHAPTER V.

JUST THE MAN.

GREAT, Craig, great!" I simply could not suppress it.

After a puff or two, he went on: "Well, you see how my field of inquiry was narrowed. Only a ball player would be carrying a baseball and mitten. That he was an amateur was also evident; a professional would not have such paraphernalia about his person.

"You recollect, no doubt, I observed that the wound was a remarkable one—that the frontal bone was crushed in. Harding, the resistance of that bone is extreme. There are cases on record where blows on that bone have been so great that the force, transmitted through the spinal column, broke the coccyx bone at the spine's extremity; yet the frontal showed no sign of fracture. Batsmen have been struck on the forehead with balls thrown from a distance of sixty feet by the speediest big-

league pitchers, and the worst effect usually has been unconsciousness.

"What sort of a raw amateur was it, then, that even at the short distance of ten feet could make a quick throw and crush in a bone of such powerful resistance? Was it an ordinary player? The indications rather pointed to the superlative of throwing strength—to the man whose arm had the most training and development, whose prowess in the game depended largely upon the strength of his arm—the pitcher.

"This deduction was merely the shade of probability, of course, but even if it had been wrong my quest would not have been hindered, since it is practically as easy to seek out an ordinary player of a certain description as to seek a pitcher.

"Having the size of my man's footprints, the bandaged finger, and the finger marks on the window sill as guides, my task was easy. It was not likely that the fellow would discontinue visiting his accustomed haunts. Yesterday I left here with one of my old electrototype plates tucked under my arm. I spent the afternoon scanning the different prairie lots for a left-handed player of extraordinary build with the second finger of his right hand bandaged. At Winslow Lot I saw such a fellow. To my satisfaction, he was a pitcher.

"I explained to him that I needed a good man to pitch one game next week. I took his name and address, broke the point of my pencil in so doing, took out my knife to sharpen it, and handed him the plate to hold in the meantime. Of course, he took it in his good hand—the left.

"Electrototype plates are rather heavy for their thickness, so that the quick downward pull of the unsupported end forced a deal of pressure against the thumb. The plate fell to the ground; I apologized for not having mentioned its weight, and urged him to call this afternoon to make terms.

"The fact that the wrapper was carefully covered with a coat of paraffin gave me a very excellent set of finger prints. Now, while you were dreaming

in Blanding's room I took a thin shaving from the window sill, just enough to get the left-hand thumb print in the dust. I left all the remainder for the use of the police—if they found them.

"So with the plate and the shaving I made my way down to Delman's, supped there, and in the meantime compared the two thumb prints. It was in high spirits that I left the place. I went to hear that excellent *prima donna*, Mademoiselle Duval, render a selection—from 'La Tosca,' supped again at Delman's, and, as you see, was already at the end of the mystery when I passed the *Press* office, and became acquainted with its terrible sequel. I believe that explains everything—does it not?"

I was almost too bewildered, even to mutter that everything was explained, but I managed to do so. Yet I knew that Craig was withholding the most important fact of all—the name of the person about whom he had spun his web of evidence. He eyed me a moment, knowing that I was dying for this fact; then he took up a pipe, filled it, and just before applying the match said:

"Harding, telephone Bronson to come over immediately."

"At last!" I asked, with relief. "Do we come to the end of this business at last?"

"I believe the end is in sight."

Fifteen minutes later our bell announced Bronson. He was not seated before a second peal told of another visitor.

"Some one to see you, Craig," I said.

"A player for our barnstorming ball team, no doubt. Show him in."

I had forgotten about the after-session trip we had planned. Even in my excitement I could not but notice the striking contrast between our two visitors—Bronson, weak, worn, nervous, abstracted; the young ball tosser, strong, fresh, clear-eyed, ruddy-cheeked. The examination of the applicant interested me little now, for I was wondering how Craig would approach Bronson.

"Name?" asked Craig laconically.

"Wilfred Moore."

"Residence?"

"Two-eighteen East May, West Salem."

"Pitcher?"

"Yes."

"Southpaw?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Moore," said Craig coolly, "you are just the man we want; just the man we want for—the murder of Horace Blanding!"

With these words, he carelessly laid his revolver on the table before him.

CHAPTER VI. BRONSON'S GUESS.

A THUNDERBOLT could not have upset our party more. Bronson kindled into a flame of wrath, and it was with difficulty that Craig and I kept him from throttling the man.

Young Moore was in a state of collapse. He fell heavily into a chair. To appreciate my feelings, one must recall his own when, after having formed a mental picture of some total stranger, he finds that his conception could not have been farther wrong. In the wilds of my imagination I had conjured up a towering bandit of brutal jaw and more brutal, bloodshot eye, of scowling visage deeply set in a framework of unkempt hair. I had found the direct antithesis of such a man.

Craig alone was calm. He rushed some water to the prostrate man's lips. For the first time, I noticed that the second finger of the man's right hand was bandaged.

Our captive chewed his under lip, and gripped the arms of his chair in an effort at self-control, then began:

"I don't know how much you already know, gentlemen, but I shall tell all, and let you, as fair-minded men, judge for yourselves. I live with my mother and sister out in West Salem. My father is dead. I attend school in Caleph, but we close early, and that accounts for my being here."

"Well, to get to my story, Blanding met my sister during the last session, and obtained my mother's permission to visit her. When school opened again this session, he resumed his visits. The

girl became wrapped up in him, and—well, you know how a woman will go to the very brink of perdition itself for the man she loves. This pitiable condition became known to me only last month when I returned home. I flew into a passion, but my mother urged that the session was near a close, and that Blanding had pledged his honor for then. But for the past two weeks we saw or heard nothing of him, and I began thinking.

"I pitched a game two days ago about five squares from the dormitory, and it was late before the crowd broke. I was traveling along Wills Street to reach my car for the suburbs when I saw a light in Blanding's window. It struck me to go up and talk matters over with him. I ascended by the fire escape to avoid trouble in getting to him, and entered the room. He was standing near the dresser at the time. He was surprised at my intrusion, but took it good-naturedly. You can believe me or not, gentlemen, but even then I felt no vindictiveness toward him. I was as cool as under ordinary circumstances. If I remember aright, I deliberately smoked a cigarette while I talked."

"And twirled the burning match in your fingers," added Craig.

"I did." He turned a startled gaze on the speaker. "But—but how in the world did you—"

"Please continue your story."

"Well, we talked it over for an hour, and I foresaw that we would come to no agreement. I tried as best I could to control my rising anger, and I think I succeeded fairly well, but it seemed that something snapped in my brain when he told me he couldn't give my sister his name because she was not of his social station in life."

Here the narrator's voice quavered in righteous wrath, and his fingers twitched convulsively. I felt something akin to pity in my heart. Bronson's face was clouded; Craig's inscrutable.

Moore continued: "I was standing with my back to the mantelpiece, with my glove on my right hand, and my ball in my left; he was seated by the window in his armchair. How and why

I made such a terrific throw I'll never be able to tell you, but—that groan—that sight! His eyes bulged, and his head dropped to one side. I knew he was gone. I picked up my ball, turned off the light, and made my escape the way I came. Heaven is my judge, gentlemen, I did not intend to kill him; but put yourselves in my place—what would you have done? I ask you: What would you have done?"

With this dramatic conclusion, he sank back into his chair, a pitiable sight to behold. In silence we sat there fully a minute.

"Well, fellows," observed Craig, at length, "we are not the police, and with their methods it is not likely that they will learn the truth about this matter. It is up to us to decide whether this young man shall answer before a jury of his peers or before the Highest Tribunal. What say you, Bronson?"

"Avenge my poor friend's death at the expense of his honor?" he cried, springing up, and bringing his foot down with a resounding stamp. "A thousand times no! The facts must not be brought to light!"

I shook my head in solemn agreement—prompted, however, by another motive. Craig arose, and turned the door-knob. A slight gesture of the hand indicated that the unfortunate youth was free.

"Heaven bless—your generosity—fellows!" he stammered, in gratitude. Then, with grave resolution: "But I've decided to end it—to give myself up. I can never live in peace with this hanging over me, however clear my conscience may be. And what have I to fear? I don't believe just men would convict me."

Craig extended his hand in silent commendation. They shook. Moore bowed, and, with measured tread, crossed our threshold.

"Who knows what we might have done under the same circumstances?" said Craig, as he dropped back into his chair.

But Bronson could not be consoled. "And poor Yoland!" he blurted out. "It was too much for her delicate soul—

too much!" And he bounded out of the room.

"And Yoland Harrison—" I began, as soon as the door had slammed. "Who did—"

"Herself."

"Suicide?"

Craig nodded his head in silence.

CHAPTER VII.

FACT AND THEORY.

IT was a minute or more before Craig spoke, and then he made some remark absurdly irrelevant to the affair that was thrilling both our souls.

"But aren't you going on?" I said.

He smiled, and replied that nothing could give him more pleasure, and he said it quite frankly. "Pleasure," he went on, "because it takes me now into the creative—into a medley of fact and theory. Undoubtedly Bronson's guess was correct. You made the mistake of reaching the conclusion that was most obvious. But if I had not already solved the first problem I should have reasoned as follows: I should have considered the second mystery in the light of the first. Neither, it appears, was actuated by motives of robbery, but by some personal reason. When you consider the youth and high standing of the principals, their intimate friendship, the nearness in time, and the limited population of the town, it would be hard to come to any conclusion other than that there was some close connection between the two tragedies.

"That, of course," Craig went on, "would be a starting point. Upon the theory that there was a connection between them, I proceeded to solve the one with the most distinctive features, since the solution of the one would mean the solution of the other. But, as I said, I had solved mystery number one when I read of mystery number two. Thus I had the advantage of knowing that the Blanding murder had been committed in a fit of passion, and that the culprit was but a youth.

"These facts threw the odds against his perpetrating such devilish savagery as the murder of Miss Harrison. It

was with a mind blank beyond this point that I read the newspaper account to you. When you enlightened me that the existing relationship between Blanding and Miss Harrison was more binding than I had thought—why, solution began to dawn. Under those circumstances, what more logical theory than suicide?

"It was at this point that the first real difficulty of the two problems presented itself. If suicide, these unusual attendant circumstances had to be cleared by some very natural explanation. You recollect that I refused to put myself on record until I had gained a few points of information. This morning, by some tall persuasion, coupled with the power of gold, I won over the housemaid, and obtained my information.

"I found that the missing ring had an unusual raised setting, which, from the base of the ring to the apex of the stone, could not have measured less than a quarter of an inch. I learned also that Miss Harrison wore new, arm-length kid gloves that afternoon. Hardly, I got but a glimpse from behind the portières of that poor girl's face as she lay stretched in the back parlor, but it was sufficient to convince me that death had no pangs for her. That smile, crystallized—I see it still. Poor girl!" His voice sank to a sympathetic whisper.

"Now, let us try to reconstruct her actions," he continued, "from the time she left home to the time she was found lifeless. Very likely the last thing she did before leaving the house was to put on her gloves. They were brand-new, mind you, and of kid, a material which gives very little. At the last minute she discovered that the large setting of her ring interfered with her putting on the right-hand glove. What other course was there left except to slip the ring off?

"When she and her mother left, it was early evening. We may easily suppose that in the preparation for the reception a newspaper was not thought of. Certainly the subject of murder would not be introduced at a gay social party.

Miss Harrison and her mother returned home. Miss Harrison went straight to her room after bidding her mother good night.

"Now, I have the word of the house maid that the habitual resting place of the evening paper is on a table in the hall. It is not far-fetched, I believe, to say that Miss Harrison on the way to her room stopped a moment to glance at the headlines, and there discovered that which would have sent many another girl into violent hysterics. But the girl evidently had a deal of self control. She realized that she would gain no sympathy from her mother over her sweetheart's death.

"You know how much we care about airing our troubles to those who have no word of condolence. So the girl neither screamed nor ran to her mother. Instead, she quietly repaired to her room. There the fact of the barrier that had stood between her and her beloved, and that she now had nowhere to turn for sympathy, intensified her frantic grief. I can picture that wild, romantic nature now, welcoming the embrace of grim death. To such a nature what means could be more welcome than that furnished her by this same sweetheart? I know that the knife with which the deed was done belonged to Blanding. I wired its description to his people, and received answer that such a knife had once been in his possession. He probably loaned it to the girl. It is likely that in search of it, or to get a last glimpse of some other token, the dresser was ransacked.

"That the right-hand glove had been removed is perfectly natural—a right-handed person almost unconsciously pulls off the right-hand glove before doing anything. The light was cut off—a whim, I fancy; in the shadows she drove the blade true. That the missing ring has not been found means nothing. I am sure that when an inventory of Miss Harrison's effects is taken it will be found in one of those innumerable nooks that only a woman knows. That face—all lighted up with that spiritual smile! It was clear evidence that she had planned and welcomed the

end. Harding, I think I shall never forget that face!"

CHAPTER VIII. SIMPLE FACTS.

WELL, does my theory seem reasonable?" Craig asked presently.

"It is decidedly convincing," I assented warmly. "But one thing I want to ask you: When I interrupted you near the beginning, it was to ask you how you knew that Moore twirled the lighted match in his fingers. He admitted it, but you reminded him of it. How did you know?"

My companion took another long draw at his cigarette, and said:

"It seems that I looked at that match stem not as upon one burned in a peculiar way, then made my deductions from that, but rather as merely upon a match stem slowly turned while in the act of burning. Actually, however, the steps were these: I observed that the stem was charred within a quarter inch of the end, and that the line of burning was the same distance from the end all around. Aside from the fact that it wouldn't consume a whole match to light a cigarette, it is also true that a lighted match held casually will burn higher on one side than on the other. Hence the conclusion that it was revolved slowly while burning."

He fumbled in his pockets. I gazed at him in blank wonder.

"I had better clear up everything," he said, "before I acquire a reputation for omitting details. My luck in running across Moore yesterday saved me the insertion of this advertisement."

He tossed over a slip of paper. It ran:

WANTED—A classy southpaw to pitch one game next week. Must be a strong, husky man, with plenty of speed. No second-rater need apply. (Signed) HAMPTON CRAIG, 123 E. Oak St.

"Craig," I declared, "you're uncanny! You were going to advertise for a southpaw. How the dickens did you know the fellow was left-handed before you ever laid eyes on him?"

My companion brought his hand

down on his knee with a sharp slap, and laughed mischievously.

"Uncanny? Well, that's a classic! Nothing like having your friends to judge you. But I think you'll have to change that a little when I tell you there are *three* excellent reasons. Charles Harding, don't eye me so curiously; I'm the same old friend you've always known. There are three excellent reasons why he could not have been right-handed. Was not a finger on the right hand bandaged? How, then, could a man make such a terrific throw with a bad hand? Again, right-hand throwers do not buy gloves for their right hand. Lastly there is the time-worn theory of position. The footprints indicated that culprit and victim faced each other almost directly. The blow was on the right corner of the forehead. Figure it out. I think you'll see that the solution was no great achievement. I shouldn't be surprised even if you said that it was, after all, somewhat easy."

Before I could reply, the bell of the telephone jingled and Jason Craig picked up the receiver.

It was the chief of police. He informed Craig that Wilfred Moore had given himself up as the slayer of Horace Blanding. The young man told a straightforward story, the chief said; and it seemed to him that he was not guilty of premeditated murder. Moore had mentioned that Craig was in possession of many of the details of the tragedy, and the chief wished to gain all the information he could.

"I do know something of the case," answered Craig calmly. "I believe that Moore killed Horace Blanding; but I agree with you that the case does not look like murder. I'll come at once, and tell you all I know of the affair."

The chief added that he was holding Moore for the coroner's inquest; but he hoped that, if the man had any friends, they would take immediate steps to get an attorney and prepare a defense.

"Come, Harding," said Craig, as he hung up the receiver, "you may as well come to police headquarters with me. I feel that Moore deserves all the help we can give him."

• *A Story of Theatrical Life* •

On a Dark Stage

By
Roland
Ashford
Phillips



(A SERIAL NOVEL)

CHAPTER I.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

SWINGING off the crowded Broadway car, Klein darted into a quiet side street. A soft May twilight was stealing silently and mysteriously over the great city. The high arcs and a few yellow, flaming signs on Broadway those harbingers of night—were leaping into brilliant life. Klein ducked a taxicab, grinned at the chauffeur, gained the sidewalk, and began scanning the dim numbers on the doors of the brownstone fronts.

The magic of springtime was in the air. A street piano suddenly burst into melody, and a group of scurrying children answered, as they must have answered the call of the Pied Piper centuries ago. Birds were twittering sleepily in the trees that lined the walk; a smell of growing things hung heavily about. The breeze from Bryant Park stirred the curtains in the open windows, and brought with it the fragrance of many flowers.

Klein whistled to himself, finally caught sight of the number he was searching for, ran up the stone steps, and was on the point of ringing the bell

when a girl came out of the house, smiled, and held the door ajar.

"Isn't this where Mr. Delmar lives?" Klein asked.

"Yes, sir. Top floor, rear."

He thanked her, entered the stuffy hall with its single yellow gas jet, sniffed hungrily at the odor that drifted up from the basement dining room, and climbed the narrow stairs.

After the last flight he found the rear door, and knocked. No answer. He tried again—louder; then, realizing what happened to be the truth, put his lips to the crack of the door.

"Hello, Delmar! You in there? It's me—Klein!"

Instantly a bolt was shot back, and the door opened.

"Thought that would bring you," Klein said, laughing and stepping quickly inside, after which Delmar locked the door once more. "I've lived in boarding houses before, Delmar. When I knocked, you thought it was the landlady, didn't you?"

Delmar, a man seemingly Klein's age, laughed, and they shook hands. "That's about the size of it, Klein," he admitted. "I've been dodging the old girl for the past two weeks. What's new on Main Street?"

"Nothing much. I've been pounding the asphalt for two weeks or more. Closed the first of the month in Detroit, and came straight here looking for a summer job. You're not looking any too bright, Delmar. What's the trouble?"

Delmar shrugged. "You've been in the show business long enough to know that. I came to New York in January, and haven't worked a day since. Then I got a bad cold and was laid up. Oh, I've had a successful season, I have."

"Why didn't you let me know?" asked Klein, looking sharply into the other's eyes. "You're a pretty one, you are. Why you kept writing me that—"

"Well, why shouldn't I lie?" Delmar interrupted, throwing up his hands and sinking into a chair. "You've had troubles of your own. Besides, I thought every day something would turn up, and then I could—"

"Got anything in view?" asked Klein, a sudden idea flashing over him.

"Not a thing. I went out a couple of days ago; but I got so faint climbing those infernal stairs, and—" He broke off and turned his head away.

Klein understood. Just as the other had said, he had not been in the theatrical business without gaining some experience about such things. He had known what it was to tramp those weary miles of agency stairs, only to meet with a curt: "Nothing for you today." It was bad enough when one had three good meals a day, and a fairly decent room to go to at night. But when it came to hunting fifteen-cent table d'hôte dinners, with a glass of buttermilk between times, and then creeping in late at night in order to dodge the landlady - creeping to such a room as Delmar's—

"Look here, Delmar," he spoke up, after a hasty survey of the dingy room. "Get rid of that bath robe, put on your Sunday best, and burn up the sidewalk to the Albany Hotel."

"What for?"

"To get a job, of course," answered Klein.

"But I—"

"Will you please get into your clothes

and shut up?" interrupted Klein. "Hurry now. You've got to be at the hotel by eight o'clock."

Delmar, finally convinced that Klein was serious, obeyed with alacrity. Klein watched him for a moment or two, and then resumed:

"Haven't any objection to a stock engagement this summer, have you?"

"I'd play four shows a day if—"

"Well, this is the Hudson Stock. Heard of it, haven't you? One of the best stocks on the coast. Hudson is halfway between here and Boston. About a hundred thousand population. The company is a fixture been running for something over forty-five weeks. Two a day and no show Sunday. Salary, sixty dollars."

"I'd be ashamed to tell you what I'd do for sixty iron men every Saturday night," Delmar spoke up, his eyes shining at the prospect. "But I say," he added swiftly, as if the idea had just dawned upon him, "what about yourself? How does it come you're offering me a job when you haven't one yourself?"

"Who said I hadn't a job?"

"Why, you as much as said so when you—"

"Are you going to get dressed and stop asking a lot of fool questions?" Klein broke in, half angrily. "I never opened my head about a job. But there's one for you, if you want it. The manager is at the Albany Hotel, and if you put up a good enough front you'll land the engagement. I got wind of it today, and—" He stopped short. "For the love of Patrick!" he exclaimed. "Are those your best clothes?"

"Best clothes?" Delmar gazed down upon the suit he had just put on. It was shabby, threadbare, and shiny. The pockets bulged; the coat hung in ripples, while the trousers gave one the impression of having been slept in. Buttons were missing here and there, grease spots were evident on the waistcoat, and the cuffs of the trousers were worn to a fringe.

"My best clothes?" Delmar repeated. "Dear me, no." He laughed, and then, with an assumed expression that might

have been humorous at any other time, he said: "I have thirty trunks of them. Oh, yes. But unfortunately, dear old chap, my valet has gone out for the afternoon, and has taken the keys with him."

"Chop that line of character stuff," snapped Klein, "and talk sense! Are those your best clothes?"

"They are. Not only the best, but the worst and the only. What did you expect I'd be wearing?"

"Well, you'll never land a job in that scarecrow outfit," Klein announced. "You look like the horrible example of a rural drama. Take them off!"

"Take them off!" snorted Delmar. "Say, I'd make a hit asking for a job in a suit of pink underwear, wouldn't I?"

"Who said anything about pink underwear? You're forever picking up the wrong cues."

"Well, what am I to—"

Without a word Klein began removing his own clothes. Delmar watched until he had finished, and had donned the discarded bath robe.

"Now get into these clothes, and don't waste time apologizing," Klein said.

Delmar did so. In two minutes the change had been made.

"That's something like it," Klein said, turning the other around critically. "You look more like a human being now."

"It's a peach of a suit," remarked Delmar.

"Had it made about a month ago. Cost me seventy-five dollars, too. But it had to be. You've got to wear glad rags in this business even if you go hungry. Here" —Klein picked up his hat from the bed—"better put this on, too. Now, clear out."

"Who am I to see, and what am I to say?" asked Delmar, giving a final twist to his cravat, and tucking a clean handkerchief into the coat pocket.

"Go right to the Albany Hotel, and ask for Mr. Beyer. He is the manager of the company. That's all the tip I had. He's down here looking for people. Just impress him that you're a valuable stock actor, and that it is to his advantage to engage you. Don't be

too anxious, but don't kick if the salary drops a few dollars. Remember this is May, and the White Way is jammed with actors out of work. August is a long way off, and you'll have to eat a few meals between now and time for fall rehearsals."

"Good enough. I follow you, Klein. I'll make this Mr. Beyer believe he can't do without me. Lord, what manager could resist this brown suit!" Delmar eyed himself critically in the broken mirror. "I look like a successful season with Mrs. Fiske—what?"

"Save your talk for the manager," admonished Klein.

Delmar laughed, put on the hat, accepted the cane Klein held out to him, and vanished out of the door.

"Don't forget to hurry back," was Klein's warning. "I want to go home before morning. Good-by and good luck!"

After Delmar had closed the door softly behind him, Klein settled himself in the one easy-chair, drawing it up under the flickering gas jet. Then, just as he had started looking through a magazine, Delmar returned on tiptoe, his face like a thundercloud.

"Just my infernal luck!" he groaned. "Mrs. Wold is in the lower hall."

"Who is Mrs. Wold?"

"She happens to be the high lord of decision at the present crisis," replied Delmar. "She's the landlady. If she catches sight of me in these fine togs — and me owing her a month's rent—"

Klein's eyes swept to the window. "You'll have to get out this way," he announced. "This is the top floor, isn't it? Well, take the fire escape to the roof, and go down on the other side of the house. It's dark now. You won't be seen."

"Say, you're a wonder, Klein," said Delmar admiringly. "I wouldn't have thought of that in a hundred years. We'll fool the old girl yet!"

He climbed out of the window, and, with the aid of the iron ladder, drew himself up to the roof. Klein waited until he had disappeared, then returned to his chair.

"Poor old Delmar!" he murmured

sympathetically, allowing his eyes to make a more critical inspection of the dingy room and its shabby contents. "He's up against it bad. I only hope he finds the job."

He smiled reflectively. "And it was just the little engagement I wanted for myself—and needed, too. But I guess Delmar needs it more than I do, after all. I can find another one to-morrow—if I'm lucky."

He raised his feet to the window sill, leaned back in his chair, closed his eyes, and fell into a doze.

CHAPTER II.

DESTINY'S CLEW.

KLEIN awoke with a start, looked around the room, suddenly remembered where he was, yawned, and arose to his feet.

"Delmar ought to be home soon," he told himself, walking over to the table, upon which he had dumped the contents of his pockets. "Hello!" he exclaimed, rubbing his eyes, and holding his watch nearer. "Is this right? Jove, twelve o'clock!"

He stepped to the window, and peered out; everything was as quiet as a country churchyard at midnight. "Now, that's funny," he muttered to himself. "Delmar should have been back long before this. The hotel is only two blocks from here."

Half an hour longer Klein waited, growing more and more impatient. Finally, convinced that the unexpected had happened to his friend, he decided to get into Delmar's old clothes, and venture out.

He dressed, chuckling to himself as he did so.

"Hope I'm not recognized in these togs," he remarked, catching his reflection in the mirror. "They're a travesty. And if Delmar doesn't put in an appearance before morning—--" He broke off with a shrug. "Heaven help us both. That brown suit is the one decent outfit I possess."

Klein found an old cap of Delmar's, put it on, lowered the gas, listened for a moment at the door, then tiptoed out

into the dark hall. Slowly, cautiously he ventured down the stairs, guided by the banister, for the only light was in the second floor hall.

"Lord, how these stairs creak!" he muttered. "Hope I won't disturb any of the inmates of this boarding house."

He gained the last landing, where a single, putty-plugged gas jet struggled for life. Then, on the point of passing on to the final flight of stairs, thankful that his descent had been accomplished without any painful interference, Destiny, in the shape of the corpulent Mrs. Wold, suddenly confronted him.

She stepped out of a side room, and met him, face to face. Coming out of a brightly lighted room into a dim hall had apparently confused her for the moment, for, after starting back with an exclamation of surprise, she cried:

"Oh, Mr. Delmar! How you frightened me!"

But the next instant she must have realized her mistake—evidently the suit and cap had misled her in the first place, and, with something between a gurgle and a scream, she put out both of her arms as if to ward off an imaginary blow.

At the same time Klein, as much surprised at the meeting as the landlady, in attempting to make a dash for the last flight of stairs, tripped on the edge of the carpet, and fell squarely into the extended arms of Mrs. Wold. Instantly the landlady's vocal cords produced an outburst that would have shamed a screech owl.

Doors opened, footsteps clattered in all the halls; confused voices were raised. Frantically Klein struggled in the terrific embrace of Mrs. Wold, and, while her screams arose higher and higher, still she had presence of mind enough to keep him entangled.

Escape was no longer possible. Inmates of a dozen rooms, in all stages of dishabille, crowded the halls above him and below him. Everybody was trying to speak at once, and no one, with the exception of the two principals, seemed to know just what the trouble could be.

"Police!" finally gasped Mrs. Wold.

"Some one call the police. I've caught a thief!"

Half a dozen women and two men crowded about them. Mrs. Wold still gripped Klein's arm.

"Police!" she kept repeating, between gasps. "I caught him in the hall. And he tried to beat me."

"Just allow me to explain," protested Klein, recovering his composure somewhat. "I'm no thief. I'm a friend of Mr. Delmar's, and we tried—"

"Hold him tight!" cried a woman from part way up the stairs. "He might try to kill you."

One of the men stepped forward. "I'll take care of this rascal, Mrs. Wold," he offered. "Don't worry, I won't let him get away."

"He's got on poor Mr. Delmar's clothes," some one added. "He's been stealing—"

"What have you got to say for yourself?" demanded the man who had relieved the landlady of her responsibility. "Come on, speak out."

"I'm a friend of Mr. Delmar's," began Klein. "I've been in the house since eight o'clock. I gave him my suit to wear, and have been waiting for him to return. Something must have happened to him. He should have been back several hours ago. I was forced to put on this suit of his, and start for home."

"Mr. Delmar didn't go out to-night," spoke up Mrs. Wold. "I've been waiting for him."

Klein did not doubt this at all, yet he did not intend to enlighten the indignant landlady as to the method her resourceful roomer had taken in outwitting her.

"If you will go to his room you will find I have been telling the truth," protested Klein.

One of the women did so, at Mrs. Wold's request, and promptly returned with the information that Delmar was not in his room.

"I shouldn't be surprised," snapped Mrs. Wold, "if you've murdered him and hidden his body. You look bad enough for anything." Her courage was returning swiftly now that she was

amply protected. "Yes, sir, that's what he's went and done!" She turned to her breathless audience. "He tried to beat me, he did! Struck me! Me, a poor, defenseless woman! Yes, you did, you coward!"

She shook a mighty fist under his nose. "Just you wait until the police come!" She leaned over the stair rail, and called down: "Maggie! Have you phoned for the police?"

"Yes, Mrs. Wold. Ah done phoned," a small, frightened voice answered from the depths below.

Mrs. Wold turned to Klein again, half in tears. "Poor Mr. Delmar!" she moaned, wringing her fat hands. "He was a perfect gentleman, too. I always thought the world of him. He had such elegant manners! Such a lovely personality. Even if he did owe me a month's rent, I—"

Like the snuffing of a candle, the gas went out, and instantly the hall was plunged into darkness. A short, decisive struggle took place at Klein's side, although he was not a party to it. Then he felt an iron hand grip at his shoulder, whirl him half about, and propel him forward.

Mrs. Wold was screaming again, ably seconded by the other women. Then a voice at Klein's ear said sharply, commandingly:

"Run for it!"

A door must have closed behind him, for suddenly all the voices were hushed. Klein groped his way forward in the dark. Presently he discovered a door, and opened it cautiously. Ahead of him was a raised window. This he reached, swung over the sill, held to the iron ladder of the fire escape, descended to the foot of it, and dropped lightly to the ground.

CHAPTER III. OVER THE PHONE.

TO run across the small yard, now gloom-enveloped, climb the rear fence, and finally gain the narrow alley that led between houses to the opposite street, proved to be an easy achievement. Once out in the open, Klein

breathed freer; yet before he had covered half the block he imagined, not without a sudden quickening of his pulse, that a police whistle sounded. It lent wings to his heels.

Heading toward Bryant Park, he walked swiftly through it. Under the high arc lights and against the yellow glare of the big electric signs of Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street, the classic bulk of the public library loomed up like some white fairyland palace.

"Of all the foul situations," Klein muttered under his breath, as he hurried forward. "Never thought such things could happen except in a play. I'm lucky to get out of the house without being —"

He stopped, puzzling over the last unexpected but none the less welcomed incident in the hall. Who had turned out the gas? And why? It could not have been either of the men who had guarded him. Yet it was a man's voice who had commanded him to run.

"Lord, won't Delmar hear a great story when he returns!" said Klein to himself, chuckling at the thought.

In view of the situation he realized that his escape had been fortunate for all concerned. With the arrival of the police Mrs. Wold undoubtedly would have enlarged upon the story of the imaginary attack upon her. Klein's explanations would not have been given credence by the police, especially as he was wearing Delmar's clothes, and Delmar was not at hand to back up his statement. The outcome of the affair would have meant an uncomfortable night in the police station, and an endless amount of trouble, not alone for Klein, but for Delmar as well.

Just what had happened to Delmar after his disappearance over the roof of the boarding house was a mystery. Delmar was rather a wild sort of fellow at times, but it did not seem probable that he would deliberately remain away, knowing Klein was waiting for him.

In this unsettled frame of mind Klein reached his room, and was soon in bed. He awoke early, put on another suit, and hurried out to breakfast. That

meal, in his present financial state, meant a certain basement restaurant on Forty-fifth Street, which to all theatrical folk, especially those who are hunting or "considering" engagements, is known as the "Saving Grace." It has a French name and a German proprietor, and one can enjoy the luxury of a five-course meal for twenty-five cents.

The big room, crowded with small tables, reeks with the theatrical atmosphere. Shop talk begins with the soup and continues through the entrée, the roast, and the other dishes, and does not end until the demi-tasse has been drained, and the precious quarter handed over to the smiling madame.

If the diner is content to listen instead of joining the White Light symphony, he will become imbued with the theatrical situation from the four-a-day vaudeville stars to the English actor who is at present "resting," and who refers to Frohman as "Charlie."

Klein found an unoccupied table in the corner of the room, from where he could keep an eye out for Delmar. Half-way through the meal a hand fell on Klein's shoulder, and looking up he beheld Maddern, an actor friend who had, only the day before, given him a tip on the Hudson Stock job.

"Hello, Klein," was his greeting, as he dropped into the opposite chair. "Keeping this chair for any one?"

"Take it. I guess Delmar isn't showing up this morning. Must have celebrated last night."

Maddern gave his order to the waitress. "I say, Klein, what luck did you have last night?"

"Didn't go after the job," Klein answered. "Sent a friend of mine. Don't know whether he landed it or not."

"What's the matter? Didn't it sound good to you?"

"Sound good?" Klein laughed. "Like milk and honey, old man. But at the last moment I met a friend who was down and out."

"I get you, Klein," interrupted the other, with a nod of his head. "You always were too tender-hearted. You know in this show business it's every man for himself, and the devil —"

"Some of us are more capable of bucking up against the devil than others, Maddern," said Klein quietly. "I've had a fair kind of season—about twenty-odd weeks, and managed to save a few dollars. But poor old Delmar—well, he has been on his uppers. He'd do the same for me if things were reversed."

"Surely he would," agreed Maddern. "But it's tough to hand a friend a job on a silver platter when you're counting the pennies yourself, isn't it? Klein, this is a rotten show year. Never heard of so many good pieces falling by the wayside. I'm signing with a picture company for the summer. As good money as stock, and not half the work. Why don't you tackle them, Klein?"

"I might," Klein said thoughtfully, "only I'm after a 'bit' with the new Belasco show. Rehearsals start in August. And you know he won't have a film actor for love or money."

Maddern shrugged. "Maybe you're right—but beggars can't be choosers. Even an actor must eat in the summer." He took a small cigar from a package of ten, and lighted it after handing one to Klein. "You were down to the Albany Hotel last night, weren't you?"

"I was not." Klein smiled at last night's recollections. "Why?"

"I could have sworn I saw you going up in the cage about—about eight o'clock. I thought, of course, you were going after the stock job. I hung around for a time, but as you didn't show up I went away."

"What made you think it was I?"

"Recognized that straw hat and a brown suit I've seen you wear."

"Oh!" and Klein laughed. "That was my friend—Delmar."

"But the suit? I'm sure it was yours. How did it happen he was wearing your suit?" Maddern insisted upon knowing.

"For purely business reasons," Klein answered. "He made up for the part of a prosperous actor willing to accept an engagement."

"And you?"

"I was sitting in his room wrapped in a faded bath robe."

A hearty laugh broke from Maddern.

"You're a real, dyed-in-the-wool philanthropist, aren't you? I hope, after all your trouble, that your friend landed the engagement."

"I hope so, too," said Klein. "And I am also hoping for an early return of that brown suit. Delmar did not come back last night, so I had to borrow his old clothes in order to get home."

He was on the point of relating the adventure which had befallen him, but suddenly changed his mind.

"I suppose Delmar got the job, and went out to celebrate," Maddern suggested to Klein.

"I intend finding out very quickly. I can't look for engagements in the togs I have on."

The two left the restaurant, and walked over to Broadway. Here Maddern pleaded a previous engagement with his film company, and hurried off toward Forty-seventh Street.

"Good luck!" he called back over his shoulder. "Drop around and see me some time, won't you?"

Klein nodded, and walked down Broadway as far as Forty-first Street. At the corner he paused. Midway in the block was Delmar's boarding house. Should he go up and boldly ask to see him? Would Mrs. Wold listen to a calm explanation?

"Why shouldn't she?" he asked himself. "Delmar will back me up. Between us we can—"

He stopped before he had covered five yards. Suppose Delmar had not returned? In that case explanations would be useless. So he weighed the matter, finally concluding that the better method would be to telephone. If Delmar was in he would go up to the house. If not, then he would make inquiries at the Albany. The stock manager would tell him if Delmar had signed a contract.

Crossing the street Klein went up the steps, and into the side door of the hotel. After thumbing the directory he found Mrs. Wold's telephone number.

"Give me Bryant eight thousand, please," he told the girl at the desk. The connection was speedily made.

"Second booth for Bryant eight thousand," the operator announced.

Klein entered, but did not close the door.

"Hello! Is this Mrs. Wold's?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Will you call Mr. Delmar to the phone?"

"Mr. De Delmar?" the voice on the other end broke into a stammer. "Why—why—he—" a confused murmur of other voices interrupted. Klein heard, quite distinctly, Mrs. Wold saying: "Let me talk with him, Maggie."

"Hello!" she said, after a pause. "What is it?"

"I want to speak with Mr. Delmar. Isn't he in?"

"Who is this speaking?"

"A friend." Klein was becoming annoyed.

"Why, they've taken him away," came the puzzling reply. "They took him away—just a few minutes ago."

"Took him away! What do you mean?"

"Haven't you heard?" Mrs. Wold's voice became shaky. "Mr. Delmar—is dead!"

CHAPTER IV.

A CASE OF NERVE.

FOR the fraction of a second Mrs. Wold's announcement, sudden as it was, robbed Klein of speech. Then the full truth dawning upon him, he spoke sharply into the mouthpiece of the telephone.

"Mrs. Wold! How did this happen? When did Mr. Delmar die? Let me have the particulars!"

He received no answer. He repeated his questions.

"Mrs. Wold! Can't you hear me?"

Still no reply.

"They've rung off!" the operator spoke up merrily. "Shall I get them again?"

"Yes, please."

For several minutes the girl tried to get Bryant eight thousand. Finally she turned to Klein.

"Sorry, sir, but they don't answer."

With an impatient exclamation, Klein handed a dime to her and started for the door. At the same moment a man who had been standing near the open door of the booth followed him and touched his arm.

Klein whirled. "What is it?"

"You'll pardon me, but I just heard what you were saying over the telephone. Were you a friend of Mr. Delmar?"

"I considered myself such," answered Klein, in no mood for talk with a stranger.

"Then you did not know anything about this accident until just now?" the other ventured to ask.

"Not a word. I can't seem to believe it. Why, I was with Delmar only last night."

The stranger betrayed instant concern. "I don't suppose you have read the morning papers?"

"Not one."

"I represent the *Morning News*," announced the reporter—for such he was. "Naturally, when I overheard you asking for Delmar a moment ago I was interested. Possibly you could give me some information—"

"About what?"

"You just said you were with him shortly before he was found murdered," began the other.

"Murdered!" broke from Klein's lips. "Good Heaven! You mean to say Delmar has been murdered?"

"That's how the police have sized it up," declared the other. "Of course, they may be mistaken."

"Yes, but how? Where?" Klein insisted.

"Here's the *News*. It'll tell you everything."

The reporter jerked a folded paper from his pocket and thrust it into Klein's hand. The latter accepted it, his eyes leaping immediately to the black heading on the first page. Being a lover of the sensational, the *Morning News* had seized upon this mystery, and had spread the glaring details over four columns.

The heavy type at the top announced

the gist of the story. Beneath it in a smaller font ran the following:

Charles Delmar, an actor, was found unconscious on the roof of his boarding house early this morning by the police, who had been called there by Mrs. Wold, the landlady, to arrest an alleged sneak thief. Four hours later, Delmar died. The sole mark of violence was a small bruise just back of the right ear, which, according to the physician summoned, would not have resulted fatally had Delmar been in good health.

It was later learned that the murdered man had long suffered from a weakened heart, and had had frequent fainting spells. The shock of even the slightest blow would have been sufficient to cause death.

The one clew upon which the police now base their hopes of finding the assailant, is the sneak thief whom Mrs. Wold discovered in her hall just before the arrival of the police. This man attempted to attack her, and managed to escape by putting out the lights.

What appears to be conclusive evidence that this man had something to do with the crime is the fact that he was wearing Delmar's clothes at the moment he was seen by Mrs. Wold. A good description was given to the police, and his arrest is expected.

When found, Delmar was clad in a worn gray suit, bearing the label of a San Francisco clothing house. Nothing was found in the pockets.

Klein looked up from his paper, a faint color touching his cheeks. Delmar dead! And he himself hunted for the crime! What an end to the innocent adventure! What a ghastly trick Fate had—

"At what hour last night did you see Mr. Delmar?" the reporter inquired suddenly.

Klein's eyes looked into the other's. For several seconds neither of them moved or changed expression. The reporter was a young fellow, apparently not more than twenty, neatly dressed, and with peculiar blue eyes set far apart under well-arched brows. He did not in any way appeal to Klein as being the usual type of newspaper man.

What the reporter saw during that brief half minute, was a slim, plainly dressed, clear-skinned young man of about his own age who possessed gray eyes that somehow instantly reminded him of hard sunlight on polished steel. They were eyes that challenged. Swiftly, mentally, the reporter was checking

off the description of the sneak thief given him by Mrs. Wold. It tallied exactly with the gray-eyed man before him.

Intuitively Klein read the other's mind. The interval was brittle with expectancy. Klein had thoughtlessly confessed being with the murdered man last night, and the newsgatherer had leaped to the one conclusion. Klein now found himself to be in exactly the same position as he had been last night, before the unknown had opened an avenue of escape.

To risk capture now, without a bit of evidence to support his story, would be sheer folly. Two charges would be brought against him—one for the murder of Delmar, the other for an attack on Mrs. Wold.

In reading the newspaper story, one thing had troubled him—set his mind to working swiftly in another channel. This was the announcement that Delmar had been discovered on the roof of his house clad in a gray suit of clothes, bearing the label of a San Francisco clothier. How had the change been made? Why?

The reporter spoke first, his voice barely above a whisper. "Maybe we'd better step over here in the corner and talk."

Klein hesitated.

The reporter, aware of the situation, spoke again. "The house detective is standing over there against the telephone desk," he said quietly. "I know him very well. I could call him, and have you—"

Klein, by following the newspaper man toward the corner where a couple of big chairs faced the low window, acknowledged temporarily his defeat. They sat down.

"I was at Mrs. Wold's an hour after Delmar was found on the roof," began the reporter. "She gave me a very good description of the sneak thief whom she found in her hall—found wearing Delmar's clothes."

"Well," answered Klein calmly—he had not been an actor three years without gaining some self-possession. "Go on."

"I must admit," the other said, "that I'm puzzled."

"So am I," returned Klein.

"You appeared to be very much surprised upon learning that your friend was dead. I was watching you. If it was acting, I congratulate you."

Klein shrugged and waited for the other to continue. He noticed that the house detective was still at the telephone desk carrying on a conversation with the operator.

"Look here," suddenly broke from the reporter. "Why won't you tell me the whole story? You might as well. The police will force it out of you in the end. They always do."

Klein's lips set in a hard, straight line, and once again the reporter saw the steel-like glint leap to his eyes.

"Would you believe what I told you?" Klein asked.

"I—could form my own conclusions."

"That's the usual way with your newspaper man."

"Now see here"—the reporter leaned forward in his chair, breathing rapidly—"I can call the house detective. He will hold you while I get Mrs. Wold. She'll identify you. Then in fifteen minutes you'll be locked up."

Klein smiled into the flushed face of the speaker. "I wouldn't think of differing with you, only—"

"Only what?" interrupted the reporter.

"Well, what you have suggested would probably happen," Klein said, quietly amused at the reporter's excitement. "Your plan would work beautifully, only"—he hesitated—"only it would be an extremely bad move."

"A bad move?" The reporter looked indignant. "Of course it would be a bad move—for you."

"You're pretty young for a newspaper man, aren't you?" Klein asked.

"Young? I'm over twenty. It's we young chaps who really count in this game." The reporter seemed impressed with his own statement.

"Granted, my boy," answered Klein. "But how long have you been in the newspaper game?"

"What's that got to do with the present situation?" angrily exclaimed the other, realizing for the first time that Klein was smiling, and to all appearances enjoying the talk. "This is a serious matter. And as a representative of the press I—"

"Have you been in the game, as you term it, long enough to appreciate the value of a beat, a scoop?" mildly interrupted Klein.

The reporter's blue eyes opened wide. "A scoop?" he repeated. "Of course I appreciate the value of one."

He had been in the business just long enough for that word to have a proper and lasting effect. An older man might have been skeptical. Such an expression came to his pink-and-white face as might have appeared upon a ten-year-old's had a dish of ice cream been suddenly placed before him.

"I suppose, then, you realize what would happen if you called to the house detective, and brought Mrs. Wold here, and had me taken to the police station?" Klein went on to ask.

"Why—why—" the reporter was floundering with the question. "I suppose the murder case would be—" he stopped, as a new light sprang to his eyes. "Oh, I see now. I see what you're getting at. If I had you arrested every newspaper man in the city would know of it! Of course! They would all have the story—my story—the story that belongs to me, wouldn't they?"

"I'm glad you understand at last," Klein said.

"By Jove! You're right! I hadn't thought of that. I won't dare let this end of the story get out until I can get it all, and—and get it to my paper."

"It will be a big story, won't it?" encouraged Klein, helping along the other's rising enthusiasm. "I imagine it will boost your salary, too."

The colt reporter was trembling with excitement now; his hands were shaking. The prospect of this scoop had upset him.

"Then you'll—you'll give me the whole story?" he asked, half in doubt.

"The whole story, yes," responded Klein. "But not here."

"Why not?" the other wavered.

"We may be interrupted. Other reporters might be snooping around. You don't want them to——"

"You're right. I hadn't thought of that possibility, either. I'll have them give us a room here."

"Hadn't you better have witnesses?" Klein suggested, in a whisper. "It's the usual thing, you know." He assumed a mysterious air, which was instantly absorbed by the colt reporter.

"Yes," the latter answered, his own voice lowering. "Yes. I guess that would be better. But where can we go?"

"What better place than your own newspaper office?" Klein said. "You'd be right among your friends—and your editor would be impressed by the boldness of the thing."

"Yes, but——" began the other.

"I can well imagine the heading for the story," Klein broke in quickly. "Morning News reporter bests entire police force. Single-handed he arrests Delmar suspect, who, cornered, tells the whole story. Full details of the thrilling adventure."

This picture was too much for the colt—principally because he was a colt. He jumped to his feet. "Come along!" he cried excitedly. "We haven't any time to waste. I'll call a taxi."

Klein started to object—for a taxicab had not entered into his scheme of things—but before he could open his mouth the reporter was motioning to a taxicab man standing at the curb. Klein was thankful to be out of range of that house detective's eye, so he followed the reporter into the cab.

"Morning News office—and hurry!" ordered the latter.

The chauffeur shrugged his shoulders lazily, as if he did not much care whether he obeyed or not, swung the machine around, and started swiftly down the street. As he did so a sudden idea flashed to Klein's mind. Stealing a glance at the reporter's face, he smiled to himself. The curtain of the little drama had rung up unexpectedly; but he had kept his wits about him, and unless he was greatly mistaken, the act

was to have an abrupt finish. It was a case of putting on an impromptu performance.

The cab bowled along merrily—a trifle too merrily, Klein thought, for it was with increasing difficulty that the passengers could hold their seats. Policemen looked sharply in their direction. Everything seemed to be going exactly as Klein had hoped for.

The two passengers did not exchange words: the colt seemed to be busy mapping out his great story, his cheeks still suffused with color, and his eyes sparkling. Klein, cool and confident, as befitting an actor who has well memorized his lines, sat far back on the soft cushions, awaiting his cue. It came in the shape of a particularly severe jolt of the cab. Klein leaned forward and tapped the driver on the shoulder.

"Don't you think you are driving a trifle too fast?"

The chauffeur, who was slightly under the weather from an early-morning drink or two, turned his head, and out of the corner of his mouth retorted: "If you don't like it—get out an' walk."

Klein looked at him a moment, then said: "We have engaged this cab, and have no intention of getting out until we arrive at our destination."

The chauffeur uttered an imprecation. "I'm thinkin' you two are a couple of cheap sports," he observed. "Don't think you ever rode in a taxi before."

"Never mind what you think," Klein replied. "We're not interested. We only want you to use a——"

The chauffeur interrupted by throwing off the clutch and running the machine close to the curb. They were opposite Union Square.

"I ain't in the habit of takin' orders from the likes of you," the chauffeur cried. "You understand that? Why, for a plugged cent I'd punch that lily-white map of yours."

His eyes were blazing, and he was growing more and more indignant. Klein smiled at him in a cool way.

"I'd like to accommodate you with the plugged cent, my friend," he said, "but unfortunately we are in a hurry."

The driver sneered. "I thought so. All your kind is the same. You're strong on the hot-air proposition, but when it comes to puttin' up a pair of dukes, you crawlish. Why, you're both a couple of cheap—"

Exactly what happened was more or less a mystery to the reporter. Klein stepped from the cab and met the irate chauffeur. The latter swung wildly, and Klein nimbly ducked. A crowd began to gather. The colt reporter, eager to get to the newspaper office, and still more eager to get the supposed murderer safely away, got out of the cab, and pushed through the crowd. Believing him to be a mere spectator, like themselves, they fought against his intrusion.

This started another row. Much excited, the reporter crashed a doubled fist to the point of a man's chin. Soon the whole crowd was in an uproar. A policeman forced his way to the seat of the trouble. And then—

The newspaper man saw the chauffeur standing alone in a cleared circle, arms extended, fists doubled, face inflamed, yet with an incredulous and surprised look in his eyes.

"What's the trouble?" roared the officer.

"He ducked," the chauffeur said. "What you know about that? The big wind made a get-away."

"Get away!" the reporter cried, his heart sinking. "Not away! Where? How?"

No one volunteered a reply. The amazed chauffeur, sobered by this time, called his "cowardly" opponent some unprintable names. The officer made a futile effort to scatter the crowd. The reporter, conscious that his brilliant air castles were toppling about his shoulders, berated the luck that had robbed him of a big scoop.

And while this scene was being enacted, a plainly dressed young man, with steel-gray eyes and cheeks flushed as though he had been running, threaded his way in and out of the cluttered traffic, and finally hopped to the platform of a moving uptown surface car, about

a block away from where the disturbance had occurred.

As the car ran slowly past the crowd gathered about a taxicab, he turned and looked out of the window—and smiled. The reporter was explaining something to the officer, and the chauffeur was climbing back to his seat.

"Good-by, Mr. Colt," Klein said, under his breath. "Sorry to spoil your scoop. Better luck next time."

CHAPTER V.

TOD MAKES A DECLARATION.

HALF an hour or so later the city editor of the *Morning News* looked up from his desk to find, standing expectantly before him, the agitated figure of Irving Tod, reporter.

"Well," he snapped, "what do you want?"

"I found the man suspected of murdering Delmar," Tod began. The editor jerked back his head.

"The devil you did!"

"Yes, sir. But he got away from me at Union Square."

And then, while the city editor listened, Tod poured out the story, from the moment of meeting the suspect in the side lobby of the Albany Hotel, to the moment he had disappeared through the crowd at Union Square. When he had finished, all but breathless, the editor crashed a fist to his desk.

"Of all the blockheads!" he cried. "Did you suppose that such a man was going to ride peacefully down to this office and give himself up?"

"He—suggested it," faltered Tod.

"Of course he did. He knew you had him trapped. He was afraid of that house detective. All he wanted was to get out of the hotel without making a scene. Oh, you're a smart one, Tod. A real, clever newspaper man, you are. Keep this up, and I'll put you at the head of the staff, and give you a hundred a week." He hung up his hands hopelessly. "Good Lord!" he groaned. "What an opportunity you had! What a story a live reporter could have corralled!"

"Then—then you think his fight with

the taxicab driver was just a scheme to escape me?" wavered Tod.

"Do I think it?" The city editor rolled his eyes ceilingward. "Look here, Tod," he added, after a pause, "by all the rules and regulations of a newspaper office I ought to connect the toe of my shoe with the seat of your trousers and lift you out into Park Row. And if it wasn't for the fact that my daughter would probably throw six kinds of fits in as many seconds, I'd do it."

"I'm sorry," breathed Tod. "I suppose I am a boob. But I've learned my lesson, and—and it won't happen again. Please don't tell Claire."

In spite of his anger, the city editor grinned. The chink in his otherwise impenetrable armor was his daughter, Claire. Tod knew it—had known it for more years than one. It was because of Claire that Irving Hamilton Tod, left to squander the fortune of his deceased senior, had decided upon a profession. The girl simply would not listen to the pleadings of a waster, as she termed it. The man who won her would have to accomplish something in this world. She had innocently suggested newspaper work, probably because what was good enough for her father was good enough for her husband-to-be. And so newspaper work it was.

"Don't tell Claire, eh?" The editor continued to grin. "It would be a good lesson to you if I did, young man."

"It'll never happen again. I promise you that, Mr. Reed," said Tod. "You think because I was left a lot of money that I'm brainless. I'm not. I'm ambitious, Mr. Reed."

Reed laughed. "You've shown it today, haven't you?"

"Yes, but—"

"You've cheated your paper out of the best scoop of the year," he interrupted sternly, lapsing back to his usual gruff tone. "Why, it would have been a slam to the whole police force. Likely as not some other paper will get hold of the story, and make us the laughing-stock of—"

Tod's blue eyes hardened. "How long will you give me to find this fellow again?" he suddenly demanded.

"Find him?"

"That's what I said, Mr. Reed. Find that suspect—the man who got away from me to-day."

The editor fastened an amused glance upon the embryonic reporter, at the same time surprised at the tone of voice the other had suddenly assumed.

"So you still believe you're the smarter man?" he asked.

"I—I don't know," Tod answered. "But I do want another chance."

"Go ahead and take it." Reed pulled a sheaf of papers toward him. "Heaven forbid that I would ever deny an ambitious young man a fair chance," he added, with a touch of sarcasm.

The retort was not lost upon Tod. He realized, bitterly enough, that he deserved it, and still—

"Very well, Mr. Reed," he answered, trying to keep his tone normal. "I'm going to show you I mean business."

"That would be a great shock to me, Tod."

Color flamed to the reporter's cheeks. "Don't worry if I'm not around the office for the next few weeks," he managed to say.

"Well, Tod"—Reed apparently was more interested in his papers than otherwise—"it will be difficult for us to get the paper to press without you, of course. We'll all miss you dreadfully. But be sure and write me, won't you?"

"I won't show my face around here until I've got the man I want," indignantly replied Tod.

"We'll manage to survive the ordeal. I only hope none of the other boys will take it to heart."

"You can explain the situation to—to Claire," Tod managed to say. "She—she'll believe in me."

"Oh, ho!" Reed broke out, interested for the first time. "So you don't intend seeing Claire until you've pulled off this Sherlock stunt. Is that it?"

"That's it, Mr. Reed," replied the colt, in a manner that suggested a great sacrifice. "I'm sick and tired of being

made fun of. It's always been this way. I know I'm a green hand at this game, but we've all got to make mistakes. Just because I inherited a little money everybody thinks I ought to travel around with a nurse. But I'll show them. And I'll show you, too, Mr. Reed, and all of the *Veter* staff. I'm going to surprise you."

"Don't do that, Tod," Reed pleaded, with mock seriousness. "I've a rather weak heart. The shock might——"

"When I come back you'll be only too glad to keep me on your staff," Tod broke in.

"All right, Tod. If you insist I suppose we'll have to let you have a shot at it. But do be careful. And don't forget to take your man along. It might be a good plan to take a secretary, too. And when you get your suspect, send me a wire. I'll keep the paper waiting, and we'll get out an extra, with red headlines."

Tod was hurrying for the door. His ears were burning. Everybody was against him! The whole world laughed at him! If it were not for Claire he would chuck it all, and go to Europe.

"Hold on a second, Tod!" Reed called to him. "You'd better go in and see Reese and give him some details of your—adventure. We'll blow it up and play it for a feature to-morrow."

CHAPTER VI.

A NEW ROLE.

BECAUSE Irving Hamilton Tod did not stick to the facts of the case, proving beyond doubt that he was not cut out for a successful reporter, and because Reese, the star man, did some telling embroidery work upon it, and the copy reader passed it along without much blue penciling, a certain interested person, who happened to be one of the principals in the little drama, laughed to himself when he read the *News* the following morning. This interested person was our friend, Hobart Klein.

"What a story!" he murmured to himself, reading the black headlines for

the third time. "If that colt wrote it he is certainly an artist."

The statement, in big type, read:

NEWS REPORTER LANDS DELMAR MURDER SUSPECT.

POLICE AS USUAL ARE ALL AT SEA ABOUT THE MYSTERIOUS CRIME.

THE SUSPECT CONFESSES, THEN MAKES HIS ESCAPE.

Below this, in smaller type, ran the following:

In the side lobby of the Albany Hotel yesterday noon, a reporter of the *Morning News*, alone and single-handed, captured a stranger who afterward confessed to the murder of Charles Delmar, the actor found unconscious on the roof of a boarding house in Forty-first Street early yesterday. Later, after a terrific struggle in a taxicab, the man escaped. The reporter is badly injured.

The police, as usual, are completely at fault, and have discovered no clew. The *News* staff of reporters are working independently and hope to land the criminal before long.

The fugitive, as described by the reporter, who lies in a serious condition at the hospital, is a husky six-footer, heavily muscled, dark-faced, and unshaven. His eyes are narrow and wicked; lips thin and twisted at the corners. He wore a black suit and checkered cap, and is apparently an old hand at the business.

Then followed a column of details, more or less new, relating to the adventure in the Albany lobby.

"I suppose that reporter is wearing a hero medal now," Klein said to himself. "Well, he deserves it. No joke being attacked by a brute of a murderer with a wicked eye and twisted lips."

He laughed and tossed away the paper. "However," he mused, "that description will prevent me from being bothered until——"

Just what he should do in this critical situation had been fully decided upon, even before he left the street car the day before at noon, after making his somewhat dramatic escape from the taxicab. He had found Maldern, and talked with him for half an hour. Maldern was positive that it was Klein's brown suit he had seen that night in the Albany Hotel.

"It's a peculiar shade of brown," he

said, "and I spotted it when I first came through the door. The man was stepping into the cage. I could not see his face."

"And what time was that?"

"About five minutes to eight."

"You saw what you took to be my hat, too?" Klein asked.

"Yes. You had it on the day we met in the Knickerbocker Agency. Remember I spoke to you about it? It was a noticeable hat, all right. You don't see many high crowns and narrow brims this season—especially in straw hats. Besides, I immediately spotted the brown silk band. I tell you, Klein," he went on earnestly, "that suit and hat were yours."

"I can't quite see how—"

"You didn't seem surprised to hear of it at breakfast time," replied Maddern, with a frown. "I mentioned the fact. You laughed and said he was a friend of yours."

"Have you read the papers to-day?" Klein asked.

"Some of them. Why?"

"Well, an actor was found murdered on the roof of a boarding house in Forty-first Street early this morning. Did you read that?"

Maddern nodded. "I did."

"That actor was my friend—Delmar."

"The dickens you say!" Maddern exclaimed. "And he was the chap you changed clothes with?"

"He was. Now do you see what I'm driving at?"

Maddern's eyes widened, and he whistled softly. "Good Lord! Of course. If your friend had on your suit, how was it I saw—"

"You probably saw the suit," Klein interrupted, "but not the friend."

"Yes, but how—"

"When Delmar left his room and went out over the fire escape, to avoid meeting the landlady, he was wearing my brown suit and my straw hat; but when he was found, shortly after midnight, by the police, who had been called to arrest me, he was wearing an old gray suit, and no hat at all."

"Then who the deuce did I see wearing your clothes?" asked Maddern.

"That's the chap I've got to find. That man, whoever he is, and whatever his intentions were, slugged Delmar, changed clothes with him, and appeared at the Albany Hotel—provided, of course, that you, Maddern, saw my suit there."

"I could swear to that," Maddern declared.

"Good! Then the question is: Who was it you saw stepping into the hotel cage?"

"We'll soon settle that," said Maddern. "I'll go to the hotel and ask for Beyer, the manager of the Hudson Stock Company. If he signed a contract with a man in that brown suit he'll know it, all right."

Maddern went to the hotel, asked for Beyer, but learned that the manager had departed for Hudson, taking with him the men he had engaged. This much he told Klein a few minutes later. This turn of events added to the mystery. Klein had overlooked the possibility of the manager signing more than one man.

"Look here, Klein," Maddern went on to say, "why are you suspecting that your friend's assailant was an actor, and that he was after the job with Beyer?"

"That's merely a supposition," Klein answered. "I've got to work on some clew, haven't I? I'll run this to earth, and if it doesn't pan out I'll try another."

"Do you mean that you intend getting at the bottom of this affair? That you are going to take all the time and trouble to play a Nick Carter engagement just to—"

"You're forgetting the real issue, Maddern. I'm placed in a ticklish position. I've got to find the murderer in order to clear myself of suspicion."

"I see," Maddern said slowly. "It's a bad turn of luck all around, isn't it? Wish I could help you."

"You might have a chance, later on," Klein returned. "So cheer up."

They parted, Maddern swinging over to Broadway, and Klein turning up the

steps of his rooming house. Before he went inside he called to a passing newsboy and bought some early editions of the evening papers.

In his room he looked them over, hopefully and curiously. None of them, however, treated the Delmar incident with such a spread as had the *News*. Three of the papers had a column apiece—and on the inside pages. The other two did not give such long accounts. But short or long, no light new to Klein was shed by any of the papers on the mystery that had become such a serious matter to him—that threatened his very life.

"It can't blow over too soon to suit me," Klein said to himself. "I've got a difficult task on my hands, but if the newspapers will only keep quiet, I may be able to accomplish it."

CHAPTER VII.

THE START.

KLEIN had been a professional actor for three years. Beginning in San Francisco, with a second-class "rep" company, he had gradually and resolutely worked himself into the position of second leads in a well-known Los Angeles stock company. For two seasons—they lasted fifty-two weeks in this stock—he remained there, gaining profitable experience in the numerous rôles assigned to him, and considering himself fairly well established.

Being naturally ambitious, and somewhat elated over the many local notices received, he decided that New York needed him. So, despite the pleading of his stage manager and the warnings from the rest of the company, he handed in his two weeks' notice, bought himself an extensive wardrobe, and climbed blithely aboard the *Sunset Limited*.

He landed in that mecca of all meccas, theatrically speaking, to find that a "coast defender," as the Western actors are termed, might as well have mentioned previous experience gained in a small-town dramatic school, as far as such recommendations went to influencing the cynical and indifferent New

York managers. He found, as had the majority of others, that there is an invisible, yet none the less exacting, line dividing the theatrical East and West.

Indignant at first, because the managers had not read the "brilliant" notices in the Los Angeles papers, or given any consideration to his three years of stock experience in the land of California, Klein swallowed his pride—which was a difficult and humiliating thing for an actor to do—and accepted with open arms the first engagement offered him—a character part in a third-season production. They opened in Trenton, N. J., and closed in Detroit; and never in his wildest fancy had he imagined so many unknown and unbelievable one-night stands existed. But he stuck gamely through it all, and finished the season, hurrying back to New York when the company disbanded.

His second assault of the agencies, even with the bitter experience learned, offered him little encouragement. The season had been a bad one—the usual wail of the managers in May—and summer stock jobs, at about half winter salary, seemed to be the best things offered. Even these were few and far between, and one day when Maddern had given him a tip on the Hudson Stock manager being in town, and looking for good people, Klein determined to land the engagement.

As things turned out, he did neither. Delmar had long been a friend of his, since the balmy days in Los Angeles. With Klein, a deserving friend stood head and shoulders above all else; and day before yesterday, when they met for the first time in months, Klein was more than willing to give up the tip, and allow Delmar to get in first.

The outcome had been so unexpected, unpleasant, and startling that Klein had a hard time convincing himself that the things had really happened. With Delmar murdered, and himself practically a fugitive from the law, Destiny had indeed been busy.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The next section of this serial will appear in the September issue.

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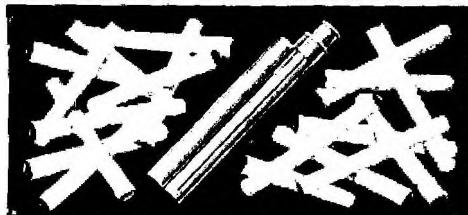


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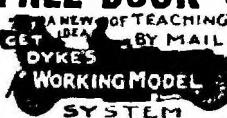
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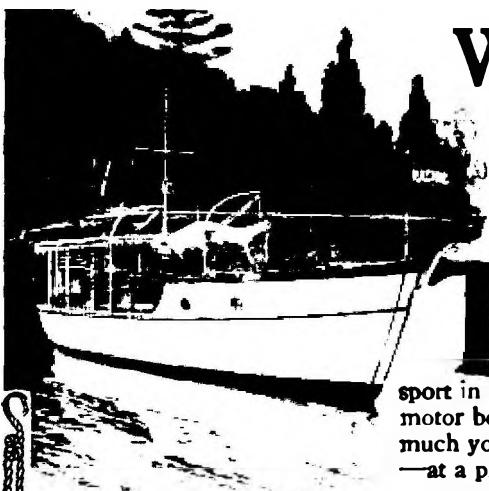
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We Have Just the Boat for You

At a Price You Can Afford to Pay

THIS is going to be a boating year. More people than ever before are going to experience the real joy of motor boating—are going to own a boat of their own. No other sport in the wide, wide world equals the great sport of motor boating, and no matter where you live or how much you can put into a boat, we have the boat for you—at a price so low that you will wonder how we do it.

The secret is in a perfect organization, special factories for each type of boat, bringing the cost of production to a figure lower than ever before.

Take, for instance, the beautiful boats we illustrate herewith. Never have such bargains been offered.

Never Has It Been Possible to Get So Much for So Little

First of all, there is the famous Racine 36-ft Raised Deck Cruiser. This boat will go anywhere a boat can go. Beautiful, big, staunch, with cruising accommodations for eight of your friends. Toilet room, owner's stateroom, galley, electric lights, dinghy—a real home on water with every "extra" included, and yet our price on this beautiful boat is only \$2500.00. You would expect to pay not less than \$4000 or \$5000 for a boat of this size. And you can afford to own and run her. The cost of operation is almost nothing, and you can live on board all summer long if you wish.

Now, let's look at the other end of the line. The little illustration at the right shows our 16-foot Dory Launch—the type of boat the sturdy fishermen of Massachusetts have made famous, a boat you can trust—handsome, roomy, with all the speed you need, easily carries eight to ten, and will give you ten thousand dollars' worth of fun this summer—yet she only costs you \$150. Can you beat it?

Down in the lower corner, you see the Truscott 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ foot family runabout—the boat of your dreams—a Truscott boat—fit to meet the most exacting in finish and refinement. A boat your wife will be proud of and with speed enough to burn, yet as safe as sunshine. We'll tell you the price. Ask us.

Remember— Every boat we build—the above are only a few examples—are, without question, the finest examples of motor boat construction produced today. Nothing is "skipped" to save money—our prices are due to organization. We have made it possible for anyone to own a motor boat and a boat you will be proud of.

Canoes and Row Boats as well. We have these boats to fit your needs, no matter what they are. We only ask the privilege of giving you the full details. We offer you the most perfect service in the world. Just give us the opportunity to tell you about it. Write today.

Racine-Truscott-Shell Lake Boat Co.,
Dept. 38, MUSKEGON, MICHIGAN.





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