

WILLIAM  
POLLOK

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GERALD GROGAN



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WILLIAM POLLOK  
AND OTHER TALES

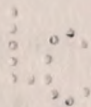
BY THE SAME AUTHOR

A DROP IN INFINITY  
A NOVEL

THE BODLEY HEAD

WILLIAM POLLOK  
AND OTHER TALES  
By GERALD GROGAN

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LONDON: JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD  
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## MEMOIR

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**T**HE author of these stories was born in Perthshire in May of 1884, and for the first eleven years of his life moved about the world, with the first Battalion of the Royal Highlanders, "The Black Watch," in which regiment his father served thirty-four years.

At eleven years of age the boy came home to England, and as he was destined for the Army, he was sent to Cheltenham College. When he was about fifteen, however, a slight tendency to short sight, which had been hardly observable hitherto, increased so quickly and so distressingly in six months, that the Army as a career was put out of the question. This was a bitter blow to the boy. He had lived all his life with soldiers, and loved and understood them. His popularity with the men of his father's regiment was remarkable. Even in his childhood he seemed gifted with the power of understanding and influencing his fellow-creatures in an extraordinary degree.

Confirmation of this is given by an officer who was travelling with the 1st Black Watch to South Africa when Gerald was between nine and ten. He noticed that at a certain time in the day a little

crowd of men on board could be seen congregating in one corner of the ship, where they evidently found something that entertained and interested them immensely. From curiosity, the officer got forward unobserved, and then found that a small boy holding forth in the midst of the crowd was the attraction !

When Gerald was about seventeen he went to Edinburgh to study at the University, with the half-formed project of taking up medicine or surgery as a career. For two years he enjoyed the studies, which were on subjects that appealed greatly to his interest : Botany, Natural History, Chemistry, and Physics. He also passed his exams without difficulty ; but when he reached the later stage of the work—Pathology—his interest entirely ceased, and he turned from it with distaste.

He was then sent to Camborne College, to learn Mining Engineering ; and, as the Certificates he had gained in Edinburgh on the earlier subjects he had worked at were accepted at Camborne, no time was really lost. After finishing his training at Camborne, he went to Arizona and, when the mines closed there, to Mexico, and it was in these places that he met with the mining experiences from which he drew the foundation of many of the tales in this book.

Just as in early childhood he had made his way with the soldiers, so over the miners and all his companions he exercised the same compelling

influence, winning devotion and affection from all. He had the power of reaching down to the solid worth of any one, however it might be hidden by a rough exterior ; and he drew forth to light in his tales noble traits of character, which a more superficial observer would have passed over.

When the Revolution stopped all mining, and indeed all industry in Mexico, he devoted himself to writing, while he waited for things to brighten ; but, when that was seen to be a vain hope, he came back to England and conceived the idea of devoting himself entirely to writing. He was encouraged at the very outset by his poems being accepted and published in periodicals like *The Spectator* and *Chambers' Journal*.

With his father's consent he went to London, and succeeded in getting employment on the staffs of the *Throne* and the *Pall Mall Magazine*, and in his leisure time he wrote his stories and poems, and also a novel, *A Drop in Infinity*, published in January, 1915, by John Lane, which was well reviewed.

But by this time he was enrolled as a soldier ; for at the first note of war he enlisted as a private in the H.A.C. His father could have got him a commission, but he refused, as he said he did not know enough to be an officer at once, and he wished to get out to France quickly.

He spent the winter of 1914-15 in the trenches, enduring that terrible experience in a way that

astonished all who knew him, for he was not particularly robust.

Early in 1915 he got a commission in the 8th Leicesters ; but, after training with them and going out again to France, he decided to transfer to the Royal Engineers—Tunnelling Department—as he felt his training as a Mining Engineer would make him of more service there. For two years he served in the 183rd company, the men and his brother officers being devoted to him.

He escaped unscathed, in spite of several very narrow shaves, till January 8th, 1918, when he was killed by the bursting of a High Explosive shell right above him when on duty with his section in a forward area.

His last poem, written at the close of 1916, was prophetic. He desired nothing better than a soldier's death, and believed it would be his portion.

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WILLIAM POLLOK  
AND OTHER TALES





THE TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS  
OF  
WILLIAM POLLOK  
MINE SUPERINTENDENT



## AN INTERNATIONAL INCIDENT

“ I HAVE not seen you,” said the Englishman, “ for the devil of a time.”

“ The fault is entirely yours,” I said. “ I have been here. Anyone who really *wanted* to see me could do so at a moment’s notice by stepping down here to the club and ringing the bell for the *mozo* who brings the drinks. By writing to me c/o Corral Foreign Club, Corral, Chih, Mex.—Chih is short for Chihuahua, pron. Chee-wá-wa, and Mex. for Mexico, pron. thus, or by the intensely erudite May-he-ko—you would have ensured an answer within a week or two, or three months, according to the state of the climate and the altitude and my liver and all that sort of thing. No,” I concluded, “ if you have not seen me for the devil of a time the fault is entirely yours. Except to scratch my nose when the mosquitoes bit it, I have hardly moved a limb for two months.”

“ Perhaps it was as well,” said the Englishman. I cannot work out *quite* what he meant by these last words. “ I have had a frightful time,” he added. “ I have been in a place called Puerto Miraflores on the Gulf, and I have had a frightful time there.”

“ How did you get there ? ” I asked. “ The Gulf of Mexico is no place for a mining man.”

“ I forget. I think my Board sent me to wait for a steamer for Honduras. It was so appallingly

hot, however, that I cannot be quite certain. I think I was in Puerto Miraflores for a month."

"Never heard of the place. Any other white men there?"

"Not at first. It was excellent practice for my Spanish"—I shuddered as I thought of the sufferings of the Miraflores natives—"because I spoke frequently to the hotel-keeper"—poor devil!—"in his tongue"

"Did he understand what you were doing?" I asked.

"Oh yes; he would answer me in English. The only words he knew were 'By G—d' and another expression I hope I have weaned him away from. It seems he learnt it from an American. By the way, there was an American man in Puerto Miraflores latterly. Shall I tell you about him, or shall we have a drink?"

"Both," I suggested, and the Englishman told me a tale.

"It began," he said, "in a skin game. Do you know what a skin game is?"

"I do not," I answered him.

"Neither do I. I was walking down the street and it was beastly hot. Somebody—apparently in the air overhead—remarked that it was a skin game.

"I looked up to heaven," continued the Englishman, "and saw nothing. Only the sun swung glittering in a hard blue sky. I looked down the street and saw the still waters of the Gulf beyond the decayed wharf, the whole picture being framed in a frightful smell."

“How could you see the smell?” I interrupted.

“I suppose it does seem a bit impossible,” said the Englishman, “but then you have never been in Puerto Miraflores. I looked at all these things without discovering anything fresh. Then the voice spoke again. ‘This,’ it said, ‘is a skin game.’ You know the swing-doors they have outside cantinas? Kind of door with a space above and a gap below and the door in the middle? Well, that’s where he was.”

“Inside a cantina?”

“Yes—drinking beer. I do not like going inside cantinas of this class in places like Puerto Miraflores—one is so likely to get gashed with a knife or otherwise mutilated. I looked in over the door, however.

“There were two men inside playing cards at a stone table. One of them was a Mexican. I judged him—from his appearance—to be a nasty Mexican. Kind that has been to the ‘States,’ you know. Talks English and all the rest of it. He was drinking beer out of a litre bottle and dealing out the cards.

“T’other fellow was a—a—well, he was a sort of stubby man, you know. Looked as if somebody had beaten him down from six foot five, or thereabouts, to five foot seven. He was an American, and he had thoughtful eyes.

“I am not ‘wise’ to card games, but I take it that a skin game is one wherein the dealer takes liberties with the rules and regulations. I think this must be so because, just after the stubby man said it was a skin game—for the second time—he made a grab for the dealer’s wrist. He had a pretty firm grip. The dealer’s fingers opened and he dropped two cards—ace of spades and four o

diamonds. He also said something I will not repeat.

“ This seemed to annoy the American, for his next move was to hit his playmate a severe blow on the head with a beer-bottle. The bottle broke and made an appalling mess—bottle, glass and beer and blood and what not all over the shop. Having performed this feat, the American put all the money on the table into his pocket and moved to the door.”

“ *Moved to the door?* ” I cried.

“ I suppose that is what he did,” said the Englishman gloomily. “ I next found myself sitting in the street of Puerto Miraflores upon what I judged from its clamour to be some one else’s hen. He must have come out by the door whilst I was looking in. He must have come out suddenly.

“ As there was no policeman handy to arrest me as a witness—they do this in Mexico—I arose from the bosom of the hen and returned to my hotel. I deemed it my duty—as a respectable member of the community—to keep as far away as possible from the bar-room brawls. Also, there is a breeze from the sea on the hotel porch, the stink is less intolerable and the seascape is one of the few things that the inhabitants of Puerto Miraflores have not managed to defile. I sat upon the porch to think.”

“ What did you think about ? ” I asked.

“ Oh, beer and gunboats and ‘ Gachupines ’—anything that begins with a G. I was rather hoping a gunboat would come—there was one hanging about the coast—because the *jefe politico* had told me that the people were organizing a massacre of

foreigners. This American had caught the dealer a bally awful whack with the bottle. He was probably dead. By the way, have you ever seen the Gulf in a light breeze on a sunny day? It is an ideal sight. I should be looking at it yet only I happened to go to sleep."

"Never mind the scenery," I urged. "Tell me about the massacre or whatever it was that occurred."

The Englishman drank his drink, thought deeply for a moment or two, and then poured himself out a second.

"I was awakened," he said, "by a grunting noise. I opened my eyes with difficulty and saw the fat *jefe politico* coming up the incline to the house. I offered him a chair—there were several knocking about on the porch—and he sat down and swabbed up his bull neck with an enormous bandana; red thing with blue spots. He said that it was frightfully hot, and that an outrage of the most horrible had been committed. 'By an American,' he added, eyeing me with severity. He has a conviction that the English and American Republics are different names for the same evil nations. 'More,' said the *jefe*, 'the wounded is my poor cousin Juan. What barbarity!'

"I was glad to hear that Cousin John was the manipulator of aces. He was reputed to hold most of the municipal contracts and was therefore largely responsible for the stink. 'Is he dead?' I asked."

I can imagine the cheerful tone in which the Englishman would make this inquiry.

"'Gracia á Dios, no!' said the *jefe*. 'He yet

lives. The assassin has fled—sacrilegiously—to the roof of the church. He has barricaded the trap-door by which one goes up. At the moment it is impossible to arrest him. But he cannot escape.’ Considering the man had nearly killed the *jefe’s* cousin, I felt I owed him a debt of gratitude. ‘How do you propose to catch him—this American?’ I asked. The *jefe* said he was thinking of knocking down the church. ‘That would be rather drastic,’ I suggested.

“He looked uncomfortable and he rubbed his knees. ‘You understand English,’ he said, after thinking it over a bit, and with the air of a man announcing an uncontroverted though not generally popularized truth. ‘You understand English, as is most natural, your honour being an Amer—an English citizen. It is possible—that is to say, should you be so kind——’ ‘You want me to talk to him,’ I suggested. ‘He is very barbarous—this man,’ said the *jefe*, ‘very uncultured. He does not comprehend the Castilian tongue.’”

“Look here,” I interrupted—the Englishman’s manner and air suggested an easy and fluent conversation betwixt him and the *jefe*—“do you mean to tell me that this *jefe politico* person had the nerve to employ *you* as his interpreter?”

“Why not?” said the Englishman. “Apart from pronunciation and grammar and not having a very large vocabulary, I get along pretty well. I can always understand what they are saying to me.”

“Go on,” I said. “He was a brave man, your *jefe*—for heaven’s sake go on with your tale.”

“This scheme,” continued the Englishman, “was for me to promise the American a free passage out



of the town. As soon as he came down he meant to arrest him. Typical dirty political trick. I didn't like mixing in the affair at all, but I thought it would be something to do, so I agreed to go along with him. On the way down we passed the *jefe's* house. He had a daughter called Rosa. Damned pretty girl——”

“Blow the daughter!”

“Hang it all,” cried the Englishman, “she's part of the yarn—so far as I can see. Rosa was her name. She was engaged to Cousin Juan—the maimed—but they tell me she had her eye on the lieutenant in command of the American gunboat and a few more besides. A most frightful young person; but I admit she was attractive. She said, ‘Is it Meester Pollok who has wounded Juan and fled to the church?’ She seemed quite anxious. ‘It is the American, Pollok,’ replied her parent severely. ‘*Pobre!*’ said Rosa. I do not know whether she was referring to her Cousin John or Mr. Pollok.

“After that we went on down to the Plaza Principal, where the church is. The church is built of brown stone and it has a single belfry and a long vaulted roof. You cannot imagine what a delightful contrast it makes with the atmospheric blue of the sky and the sombre green of the orange trees in the Plaza——”

“Oh yes, I can,” I remarked—hastily. The Englishman's voice had taken on a staccato lilt and he played upon an invisible piano about level with, and a couple of feet away from, his nose. “You must not talk about scenery,” I said severely. “You must tell me about Mr. Pollok only.”

“ There were three *rurales*—rural mounted police—and two gendarmes on the Plaza,” continued the Englishman. “ The *rurales* had taken up a strategic position in the bandstand, and the rest of the forces of law and order were leaning against the nearest wall, smoking cigarettes. ‘ He cannot escape,’ said the *jefe*. ‘ Tell him, Meester Chonés ’—Jones is the Englishman’s patronymic—that resistance is useless.”

“ I started to ask where he was, but as I spoke a round face—like a rising sun—popped up over the parapet on the coping, looked at me once, closed one eye, and shot down again.

“ The face said, ‘ Howdy, Johnny Bull? How’s the *jefe*’s blawsted cousin, old top?’ ‘ The *jefe*’s blawsted cousin is extremely sick,’ I answered, ‘ although I fear that he will live. If you are going to be facetious I shall return home. Do you suppose I walked all this distance on a hot day just for fun?’ ‘ No offence,’ said Mr. Pollok. ‘ You was the buck I butted into makin’ my getaway—ain’t it?’ ‘ I were,’ said I—‘ that is to say, I was. Furthermore you made me spoil a hen for which I shall probably have to pay.’

“ Mr. Pollok chuckled. ‘ Didn’t have much time to whistle for the crossin’,’ he said. ‘ Guess you should ha’ moved a bit smarter. What’s the good word with now?’ ‘ The good word is that the *jefe* wishes you to descend,’ I said.

“ Mr. Pollok said several words that were far from good. ‘ What does he say?’ inquired the *jefe* anxiously. ‘ He says he will not come down,’ I explained. ‘ Tell him I will permit him to leave the town unmolested,’ said the *jefe*. ‘ It is expedient

that we use strategy. I will have him arrested afterwards.'

"I passed on the news to Mr. Pollok—rather more in detail than the *jefe* had meant it to be. I shouted it as rapidly as possible, being uncertain as to the *jefe's* linguistic accomplishment. 'Thanks,' answered Mr. Pollok from on high. 'I understand Spanish, though I ain't seeing much need to publish the fact right now. Tell him that——' here Mr. Pollok used several oaths I already knew and nine or ten I had not so far encountered. 'He says his determination not to come down is even more steadfast,' I told the *jefe*.

"The *jefe* said he would knock down the church, but I explained that such an action might involve international complications. Then he swore. Finally he decided that one should not be permitted to make a joke—a plaything—of the Mexican law, and that he would beleaguer the church until Mr. Pollok came down or died of starvation—he didn't much care which. I offered to notify the nearest American Consul on Mr. Pollok's behalf—an offer which that gentleman declined with some heat—and then I went back to my hotel.

"Let us go out now and take a walk on the Plaza," suggested the Englishman. "It is cooler than it was."

"You shan't stir a step until you have told me the rest of your story," I promised him. "Go on! Proceed! *En adelante!*" He sighed.

"I sat upon the hotel porch for three days," he said gently. "At the end of that time I had for-

gotten Mr. Pollok. He was called to my mind by another visit from the *jefe*. 'It is a miracle,' he groaned. 'He continues singing.' 'Who? Oh, the American on the church! Is he still there?' 'He sings,' said the *jefe*. 'He lives three days without food or water, and then he sings. *Demonio!*' 'What does his song consist of?' I asked. 'Ees estar spangli ba-na, aoh lon' mai eet uav,' chanted the *jefe*, beating time with his fingers. 'It is an American song—very barbarous. Moreover,' he said, 'he continues fat—very fat—and—and he has shaved himself. The devil, his master, supplies him with food and water.'

"He sat back and blinked at me. Not wishing to queer Mr. Pollok's pitch, I kept my mouth shut. 'By order of the authority,' said the *jefe*, patting his ample bosom, 'no person has been allowed to enter the church. That is to say, no person save the priest and my Rosa, who goes daily to offer supplication for the poor Juan—the gravely wounded.' 'In which case, Señor *jefe*,' I exclaimed, 'it is obviously what you yourself have suggested—a miracle.' 'It is a scandal,' corrected the *jefe*. He seemed very gloomy about it.

"Next day, a cablegram arrived for me. It said: 'GAZUPA,' that, being decoded, meant—'Deal fallen through. Do not proceed to Honduras. Return to Corral.' I ought to have gone home then."

"But you didn't?"

"No. I had to discourage the *jefe* from various bloodthirsty enterprises, and I wanted to see what Mr. Pollok would do, and what would happen if the gunboat turned up in the meantime and all that kind of thing. It was appallingly hot; but I stayed

on. I think it was on the eighth day when matters came to a fearsome head.

“Somewhere around three o’clock in the afternoon I was abruptly wakened by the report of a pistol, followed by dreadful bangs and crashes and a sort of reedy cheering in the distance. I thought, at first, that something was up down in the harbour. It wasn’t, though. There was only one solitary pirogue in sight and a splash of smoke on the horizon. The glittering Gulf lay silent and deserted. You cannot imagine how——”

“Yes, I can,” I said. “I can imagine anything if you will only continue your recital and cut the scenic effects.”

The Englishman looked vexed.

“Positively,” he said, with great impressiveness, “I almost ran down into the town. The church and Plaza when I arrived in the vicinity presented a stirring scene—for Puerto Miraflores. Behind the bandstand, in an exact row, knelt the three gallant *rurales* with their carbines levelled at the banging church.”

“The *what* kind of church?” I cried.

“Banging church. Most horrible uproar in process of production on the roof. I did not notice any *bullets* to speak of, and the smoke and so forth was rather suggestive of half-sticks of dynamite, but the din was positively bestial. I could not see Mr. Pollok or I should have remonstrated—if I could have made my voice carry above the uproar of his artillery. The thing was becoming really serious, for, besides being wakened at an inclement hour, I was rapidly developing a most severe headache. The only sign of human occupation, however, was

the Stars and Stripes. He had hoisted his flag on a crooked stick, so that it was clearly visible above the wreathing clouds of smoke. I thought this was pure swank at the time, but it seems I misjudged him.

“ ‘Meester Chonés ! Meester Chonés !’ croaked a sepulchral voice. ‘Meester Chonés, have a care. There is danger.’ I observed the *jefe* beckoning from the shelter of a doorway. ‘One cannot live for ever,’ I said. The *jefe* grew pale about the gills. ‘These—Americanos !’ he muttered. ‘I am not an American,’ I said coldly. ‘But—Meester Chonés—if he kills you ? How shall the Americans differentiate ? They will say I did it, and that you are without doubt one of themselves.’ ‘What Americans, Señor *Jefe* ?’ I asked. ‘Those of the gunboat.’ What disgrace ! The accursed gunboat which even now approaches. As your honour knows,’ he said, ‘this is the year in which the low people of the country—the shameless ones—make the proposition to kill all the foreigners on the 16th September—the day of *fiesta nacional*. This being so, the Yanquis perfidiously send armed vessels of war—the hypocritical Doctrina de Monroe, I spit upon it—to patrol the coast. And from time to time comes this *maldito* gunboat—and—and—’ the *jefe* was almost in tears—‘and now here is made an International Question in my jurisdiction !’

“ He seemed frightfully anxious ; said that we were now going to be bombarded and that it was not his fault, and added a hope that the first ball might annihilate Mr. Pollok. I was going to speak a few words of comfort, when Mr. Pollok’s revolver popped five times—as a sort of finishing touch—

and stopped. In the resultant hush we all heard a distinct, if distant, clicking of rowlocks. ' *Ya vienen!* ' boomed the voice of Mr. Pollok. This was the first time I heard him use Spanish to express his ideas. ' Sons of shame,' he said, ' the Americans come ! Cowards ! we avenge Alamo ! '

" Just at this moment along comes another gendarme—at the double. He thoughtfully declined to expose his person in the Plaza, but backed up against a wall and beckoned mysteriously. ' Approach ! ' said the *jefe*. The gendarme seemed to think he had done all the approaching that was necessary. ' They would talk,' he said in a thirty-horse power stage whisper. ' Who,' said the *jefe*, ' who would talk ? ' ' *El Capitan Americano,* ' said the policeman.

" This made the *jefe* frightfully sick. He said that now he would most certainly be hanged, and he implored me not to desert him. I said I would be willing—while preserving a strict neutrality—to act as interpreter ; and Mr. Pollok agreed to make no more warlike noises until *El Capitan Americano* had been interviewed. Followed by most of the population of Puerto Miraflores, I went down to the wharf.

" There was a boat alongside. It was filled to repletion with bluejackets with guns and bayonets and things, and the thirst for glory engraved upon their faces. I think they were about 50 per cent Irish and the rest Scandinavian, and they were a hard-looking lot. As long as they refrained from fighting one another there was nothing to hinder them from chasing the entire town across to the other side of Mexico. Notwithstanding this deadly

peril, the patriot population was competing all along the water-front to sell them vegetables. It was a thrilling spectacle."

"It must have been," I remarked.

"A funny thing happened," continued the Englishman. "The lieutenant in charge of the boatload asked if I was an American. Then, without waiting for my reply, he said, 'My mistake! A Britisher, I guess!' It's queer how people seem to spot the dread secret. 'I am an Englishman,' I answered him, with a dignified pride which must have attested the statement, 'but there is at least one American in town. Thank goodness you arrived in time.'

"The frightful resolution on the faces of the gallant Irish and the warlike Scandinavians—I think that lieutenant must have been an Irish-Swede and picked his men accordingly—became even more intense; and an ancient woman held up a hen which I seemed to recognize. 'Ten reals!' she whined. 'Very fat! Very cheap!'

"These statements were lies, and they didn't seem to pacify the lieutenant a bit. 'Who is in charge here?' he demanded. I showed him the *jefe*. 'Tell him,' said the lieutenant, 'that if another shot is fired we will proceed to bombard the town.'

"I translated, and the news seemed to put the *jefe* in a worse stew than ever. He went through a few colour changes and came to a standstill at greenish yellow. He said, 'Juanito'—Juanito appeared to be the smallest of the four or five hundred small boys on the wharf—'run swiftly and tell the corporal that he shall pray the American Pollok to be silent



—lest the vessel of war commences to bombard——’  
 ‘The church,’ said the *jefe*’s secretary, with a flash of inspiration.

“Juanito pointed out that the three *rurales* and the two gendarmes were already on the wharf—having come down to see the fun—but the *jefe* urged him to go on notwithstanding, and break the news to Mr. Pollok—‘lest,’ he said, ‘he commit an indiscretion.’ ‘How many of you are there?’ said the lieutenant. I began to count the crowd. ‘Damn it!’ said the lieutenant rudely. ‘Foreigners, I mean.’ ‘Oh, *foreigners!*’ I said. ‘Three, I imagine. Myself, Mr. Enrique Gomez—the fat gentleman sitting on the bollard—and a man called Pollok, who insists on making disagreeable sounds on top of the church. Thank goodness you arrived in time. We were all getting frightful headaches.’

“Suddenly the lieutenant began to swear. He swore for quite five minutes, in various tongues and very readily. When he had finished he asked if I referred to William Pollok. I said to the *jefe*, ‘Is his name Guillermo—this Pollok?’ ‘His name is Guillermo,’ said the *jefe*. ‘Shove off!’ roared the lieutenant. ‘Shove off!’ ‘No,’ he said, ‘I don’t want to know what he’s done now. I guess it’s something pretty average mean. Pardon my fervour, mister,’ he said, ‘but I’ve had some past experience of Mr. double-dash Pollok myself.’

“I suggested that he might like, nevertheless, to take Mr. Pollok with him. ‘You see,’ I said, ‘he is far from popular—the way things stand—with the local authority, and it would be distressing if

the populace began to work off their grudge against Mr. Pollok by spearing me and Mr. Enrique Gomez. I think perhaps you had better take him.' 'Shove off!' said the lieutenant in a monotonous voice. 'Shove off! Tell the *jefe* I hope he gives him ten years. Shove off, I say!'

"The *jefe* showed a strong tendency to faint. He had grasped the fact that the lieutenant was annoyed. 'Meester Chonés,' he said, 'they go to bombard. Meester Chonés, tell them I will accomplish anything they wish—only that they do not bombard the town, Meester Chonés, tell them to take their infernal American. He no longer interests me.'

"I thought of explaining the situation, but it seemed a bit rough on Mr. Pollok to be disowned by both sides. I suggested to the *jefe* that the best plan was to send Mr. Pollok in a boat. 'Send 'em a note,' I said, 'explaining that he's been expelled under Article 33 and cannot be allowed to land again.' '*Magnifico!*' exclaimed the *jefe*. 'Juanito! he said, 'Juanito! Where is that boy Juanito?' 'Patron?' cried the voice of Juanito from the storm-centre of the crowd—without distinction of age or sex, all Puerto Miraflores was now on the wharf.

"The *jefe* then ordered Juanito to run with even greater swiftness and tell Mr. Pollok to come down to the wharf—all manner of guarantees being guaranteed. 'I am not able,' said Juanito sententiously. 'How not able?' asked the *jefe*. '*Se fue!*' said Juanito. 'When the police left the Plaza he lowered himself—and he fled. It will be fifteen minutes that he is gone.'

“Juanito gave a dismal cry and burst into tears, for on hearing the tidings the corporal of *rurales* had delivered up a stinger on the side of his youthful head. As one man the three *rurales* and the two gendarmes turned and fled—desperately—in the direction of the Plaza.”

“That’s all,” said the Englishman blandly. I should like to know the rest of the story myself, but as they never caught Mr. Pollok I never heard it. Let us go out now and walk on the Plaza and see the girls. There is a band to-night and it will soothe me. My manager, Ginckel, has quit, and the Santa Ynez is in the charge of Antonio the foreman, who will be always drunk now that he has no white man to watch over him. The pump will stop, and the mine will be flooded. Hang it all! I wish I had a man to take Ginckel’s place!”

“Confound your mine!” I said. “You’re always in trouble. What do you mean by telling me a story like that without any proper ending? Who fed this man Pollok on the church? And why did the lieutenant—— Hold on a moment!” I cried. “Did you not say that his name was William?” I had just remembered, in a host of dim recollections of the past history of Corral, a far-off luncheon at the Cedro Mine. “Pollok?” I repeated. William Pollok? Short, thick-set fellow? I seem to recollect——”

At that moment Ginckel entered the club *patio*. “Py Chiminey,” cried the corpulent manager of the Santa Ynez. “Mister Chonés, I haf for you efervare hunded. Ve you loog for a man by mein

chob I kvit I haf him found. Gom righd in ! Gom righd in !” he continued to some exterior presence beyond the green baize swing-doors. “Mister Chonés, meed mein old pardner Bill—der man vat knows dis camp before you vas borned. Eh? Shage hands, Meester Chonés, vith old Bill——”

And solemnly and ruminatively the Napoleonic form of William Spenser Pollok passed across the threshold.

Recognition was instantaneous on both sides. But let it not be supposed that either of these two strong men was betrayed by the unexpected suddenness of the reunion into any weak display of emotion. They shook hands. They said they were pleased to make one another's acquaintance. On neither side was there any hint of a former meeting. Mr. Pollok, as I remember, was eating an apple—like Nelson on the quarterdeck of the *Victory* when the little fluttering flags flew upward and Collingwood remarked, “Damn Nelson! he's always signalling.” I think it was this fancy which gave me my cue.

“Mr. Pollok,” I said rapidly—fearing interruption—“I understand from the cries of Mr. Ginckel that you are looking for a job. Mr. Jones here is going to give you one——”

“Hem!” coughed the Englishman.

“On my recommendation as a former shareholder in the Cedro,” I added. “But,” I said, “there is a come-back. Corral, Mr. Pollok, expects that you will do your duty.”

“Sure!” answered Mr. Pollok mildly. “Mine's a Scotch.”

I banged the bell on the table.

"I was not exactly referring to that," I explained, "although I thank you for reminding me. In plain English—what about the church in Puerto Miraflores?"

"What about it, then?" asked Pollok.

"Who fed you? My recommendation depends upon the clearing up of this point."

"Ravens," said Mr. Pollok sulkily. But I refused to be quibbled with.

"I must have the exact facts," I insisted, "or no recommendation."

"See here!" exclaimed Pollok hotly. "Back in Oklahoma where I was raised it ain't considered etiquette to say nothin' that might compromise a lady."

"Rosa, begad!" cried the Englishman. "I thought as much."

Mr. Pollok grinned sheepishly.

"Is it sense to suppose any girl's goin' to pray six times a day for the recovery of a thing like that there Cousin Juan?" he asked. "Him and his cheatin'!"

He snorted angrily at the recollection.

"But the priest?" I exclaimed. "Surely he——"

"Ain't goin' to stick at much for five dollars a day," finished Pollok. "Why—there ain't nothin' in what you're askin' about. I had my grip and my blankets brought up and lived right elegant until the gunboat turned in again and give me the chanst to skip out. Where I miscalculated," he proceeded, "was not expectin' that long-legged lootenant to do me the dirty way he did. I heard about that

later in Tampico. He ain't got no call to be jealous. I never done nothin' wasn't strictly gennelmanly, even if I am a better looker than him. Oh, pshaw!" he muttered, more to himself than to me. "Oh, pshaw! them women!"

## THE SOUL OF VELASQUEZ

ONCE upon a time there was a writer of tales whose name was Fortescue. The same came to Mexico in search of raw material. In the interior of that progressive republic he found William Pollok.

To be less premature, he first met—in the sandy, sunny, disreputable railway station of a northern town—a hawk-featured fellow-countryman in English riding-breeches and an American wideawake. This person swore intermittently at a gang of peons who were toying with carboys of acid—evidently the Englishman's property—in process of transshipment from a freight-car to a waggon drawn by a slumbersome mule. He swore so much—the Englishman, not the mule—that Fortescue, scenting “copy,” edged closer and opened the conversation by inquiring when the next train left.

The Englishman stared.

“The next train,” he said, “should leave here approximately in twenty-three hours and forty-five minutes—that is, if it runs on *de facto* schedule time.”

“What is the *de facto* schedule?” asked Fortescue.

“Who knows? The train has been two hours late on the last ten occasions. I take it that that is the *d. f. s.* But there are no fixed rules in this country. Anyhow,” added the Englishman, “the

train you just got off is *the* train. Damn it all, what does Pollok mean by leaving me to do a filthy job like this? I won't do it! It's not right! Hang it all, I'm supposed to be his boss, not he mine."

"Might I ask who Pollok is?" ventured Fortescue, now in full cry in his hunt for copy.

"*Hijos de—de—de sus madres!*" snapped the Englishman. The phrase merely means "sons of your mothers," in case there should be a doubt. "Confound the man, he's—— Ah!" The last carboy, poising perilously a moment on the edge of the waggon, miraculously slipped into place. "I beg your pardon? Oh, Pollok? Manager of the Santa Ynez—discovered him one day on top of a church in a place called Puerto Miraflores—brought him home and set him to labour in the mines, out there in the Sierra"—he swept his hand round half the horizon—"I'm consultin' engineer with offices here in town." The mule, responding to outside stimulation, suddenly awoke; and the waggon rumbled off over the ruts of the infamous road. "By the way," continued the Englishman, "you're a new-comer to this happy land, I take it?"

"I am," admitted Fortescue. "Not to go the actual length of asking you to sit down whilst I repeat the story of my life—which would apparently be in keeping with local custom——"

"It would," agreed the Englishman.

"I shall confine myself to the statements that I am an orphan, that I have a modest competence of my own, and that I write sparkling articles for the more eclectic magazines; that I came to Mexico in search of local colour, and that I was diverted from purely literary researches by a man in Tor-



reon. This man induced me to come here, to the City of Corral, to look at—— ”

“ A mine,” said the Englishman.

Fortescue grinned uneasily, after the manner of the puppy who has been caught in an illicit flirtation with the cake-basket. “ It is, apparently, a good mine,” he said.

“ They all are,” said the Englishman. “ Where is this particular Golconda situated—if I may ask without seeming impertinent ? ”

“ Funnily enough, in the very district you mentioned. The fact makes me doubly anxious to meet your Mr. Pollok, who, I suppose, can give me some information about the place.”

“ I can do that,” said the Englishman. “ By the way, where did you go to school ? Your tie—by George ! So did I. I say, you can't put up at the hotel, you know—too many fleas. Come down to my diggings. I infer, from what you have told me, that Winter is negotiating another deal with the old Cedro. That being so ”—Fortescue had started visibly—“ I shall be glad to have a chat with you ; for you appear to be a white man, and—excuse my apparent bluntness—what Bill Pollok would undoubtedly call ‘some tenderfoot.’ ”

That is how Fortescue came to Corral and met the Englishman. He had lunch with his self-constituted host in the *patio*, or inner courtyard, of a wonderful house where all the doors of the rooms opened inwards into the yard—an idea which probably originated with the Roman *atrium*. There was a fig-tree in the centre of this *patio*, and they put the table underneath. It was quite Biblical.

“ Winter said you can't tell much by sampling,

did he ? ” remarked the Englishman, bisecting fragments of cheese-rind with his knife. “ Well, he s right in a way. It’s a poor guide in the case of many Mexican mines, where the ore’s high grade and consequently patchy as the devil. Best guide in such a case is smelter liquidation-sheets, such as he showed you—provided you’ve proof positive the ore came from the property. Mind you,” he broke off, “ I’m not saying anything with particular reference to Winter or the Cedro. Just on general principles, you know.”

“ I think the liquidations were all right,” declared Fortescue. “ The name of the mine was on each one.”

“ Oh, I’ve no doubt at all that they came from the district anyhow,” agreed the Englishman. “ Question always is, however, did they come from the mine itself?—just on general principles, you know. I’m not suggestin’ anything against Winter, of course ; but since I caught him red-handed buying stolen ore from our own place I’ve—well, it sets a man thinkin’, you know. Tell you what I’ll do,” he added. “ Pollok managed the Cedro once, and knows all about it. I’ll take you down to the club and introduce you—after the rain stops.”

“ Rain ? ” inquired Fortescue in amaze. They had walked from the station under a spotless sky.

“ Look up,” said the Englishman.

Fortescue looked ; and behold the sky was growing dark with miraculous suddenness, and the flies—he now perceived—even more offensively adhesive with a miraculous stickiness. Even as he gazed, a fat drop fell plumply in the sugar basin.

His host proffered a cigar and suggested an adjournment with the coffee to his office. They rose, and passed into a room with a red-tiled floor; where two desks, a bookcase, a big chest of drawers and a drawing-table littered with plans and maps, made up most of the furniture. There was also a hen, which had successfully laid an egg on top of the bookcase. The Englishman seemed pleased with the egg, but irritated by the presence of the fowl, which he promptly drove forth into the *patio*. Instantly the heavens rent in twain with an ear-splitting crash, the telephone on the wall spat a spark an inch long, and the rain came down in cartloads.

“ Take the deck-chair,” advised the Englishman. “ The rain does not stop until we have had supper.”

“ I thought you said there were no fixed rules in this country ? ”

“ There are not. But this is a habit—like drink—lots of fixed habits in Mexico. By the way, Bill will be in the company of old Shaw—our agent in San Lorenzo—who will offer to sell you another mine. That’s another habit. Don’t buy it. Shaw has no right to be so voracious. I pay him a liberal salary, and the prices at his store are quite sufficiently immoral, without his adding further to his load of sin. There is a funny old book,” he continued, fumbling in the bookcase, “ which I wanted to show you ; but it seems not to be here. What a nuisance ! I suppose that’s Pollok again. He has taken it and lost it. Damn it ! It’s not right.”

Suddenly his eye fell on the drawing-board, and he emitted a sharp cry of anguish.

“ Confound his eyes ! Just look at that now !

The new plan I so carefully cleaned with pounds of bread and yards of rubber looking as if a dog had walked over it! Damn it, why can't he wash his hands at least? He makes a pig-pen of my office, and then goes off drinking with old Shaw—leaving me to do his dirty work. I'll put up with it no more. This is too frightful."

"Perhaps," suggested Fortescue, after a glance at the map in question, "he was overcome with remorse and fled to the public baths to avoid the possibility of a recurrence."

"Not he. As long as the bar holds out he'll be at the club—Shaw likewise. I know where to find them anyhow, which is one consolation."

As he spoke the little inner door, which opened into the *zaguan*—pron. *sah-whan*—or portal of the square-built house, slowly opened. With a preliminary shuffling of feet the defiler of plans and the habitual purveyor of worthless mines filed into the room—oilskin-clad and running little rivulets on to the flagged floor.

"I am," said Pollok, not without a slight hoarseness which may have been due to the humidity, "a mystic."

"You may be for the moment," corrected the Englishman, "but to mortal eyes you look more like a fat man with six or seven rounds of Scotch under his belt. You have made a beastly mess on the new plan. It is hardly four o'clock, and you are distinctly the worse for wear. I have done all your work, and now you are slopping over the floor. For the love of Mike, pitch those water-proofs outside before I kill you. This gentleman, by the way," he added, "is Mr. Fortescue, a fellow-countryman

of mine, and a distinguished man of letters. He wants to know about the Cedro."

"Glad to meet you," smiled Pollok, heaving the offending garment into the *zaguan*. "Literature is highly thought of in Boston, Oklahoma, where I was raised."

"Mr. Fortescue will be lookin' round for a good investment for the money he gets writin'," interpolated old Shaw, a weazened venerable with a goatee and a cracked voice.

"Cut it out," jerked Pollok. "You can take it from me, Mr. Fortescue ain't."

"Well, that's all *you* know. *You* keep quiet. I know all about *you*. The police is after *you* for beatin' up the *jefe politico* of Puerto Miraflores. Now th' Ampliacion de Shaw, in the celebrated Santa Ynez district——"

"Cut it out," reiterated the stocky manager of the Santa Ynez itself. "I foresee that Mr. Fortescue ain't interested in any Ampliacion de Shaw. You'd ought to know better. I am—as I said before—a clearvoyant."

"A what?" inquired the Englishman in a rather awestruck voice.

"A clearvoyant. I foresee things. It's the atmosphere reminds me o' the circumstance."

"More likely the circumstance—which looks distinctly alcoholic—reminds you of the somewhat atmospheric fact," grunted his consulting engineer. "Do you think you can descend to mundane matters long enough to give Mr. Fortescue the information he's after?"

Pollok sank into a chair, which creaked under him—though short in stature he is no light weight

—and twisted his clean-shaven and wondrously mobile features. “ I know *all* about the Cedro,” quoth he presently. “ I was manager there five years ago. It was a highly interestin’ experience I had on the Cedro first opened my eyes to my soopernat’ral gifts. Has Mr. Fortescue got an option on the mine ? ”

“ I was thinking about it,” confessed Fortescue. “ Winter offered to let me have six months for examination on payment of a first instalment of one thousand pesos.”

Pollok cast the look of a startled fawn upon him, and old Shaw groaned involuntarily.

“ I guess you can do that, if you feel like it,” said Pollok politely. “ I ain’t sayin’ the mine’s not worth it—maybe there’s some ore growed there since my day.”

“ According to the smelter liquidations there has been some very good stuff taken out,” explained Fortescue.

“ I’ve heard that too, strangely enough—I guess it may be so. I guess you’re new to the country, Mr. Fortescue ? ”

“ I am, I’m afraid. Please tell me about the property. I’m beginning to suspect Winter was over enthusiastic.”

“ I’ll tell if Shaw’ll go get the whisky. Th’ remembrance o’ those hawrible experiences makes me weak.”

The Englishman took the hint, if hint it could be called, and filled four glasses. Gently absorbing half his dose, as a preliminary moistener, Pollok proceeded :

“ It was five years ago I got the job. A friend

told me it was a good job to handle. It was, in a manner o' speakin'. I got quit of a false friend through takin' it. A bunch o' tenderfoots—savin' Mr. Fortescue's presence—had purchased the property on the strength o' the vendor's opinion of it—an' you know what that means."

"I don't," interrupted Fortescue.

"Well, I wouldn't despair. It looks like you might learn pretty *pronto*—uncommon like. I learned a heap about tenderfoot ideas an' notions when I was told the pay-roll was to be met out of profits; an' I learned more"—William's voice trailed to an impressive huskiness—"when I found out what I'm goin' to tell you about this mine an' the effects it has on those that have any connection with it.

"To put it mild an' briefly, Mr. Fortescue, there was no ore in the mine when I took on; in fact—were I not a truthful man—I might say the rock was so hungry it was dangerous to go underground with as much as a silver dollar in one's pocket. It would sure be absorbed. Moreover, I had a heap of trouble. Boards o' Directors don't urge you to put in an ice plant, an' a club for employés to recreate in, when the flow of cash is all one way—an' that down the shaft.

"I get peevish, an' mean, an' irritable with the worry of it, so that before long I'm liable to see an' imagine any old thing. I'd been huntin' for traces of a cross vein, which the old timers spoke of, and which I reckoned our last chance. It should—so they said—ha' run into the main Cedro somewhere in the old workings; where two veins run together like that there's often ore. I'd been workin' over-

time on this job, an' was sittin' up late in the office—sketching in a compass survey—when my memory slips a cog, an' somehow or other I find myself out under the stars, not bein' conscious o' having left the office.

“ I'm looking round to take my bearings and make sure I *am* outside, an' not merely dreamin', when some one comes up behind me in the dark. ‘ *Buena noche, caballero,*’ he says. I looked round somewhat startled, for I thought I was alone. ‘ *Buena noche,*’ I tell him. ‘ *Quien es ?* ’ ‘ Manuel Costillo Velasquez, at your service ’—I didn't know the man from Adam, an' could see little in th' gloom. ‘ Guillermo Pollok, at yours,’ I answered. ‘ You want to see me on business ? ’ ‘ No, *señor,*’ he answers. ‘ Once indeed, I myself managed this mine ; but now I am merely a looker-on. But yes ! Once I was manager of the mine.’ He sighs. ‘ Then I pity you,’ said I, ‘ an' I guess you extend the same to me.’

“ He seemed surprised, ‘ I assure you, *caballero,*’ he says, ‘ that I have known the time when five hundred *arrastras*<sup>1</sup> worked on the property. Pity ? *Por Dios, No !* The mine is the richest in the province.’

“ I was goin' to say that if five hundred *arrastras* ever worked at one time reducin' Cedro ore they hadn't worked very long shifts ; but I remembered my manners. I said I wished some o' the ore of those days had gone down with the vein. ‘ It is the cross vein which carries the best stuff,’ said Velasquez.

“ Well, naturally I began to sit up an' take

<sup>1</sup> Primitive crushing-mills worked by horse power.



notice when he mentioned this 'cross vein' all my old miners kept talkin' about. I said I'd been huntin' for signs of it, cross-cuttin' and everything else; but I'd still a hundred dollars in the safe for the man who could show me anything better than a measly lookin' fissure I'd found on the surface.

"He seemed surprised; said there were workin's on the cross vein connectin' with those on the Cedro main. To make a long story short, he offered to show me the place. I didn't suppose he could, but I took him up. We stroll over to the shaft. This is where the first curious thing happened, Mr. Fortescue.

"I had to waken the engineer, for we didn't work on the night shift; an' I tell him I want him to lower me an' another gentleman to the first level, an' then to wait around for half an hour to hoist us up again. He seemed to be kind o' dazed, however, for I had to speak twice before he threw the brakes off. 'You told me there was another gentleman,' he says. 'There ain't more than what you see,' says I. 'What th' hell are you talkin' about? Lower away!' He throws out the clutch and lowers.

"Gentlemen, I'd no sooner seen the collar of the shaft slip overhead than I began to have a hunch something was wrong. 'What'd that crazy Indian mean?' thinks I. 'Could he not—— Oh, pshaw!' I says. 'Ain't ye a fool, now?' An' I tried to turn my thoughts elsewhere—but they wouldn't turn. By the time we reach the station I'm plumb positive, if I ever see the light o' day again, my first act's to be the 'canning' o' the engineer—for bein' a fool or not able to count, or somethin' in-

definite like that. Then, to comfort myself, I take my first good look at Velasquez.

“ I get a real mean shock this time ! He’s wearin’ blue knee-pants, rawhide shoes, a shirt with lace trimmin’s, and a long narrer sword. Moreover, what I’d taken in the dark for a derby hat, turns out, when viewed by candle-light, to be nothin’ more nor less than an old rusty steel helmet. It didn’t look right—even for a Spaniard, which he was by his accent. Real Castilian as he spoke it.

“ He looked around, and I saw by the way he held his light he’d been underground before. Suddenly it strikes me the old helmet he’s resurrected is to save his head in low workin’s. That didn’t explain the sword, but it eased my mind. ‘ Where’s this place you are going to show me ? ’ I asked. ‘ In what I suppose are now the old workings,’ he answers. ‘ This place is new to me.’

“ I was goin’ to remark that the level we were on—a level, Mr. Fortescue ? Why, that’s just a drift, a tunnel like ; driven from any point in the shaft along the vein—was driven by an English company fifty years before, but for some reason I didn’t. Instead, I just lead the way, sayin’ nothing, to an old chute at the end of the drift. There was a ladder-way up this—ore-chute an’ man-way combined—up which we climbed to the only stope worth callin’ such the mine boasted. ‘ Now,’ says Velasquez, ‘ I know where I am. My father took ore from here by the old *boca mina*.’ He pokes about a spell, and presently cries out : ‘ There’s a big rock slabbed off over the connection,’ he says. ‘ It must ha’ fallen years ago, so it’s small wonder you couldn’t find the place.’

“ I’d passed by that slab before, though it never struck me there could be anything under it. However, back I go to the station for a crowbar I’d noticed some careless swine had left there, leavin’ friend Velasquez to hold down the slab.”

“ Hold down what ? ” began Fortescue, then paused abruptly as he caught the Englishman’s eye.

Pollok grinned.

“ Give him his due, I found him fit for harder graft than that,” he said. “ We sweated a bit, but between us we got the rock shifted. Sure enough, here’s the entrance of an old cross-cut tunnel hidden beneath it. It was ’most full o’ broken rock, but enough space for a man to scrabble over. Pardner goes through first, sword an’ all, fairly slick ; though I had one hell of a time followin’ him—there was hardly room for a fair-sized rattle-snake. We slither over, an’ the first thing I know I’m in another working like the one we’d left.

“ It wasn’t a very wide stope—I could put my hands on the two walls at the widest place—but it was a vein anyway ; and there’d been ore taken from it. The floor sloped pretty steep to the south, showin’ how the ore body had trended. ‘ Well,’ said I, ‘ I have to thank you for showin’ me what I apparently couldn’t discover for myself ; though it don’t appear the ore here was much stronger, or more persistent, than on the other vein—does it ? ’

‘ Ah ! ’ says Valesquez. ‘ But the richness ! The great *tramo* above here yielded thousands of pesos, and the ore narrows an’ widens and inclines to the south as it goes down with the vein. It is below that one must look for further treasure——’

“ His face kind o’ clouds, an’ he stops talkin’ as if he wanted to think it over before committin’ himself further. Presently he shrugs his shoulders. ‘ After all,’ says he, ‘ after all, it is an old story—— Come, Señor Pollok,’ he says, perkin’ up again. ‘ If you care to follow I will show you where you may uncover, without undue effort, the richest of ore.’ ‘ How did you come to leave it there?’ I asked. Velasquez hunches up his shoulders again. ‘ It had no value to me,’ he says. ‘ Will you follow me, or shall we return?’ ”

“ I was on the point o’ sayin’ I’d had enough. ‘ Who is this Velasquez guy?’ I kept askin’ myself. ‘ And why for does he skip out an’ leave this ore standin’, if he’s tellin’ the truth; and why did the engineer—— Oh, blast the engineer!’ I says, an’ follows Velasquez down the stope.

“ It finished in a badger-hole worse than the one we’d got in by. I was grieved to contemplate what I’d got to climb through now. ‘ Anyhow,’ I says, to comfort myself, ‘ if he does try any tricks, thank God I left my watch on the bureau.’ He was peaceful enough, however, when I come gruntin’ out through the discharge end o’ his drainpipe of a connection. I find myself in a fair-sized chamber. By the look of things, the old timers had lost the vein here; for there was a slip or fault of sorts runnin’ across the far wall, an’ cross-cuts driven east an’ west where they’d been prospectin’ to find it again.

“ I hadn’t much time to speculate, however, before friend Velasquez chips in with a noo sensation. ‘ *Carramba!*’ he cries. ‘ Look what I have found!’ ”

“ I jumped. Not very high, for I ain't built that way. But my nerves was shook. ‘ What d'ye find ? ’ I interrogates. I thought maybe it was a scorpion got in under his clothes from the fuss he'd made. He pays no attention. ‘ Pedro's lamp ! ’ he murmurs, fingerin' two or three pieces o' broken pottery he's picked off the floor. ‘ Pedro's lamp which fell from his hand as we fled—*Dios mio ! Dios mio !* How many years ago ? ’ ‘ *Quien sabe ?* ’ says I, by way of a joke, to cheer us all up. He don't cheer, however. ‘ *Santissima !* ’ he breaks away—an' his voice is shaky hoarse, an' his face pale an' sweatin' in the candlelight—‘ Most Holy Virgin ! What else ? What else lies there in the dark to await my return ? *Aie !* ’ he says—melancholy like. ‘ Cain ! Cain ! ’

“ Picture my feelin's, Mr. Fortescue ! I ain't a highly strung man ; but such doin's an' sayin's in the bowels o' the earth, about four bells in the middle watch an' in the company of a perfect stranger—Holy Smoke ! ‘ Easy ! ’ says I, as soon as I can get my voice. ‘ Calm yourself ! Calm yourself ! Maybe you ain't as much to blame as you reckon. I seen men shot I ain't regretted, an' there's others I know'd stand a heap—the man that put me on to my present job for one.’

“ Velasquez swallows, 's if he's tryin' to choke down somethin'. ‘ Come inside,’ he says, passin' in by the cross-cut that was driven to the west. In about twenty feet of tunnellin' this ends, an' I see by the look of things they've picked up the vein again. There was a drift either way from the far end of the cross-cut an' a four-by-six-foot winze, sunk, I should judge, twelve feet on the vein. There was a pile o' broken rock at the bottom of

this winze. 'Here,' says Velasquez, 'you will find ore.' 'Anythin' else?' asks I, lookin' at the rock in the winze, an' tryin' to speak calm. 'You will find,' says Velasquez, 'you will find—*Aie Dios!* How shall I say it to you?'

"Suddenly he jerks his chin up an' begins talkin' low an' rapid like a man in a hurry to get somethin' he's learned off his chest. He mostly talks through his shut teeth—breathin' hard. 'The followers o' the great Hernando Cortés,' he said, 'were in many cases rewarded with grants of land. Among those so recompensed was my great-grandfather, who was the first to work this mine. It was still payin' handsome when my father gets assassinated by a drunken Indian—leavin' me an' my brother——' 'Hold on! When did all this happen?' I asked. '1620,' says Velasquez, 'was the year father died.' 'Proceed,' I told him—there is a point where the human system gets saturated with scare—'with the symphony.' 'That leaves me an' my brother,' he proceeds, 'a man o' coarse an' violent passions, to share the estate between us. I did what I could to put up with his ways, but it was hard, señor, it was hard! For one thing he's always knockin' the *peons* about——' 'Dam' poor policy,' says I. 'Yes,' he says, 'for they are resentful. It is most dangerous. This, however, my brother could not see. Matters become complicated,' he goes on, 'by—by a *señorita*, the daughter of a neighbour; but the fact that so far she shows no special interest in either of us helps to maintain the equilibrium. This is the state of affairs when my brother goes to Mexico City for a visit. Hardly is he gone a week before I'm approached by an old miner that's grown grey in our

service. We'd lost the vein some time before, and had picked it up again—as you see—here where you are standing. I'd left Pedro an' his sons to explore the ground. Now he comes to me, in his Indian way, with a considerable amount o' mystery, an' asks me to go down with him. I followed him, Señor Pollok. In the bottom of this winze I saw a sight I can never forget. It was a miracle! It was solid silver upon which I walked, nor could a man draw his hand across the floor of the new drift—fifty yards either way—that Pedro an' his sons had driven, without scratchin' the skin off on the wires o' native metal stickin' out.'

“ ‘ And then, Señor Pollok,’ he says, ‘ while I’m standin’ in the bottom o’ the winze thinkin’ how pleased my brother will be when he comes back an’ gets the glad news, a little stone falls on my hand. I look up, Señor Pollok. I look up, and I see—*Que cosa espantosa!*—peerin’ over the edge the face of a devil. The face,’ he says, ‘ o’ my brother.’ ‘ The son of a gun,’ says I. ‘ To come buttin’ in at a solemn moment like that!’ ‘ Ah!’ says Velasquez. ‘ An’ the things he begins to call me—the expressions unworthy o’ the lips of a gentleman he lets drop, makin’ out I’ve been hidin’ this from him on purpose——’ ‘ The brute!’ I says. ‘ An’ that I’m figurin’ on beatin’ it with the girl an’ the cash.’

“ Hold on a minute,” broke in the Englishman. “ Are we to understand that this is a report of your pal Velasquez’ actual words—or a rather free translation? ”

“ Am I tellin’ this story or are you? ” retorted Pollok. “ Have it which way you like—if there’s any more interruptions I quit! ”

“ Oh, please continue,” breathed Fortescue.

“ What was I sayin’ then? Oh—I remember. Velasquez tells how his brother converses with him from the top o’ the winze. Seems there was a bit o’ language flyin’, words like *Isariota* formin’ the light trimmin’s to a real serious dialogue. ‘ Lyin’ on his stomach,’ says Velasquez, ‘ on the edge o’ the winze he calls me appellatives of a coarseness unspeakable—an’ I suffer him. I was patient, *caballero*,’ he says. ‘ I bore his *insultos*, an’ his *grosierias*, an’ his *vulgaridades*, with extreme an’ gentlemanly resignation. I did not complain of his injustice, so long as it was levelled at myself. But when he casts the most vile an’ unnatural slander on the fair name o’—*Eso no ; caballero !* I couldn’t stick that!’ ‘ Quite right!’ I tell him. ‘ No gentleman would!’

“ ‘ Who knows how it happened?’ says Velasquez, ‘ but I find myself in the cross-cut—an’ sword is out! When I understand what I’m doin’ it’s too late. I try to guard myself without hurtin’ him, but behind me is Pedro with our two lamps in his hand. Though I didn’t know this at the time, he’s holdin’ them so’s to shine the light right in the eyes of my brother. I wake from a hawrible dream to behold the feet o’ my brother pointin’ to heaven—an’ my sword is wet. *Mea culpa ! mea culpa !*’

“ He beats his chest a spell,” broke off the narrator, “ an’ I felt right sorry to hear him take on so. *Poco tiempo* he tunes up again: ‘ I become aware of the voice o’ Pedro. He is talkin’ to himself. “ Now he has died,” says he. “ *Pues entonces*, he is dead. Don Manuel gave him a big *picon*—with his sword—in the heart—and he fell—and he died.



*No vuelve—eh?*” An’ he grins,’ says Velasquez. ‘That’s Mex,’ I tell him. ‘The cold-hearted son o’ shame!’

“‘Ah, señor!’ says Velasquez, ‘how shall I continue? We dared not leave *him* there to be discovered in the morning. Pedro has drills an’ powder, an’ the rock above the winze is loose an’ ready to fall. We worked till mawning, as men never worked before. Then we lower that silent one; an’ with the roar of the blastin’ in my ears I flee from that hawrible place——’”

“An’ that’s how I came to find I was a clear-voyant,” explained Pollok in mild tones.

“But,” cried the Englishman, “what the dickens has all this to do with——”

“Good heavens!” cried Fortescue. “You don’t mean——”

“I mean that while Velasquez is tellin’ me this he gets transparent like; an’ I distinctly see the figgers o’ two men—one in cotton drawers an’ sandals an’ the other in clothes like Velasquez wears—runnin’ an’ crouchin’ an’ disappearin’ finally up the rat-hole that leads to the old stope above us. An’ while I’m ponderin’ these things a little bird begins to sing, ‘Tweet! Tweet!’ an’ I’m lyin’ with my head on the office-table, an’ the sun filterin’ in through the window.”

“My aunt!” exclaimed Fortescue, quite forgetful of the lack—so far—of any real information as to present conditions on the Cedro. ‘What a story! And—and did you——’”

“Did I what?”

“The old stope, you know—er—was it——”

“Oh, that! Sure! I rustled up a couple o’ men

right away an' went straight down. We found the slab, an' it's hard tellin's which was the most surprised—the *peons* or me—when we get her shifted an' discover I'd dreamed the whole caboodle as it actually was, yes, sir, as it actually was; bar the engineer swore he'd never left his bed. An' we cleared the winze"—Fortescue gave an involuntary shudder—"an' found nothin'."

"What?" yelled two voices simultaneously. Old Shaw had relapsed into senile slumber.

"Nothin'. Nary speck o' ore—nary bone o' Velasquez *Hermano*. The vein cuts clean out, an' that was the end o' my last hope—so far's makin' the Cedro a payin' mine went. We shut down a month later, when the syndicate's money ran out."

"How do you account for that part?" asked Fortescue.

"It puzzled me a heap, I'll admit, until I find this old book here"—he pulled a venerable calf-bound quarto from his pocket. "It's called 'The Narrative o' John Hancock, Mariner.' It's a right ancient book, an' the spellin' would shock Teddy Roosevelt; but I guess there's a passage might interest you."

Fortescue glanced curiously at the volume—which was indeed "right ancient"—and directed his attention to the paragraph indicated:

"Ye estate," he read, "belongeth unto ye descendants of one Pablo Velasquez, a souldier of the Conquest, being held at thys tyme by one Manuel Velasquez, hys elder brotherr Francysco peryshinge of ane ague whilst in ye City of Mexico . . . a most kind patron such as butte rarely falleth to a poor shippewreckt mariner . . . grievyth me to thynke

how, being steept in ye Papish Superstitioun, he shall surely brenn in Hell's flames. *Further by reason that in alle thynges appertayning to ye myne he is a most damnable liar.*"

"I underlined them last words," said Pollok calmly. "My idea bein' that the souls o' the dead goes transubstantiatin' down the ages, passin' from one body to another; present occupation o' the above-mentioned bein'——"

"Yourself," remarked the Englishman. "'Ware libels !

"By the way," he added, "who the devil gave you leave to borrow that book of mine, and make pencil marks on it ?"

Old Shaw muttered unrestfully and opened his bleared eyes. "Th' Ampliacion de Shaw——" he began.

"I think I see your moral," said Fortescue hastily. "Thank you very much, Mr. Pollok, for the information."



## THE UNRELIABLES

“**A**H’M the happiest man alive—Tu-ra-lu-ra-li-do——” sang the Englishman; and he drew a circle with his compasses in the corner of the plan he was operating upon, and marked it with a number for filing.

“Ah canna tell ye hoo ah feel,  
Ah feel as if ah could dance a reel,  
For ah’m gaun tae th’ mountains wi’ Jawn McNeil—  
Tu-ra-lu-ra-li-do.”

“The air is familiar,” remarked Mr. Fortescue—his tenderfoot friend—“but who the deuce is John McNeil?”

“A Scotchman like yourself.”

“So I had inferred from his name. What a remarkable brain I must have!”

“John McNeil,” said the Englishman, “is the leading criminal on the board of directors of the Santa Ynez Ltd., the flourishing mine of which I am supposed to be general manager and consulting engineer. William Pollok is the supe, with residence ten rods, poles or perches—approximately—north-east of the main shaft and a salary of three hundred pesos a month. It’s no good my repeating all these things to you. You only forget them again. I told you all about McNeil a week ago, but you would not listen. You were writing a poem.”

“I remember. He is a fat man, and has no soul.

His chief vice is wearing a made-up tie and his principal virtue an overwhelming interest in Presbyterian missions."

"That is what I told you, only you were not listening. At the moment McNeil is cumbering the soil of Mexico, unless they arrested him on the border. I expect him here in a week. He is going to rejoice his eyes with the first sight of the Santa Ynez, and dictate our future policy."

"But you said he doesn't know end up about mining," protested Fortescue.

"He has charge of the moneybags," grunted the Englishman. "The job before me is to make the place look tidy, feed him well and convince him that Pollok is telling the truth. Otherwise he will get in a nasty temper and order us to shut down."

"Surely he won't do that if the mine is paying," cried Fortescue. "He is a Scotchman!"

The Englishman looked sadly at the completed plan.

"He would not do that if the mine was paying," he said gently. "I must go out to-morrow," he added. "I must see what Pollok is up to, and arrange for a gentle horse to carry McNeil from the railway, and fat feeding at the other end. Everything depends on this trip. If I can only stave 'em off for another year I can put the property on its legs. You can come with me if you like. A distinguished novelist and brother Presbyterian like yourself and an accomplished liar like Bill Pollok ought to be able to handle any Scotch director that ever absorbed haggis. Besides which old Shaw at San Lorenzo will be glad to see you. He still hopes

that you may take an option on his Ampliacion de Shaw."

"I have taken one," said Fortescue, and blushed.

"Good Lord!" said the Englishman.

Before conducting the reader to a point half-way on the San Lorenzo-Santa Ynez trail—a point where I propose to gather up the thread of this stirring tale—I feel it incumbent upon me to explain that the term "Englishman" as applied to *the* Englishman is not intended as a negation of the rights of Mr. Fortescue. Mr. Fortescue is a British subject—a writer of some note, and addicted to travel. The Englishman is a mining engineer with an office in the town of Corral in the north of Mexico, and a mine to look after in the adjacent Sierra del Tecolote. His real name—I believe—is Jones, but the American and British residents of Corral evidently found this title too hard to remember. Perceiving that Mr. Jones somehow or other radiated his insular origin in a sort of psychic shriek—that new-comers looked once upon him and forthwith cried "An Englishman, begad!" or "Sir, I perceive that I am talking to a representative of the parent race," or "Say, pardner, ain't it strange, but I got a kinder blawsted hunch you must be a bloomin' Henglishman, old top"—the foreign residents of Corral promptly adopted the obvious expedient.

This explanation may save confusion. Let us hasten to the Santa Ynez trail.

"Tu-ra-lu-ra-li-do! For the Lord's sake stop playing with that pistol—it's the earmark of a greenhorn, and uncommon risky—and tell me what the dickens is *that!*" The Englishman reined in

abruptly on the mountain's southern slope and pointed down the long canyon beneath.

"It looks like a cow," said Fortescue. "What a magnificent view!"

"I'm not looking at the view," said the Englishman, and unslung a pair of binoculars. "I'm looking at the object on the bluish rock to the left. There's something extraordinarily bizarre in the way of a monument on top of it, and if you want my frank opinion it's Buddha."

"Don't be silly," exclaimed Mr. Fortescue. "Buddha is a purely Thibetan divinity."

"Not now," said the Englishman. "He's emigrated. Pretty soon the peons will be burning stolen candles round him, under the impression they've discovered a new saint. What a shock the jolly old bishop will get!"

Fortescue took the glasses. "It's Pollok," he murmured, in the tone of one making a new and rare discovery.

"Pollok my foot! Bill's far too fat to climb up that place drunk. If he was sober he wouldn't try to. Besides, he's the most temperate man in the north of Mexico—when he's working."

"It's him," insisted Fortescue, between whose literary and conversational styles yawned strange discrepancies, "It's him meditating. Has he suffered from the habit long?"

"Damn it," said the Englishman, "this must be investigated! What does Pollok mean by making a public spectacle of himself before the coyotes when McNeil is expected to-morrow? Everything is in a frightful mess, and now he goes and sits on a rock as if time were an illusion—leaving me to do



his work. Damn it, I won't have it! It's not right!"

The December sun—undimmed by even the suspicion of mist or fog—dipped to the sky-line as the travellers descended the hill. At the bottom of the slope they rode out upon a little valley, sweeping with the curve of the stream round the next hill. About a quarter of a mile up stream this open flat came to an end in two pillar-like columns of rhyolite—the gate-posts of a long canyon. On the left-hand pillar could be discerned the back of Mr. Pollok, his face being set southward to the Santa Ynez divide.

The two travellers cantered almost noiselessly over the yielding turf.

The valley lay in bluish shadow, chill with the breath of nightfall; but a last long shaft of glory yet illuminated the squat figure overhead, god-like on its lofty pinnacle. Mr. Pollok could not see them. He was also, to all appearances, too engrossed in contemplation to hear them.

"Bill," said the Englishman, addressing himself to the broad back of the devotee, "is it right—is it just—is it honourable——" He checked himself, and suddenly his upturned face was illuminated by a joyful grin. "Think of your rheumatics, Bill!" he murmured.

A twitch of the shoulders notified them that the dreamer had awakened. "I have," said he, "a constitutional right to life, liberty an' the pursoot o' happiness under whatsoever conditions I blame well choose."

"I'll be hanged if you have!" exploded the Englishman. "What right have you to be looking

at the view when hell has burst loose and McNeil is expected? Look me in the eye and answer me that!"

"I take no account of McNeil," said Pollok gloomily and without vouchsafing to turn his head. "As for the view," he added, with a tinge of bitterness, "if you gents will wait a moment the view will be round again to speak for itself. Henry," he continued in a kindlier tone, and addressing some as yet invisible audience on the far side of the crag, "Henry, old son, for my sake deal gently with the young men."

Whilst he spoke Henry came round the rock, travelling at a nervous trot.

He was not a big bull—but oh, the cat-like agility of his movements! There was no preliminary pawing of the ground, or idle outcry. He went for the Englishman with a silent malevolence that would have struck terror into the heart of a Crusader. Mr. Pollok seized this moment to ask the Englishman what he would take for his horse.

The Englishman should not have wasted time informing Mr. Pollok that his horse was not for sale. There was a juniper tree behind him, spreading its luxuriant branches across the trail. By passing underneath the pony ensured itself an unencumbered flight.

"Can bulls climb?" gasped the Englishman from the foliage where he now found himself roosting.

"This one ain't half bad," answered the interested spectator, "but I'd stay up there till he comes for you all the same. It's safer."

Fortescue came into action as Henry wheeled

from the abandoned pursuit of the Englishman's horse. Twice his revolver roared and gravel sputtered between the hoofs of Henry ; but of the two Henry was the stauncher. Mr. Fortescue's last coherent remark was in answer to Pollok's suggestion that he try clipping Henry's ear with a third bullet. According to his own account he advised Pollok to come down and clip it himself ; although the latter declares, and I believe, that his actual comment was infinitely coarser.

Whilst Henry was weighing the advisability of pursuing the flying Fortescue, against that of considering an Englishman in the bush worth two on the trail, a loud crashing arose. He turned in time to see the descent of Mr. Pollok's consulting engineer—still glued to the branch which had betrayed him—but was just too late to forestall him in his masterly retreat to the airy eyrie already inhabited by Pollok.

Somewhat blown, more than a little scratched by his bitter experiences in the tree, yet thankful for his manifold mercies, the wondering Briton lay out upon the rough summit trying to recover his physical and facultative breath. So swift had been the march of events within the last few moments of his life that it was hard for him to comprehend that this thing was no strange nightmare, but an actual drama of existence in which he moved and played a part.

As his senses cleared, the unwelcome truth of his position became more apparent. The last sparkle of the vanishing sun flashed through a scraggy oak upon the rocky ramparts of the canyon ; from below came the footfall of the relentless Henry ;

and through the gathering twilight drifted a thin but frosty breeze.

Pollok began to speak.

"Back in Oklahoma," he said, addressing himself more to the landscape than his companion in misfortune, "in the old days I'd like to have seen the twelve-year-old boy couldn't handle two o' Henry—oh, pshaw!"

"Then how does an old cattle-man like yourself come to be up here?" suggested his companion.

The manager stammered a little before answering.

"Was afoot," he grunted. "Stopped to water the horse."

The Englishman cocked his eyebrow.

"Well, nobody's askin' ye to believe me," grumbled Pollok. "Gimme a horse that's bridle wise, an' a rope, I'd learn any steer in Mexico not to fool round *me*." He seemed vaguely irritated, so his consulting engineer forbore. Presently he gathered up the thread of his discourse. "Not that it's your fault," he graciously conceded. "You know no better. It beats me sometimes to think how you know anythin' at all."

The Englishman laughed.

"I would suggest," he said, "that neither Fortescue nor myself was provided with a rope."

"Oh, pshaw! Ain't there no other ways?"

"Then why not show me some? There is the bull."

Through narrowed eyelids Pollok peered over the edge to where Henry, apparently in an innocuous frame of mind, was now grazing. On seeing him move, Henry lifted up his head, and for a moment their eyes met.

"Maybe you're right," said Pollok. "Guess this

chap has ate loco weed or somethin'. How far off do you reckon the lit'ry gent is by now? "

" Fortescue? I expect his pony is in San Lorenzo. Lord knows where he may be himself. He's not a good rider."

" He ain't," said Pollok.

" Then, even if he does get there alive, I'm afraid there's nothing doing. Shaw went off to Corral on the train."

" Th' hell! " said Pollok.

" And Fortescue only talks French and Hindustani, which the natives don't seem to understand here. The *comisario* 'll most likely stick him in jail for a wandering lunatic."

Pollok shivered.

" Meanwhile," he said, " we sit here in the fresh breeze o' evenin'. Don't worry you're goin' to suffer any heat stroke. The frost'll be sharper 'n the tooth o' an ungrateful child inside of two hours."

" And McNeil arrives to-morrow," groaned the Englishman. " Did you leave things ship-shape at the mine? "

" I left things in charge o' Antonio—an' he's a Mexican," snarled Pollok. " I left a big pile o' six-an' eight-inch timber clutterin' round the shaft-head, which sticks Antonio lets on he's goin' to stack neat-like behind the store before I get back. I left John Hop " —John Hop was his Chinese cook —" with orders to buskey eggs at La Union store or wherever he can catch 'em. They both got their orders all right, all right."

" Why on earth didn't you stay and see them carried out? "

" Why? Whisky! D'you suppose it'll pay to

leave the choosin' o' the whisky to a Chinaman? There ain't a drop in the place."

"I brought my flask," murmured the Englishman, and the light of hope kindled in Pollok's eyes. "But unfortunately I left it in my saddle pocket," he added, with ruminative regret—and hope died. Steadily the shadows deepened, and the pale moon began to assert her position as temporary queen of the heavens.

"It makes no difference," continued Pollok, "seein' we're both apparently due to be froze to death. But it makes me kind o' sad to think how McNeil 'll find those sticks o' timber, an' how much whisky an' eggs the funeral party's liable to encounter in the house. Depend upon a native to let you down. There was a *vaquero* came along the trail an hour or so ago," he added. "I spoke to him, an' he offered to 'do up' friend Henry for ten pesos. Claimed he was savage, an' the job was accompanied by grievous risk o' bodily harm. Then, when I tell him 'what kind o' parent brings fellows like him into the world to pester folks, he grins in my face an' rides off down the trail. That's Mex! If that was Texas he'd not ha' done that; but that's what we've got to expect so long's their Greaser laws hinder a decent American from occasionally shootin' one or two of the ——— to learn the rest of them manners."

"It isn't right!" complained the Englishman. "Hang it all, it isn't right." He propped his chin on his knees and sank into a chilly reverie.

The broken vista of red and blue-grey rock, pine and live oak, swam in a deep blue transparency—miraculously clear—and brighter grew the moon.

Gradually a picture of two frozen corpses sitting on a rock visualized in the Englishman's mind. Under the softening influence of the near approach of death he again unbent.

"Supposing we work out some plan of action?" he suggested. "It'll give McNeil a horrid bad impression of his staff to discover us up here like a brace of scarecrows, and I hate the prospect of being consumed by buzzards. Let us do something!"

"You fix up your plan then, an' I'll help you do it," answered Pollok helpfully. "If this was a white man's country there'd be a bunch of fellows along, soon as Fortescue broke the noos at San Lorenzo; but I'd just as lief trust a Chink as any of these people. If it wasn't for American enterprise they'd be scuddin' around half-naked, eatin' roots, an' here's all their thanks!"

"Well, kicking won't help," retorted the Englishman. "If they were people one could rely on they'd run their own business, instead of letting in foreigners to exploit the country. Pity Shaw went to town. He wears a Mexican hat, but he still has a few poor remnants of human intelligence."

"What'd he go to town for?" inquired Pollok.

"Fortescue gave him fifty dollars—the fool. It's the price of a six months' working option on the Ampliacion de Shaw. I told Fortescue not to do it, but he has no idea of the value of money. He could have bought a suit of clothes for that much."

Pollok beat his head with both hands.

"I advised him to do it," he groaned.

"Good heavens! Had you gone temporarily insane?"

"It was only fifty dollars Mex," complained

Pollok. "I thought if old Shaw had that much money to get lickered up he'd maybe keep his fool mouth shut. He's just crazy enough to go settin' McNeil against the Santa Ynez in the hopes he'd do somethin' afterwards with his blasted Ampliacion. He'd lose the Santa Ynez trade o' course—an' have to shut up his store in consekence, for his other trade ain't worth a two-cent whoop—but he ain't got enough sense left to see that. This is what I get for tryin' to be smart, an' takin' thought for the morrow!"

"Serves you damn well right," said the Englishman nastily. "I knew something like that would happen before long, when you gave the contract underground to Pablo Gomez, the mule man. I don't believe the man is a Protestant at all. It's not in nature for a Mexican to be any such thing. He's a Free Thinker, that's what he is, and next shot out of the box we'll have some ghastly accident underground."

"What—for employing a Free Thinker?"

"No, for employing a mule-driver. Besides McNeil's a hot Presbyterian, and your man's a Baptist, if he's tellin' the truth—which I don't believe for an instant."

"He sure is," said Pollok earnestly. "I met the missionary that converted him, sellin' adulterated brandy to Perkins' men on the Union. Gomez is a Hard Shell Baptist, which is a very respectable an' decent brand o' Protestant. I was raised that way myself. 'Sides which he allows if we raise his price another fifty centavos the metre he'd think badly of the Presbyterians. '*Es lo mismo,*' he says. It's all the same to him!"



“It isn't right,” said the Englishman. “You and Fortescue between you have ruined the Santa Ynez. McNeil will be here to-morrow, and we shall both be dead. There will be no whisky. John Hop will be bleary-eyed with opium, and Antonio will be savagely drunk. The timber will be strewed all over the *patio*, and the mine will have caved in underground from Gomez not timbering his place properly. McNeil will get a bad impression of the place. Hang it all, it's not right!”

As if in despairful supplication of unpitying Fate, he threw his arms heavenwards and beat rhythmically on his resounding bosom. Pollok followed suit, and for a space both flapped in the moonlight like uncouth night-birds. On a distant mountain side a belated Indian beheld them, crossed himself hurriedly and fled trembling down the trail. Even Henry appeared moved by the spectacle.

Exhausted, yet little warmed, they ceased their efforts. For all their pride of race, and dogged scorn of tame submission to the Reaper's scythe, the frost seemed to be getting in its work. Earthly hope was indeed dead, and even Pollok's heartfelt prayer that misfortune might dog the footsteps of the covetous cowboy became flat and unprofitable.

The cold appeared to have numbed their very souls.

“That's not a bravo bull,” said Pollok, “comparatively speakin'.”

He spat indignantly in the direction of the placid Henry, and the latter again raised mild eyes to his as if in approval of his sentiments.

“Back in Oklahoma——” began Pollok, and paused. Henry pawed up a few feet of turf and

emitted a low moaning sound. "Oh, pshaw!" said Pollok. "With regard to old man Shaw, Antonio, John Hop, the *vaquero* swine who come along here this afternoon an' all the other inhabitants o' these parts—all of whom I class as heathen natives—I can give you one infallible rule to go on. What you naturally *count* on the sons o' guns doin' is just what they *ain't* goin' to do—an' vice versa. I guess you an' me—if we ain't froze—will have to hunt a new job. We're here for the night, an' McNeil's goin' to shut down the Santa Ynez."

"We are due to be frozen," replied the Englishman bitterly. "I am already suffering from hallucinations."

"How much?"

"Hallucinations! Seeing things—unless the ponies hereabouts have wings."

"Not as a rule," answered Pollok. Without much display of interest, but impelled by the remnants of natural curiosity, he turned to look. "By Heck," he added, in a slightly more animated tone, "it does look rather like it, don't it? What sort o' bird do you reckon that is?"

"It's not a bird. It's a flying horse. Do you think I don't know a flying horse when I see one? It's a Pegasus of the Sierras, and we are both dead men."

"Lordy!" said Pollok.

"It don't appear to *soar* anything to speak of," he continued presently. "Let's give it a shout. Maybe it talks Spanish."

He rose to his feet, and the Englishman did likewise. Up the gulch drifted a long, two-voiced, quavering hail.

Or ever the echoes died a faint but cheerful yell answered back, and distinctly across the mountain silence drifted the distant clatter of a brisk trot. The moon shone brightly on the statuesque pines and the thick-growing oak scrub which filled the bed of the canyon. Out through an open space—glinting momentarily to vanish again—drifted the strange steed, and again the Englishman saw the beating white wings on its flank.

Pollok bent his heavy brows in thought; then groaned.

“I have it,” he remarked bitterly. “It’s John Hop!”

It was.

It should be explained, perhaps, that John Hop has a method or mode of equitation entirely his own. It consists of a series of bounds from the back of his palfrey, carrying him, at each step, a matter of a foot to about eighteen inches out of the saddle. You or I could not do this, for we should fall off, but John is in the control of a special Chinese providence—some patron joss as it were—which so to speak pats him back whence he arose. It is like the rebound of a beaten ball from the floor. He rises and falls continually in a sort of “posting” movement carried out upon a scale of unparalleled magnificence.

Even John Hop, however, cannot do this thing and at the same time keep his trousers down. In clear weather you can tell who it is, from the snowy underwear, at the greatest distances.

This, nevertheless, is digression.

What stunned the besieged into a state of hopeless apathy was the fact that Fate now seemed to

have sent—to mock their misery—perhaps the least competent person available to handle such a situation as sentinelled the base of the rock. They looked forward, with morbid interest, to a scene of destruction and bloodshed. A bull and a Chinese cook would now play the traditional parts of the traditional bull in the traditional China shop.

At the last, however, an impulse of self-abnegation stirred the hearts of the men of the superior race. Rising together, they once more shouldered the white man's burden. With oaths and loud outcry they ordered John Hop back.

Apparently he failed to understand. To their dismay he answered with a cheerful shout and the stroke of a pliant twig athwart the pony's flank. The latter broke into an easy lope, and the bounding became less pronounced.

“Hul-lo, Mis' Pollok! What you do the-ah? Hip cold!”

“Well, you'll not be heap cold long,” bellowed Pollok. “Get back out o' here. There's a dangerous bull below.”

“Bu'?” John reined in, and his tone was that of mild surprise. “How you catchum bu'?”

“Never mind how I catchum. Him here! Pretty soon him knock you galley-west out o' this world of sin, if you don't step lively. Get—you heathen!”

“And tell Antonio to send two mounted men with ropes,” added Pollok as an afterthought.

“Antonio come plitty soon,” answered the unruffled John. He showed not the slightest intention of following instructions. “Where bu'?” he inquired.

The question was unnecessary. A crashing arose

in the bush, and Henry strode across his path. The spectators waited anxiously to see the end.

As to what followed I cannot get any definite statement out of Pollok, and the Englishman is equally reticent. As far as can be deduced—from circumstantial evidence and the witness of Antonio, who saw part of the performance and told me the tale with shouts of laughter—it was this: when John Hop saw the bull before him he gave a loud and burly cry—conceiving it, perhaps, to be a cow—and brandishing his stick he rode fiercely towards the enraged animal.

And Henry——?

Well, Henry ran away; and John Hop pursued him with insults, and even with blows, a matter of a quarter of a mile.

When he returned from the chase he found Pollok and the Englishman had descended. With them was Antonio, foreman of the Santa Ynez. Antonio was explaining that he would have come sooner—fearing some mishap—had he not been kept working overtime on a matter of removing timber. He was very sorry; but he felt it his duty to see that orders were carried out in the first place.

“ My go La Union sto’ah, Mis’ Pollok. Catchum whisky—alee same ‘blue label’—alee same you likee dlink—catchum fi’, six, egg. Not ’nuff! My go San Lorenzo now. Catchum mo’ah egg. China-boy La Union cookum suppah you. Him my fiend.”

Which being interpreted meant that John Hop had obtained whisky of a reputable brand at the La Union Mine store, that he had also obtained five or six eggs, and that he was now on his way to San Lorenzo to get more eggs. His friend and fellow-

countryman from La Union had volunteered to shoulder his duties and prepare Mr. Pollok's supper.

"Which just proves," remarked Pollok, "what I was sayin'. Whatever you naturally count on the sons of guns doin' is just what they ain't goin' to do—an' vice versa. *Muchas gracias*, Antonio. We prefer to walk. It's not far, and it's a cold night."

Fortescue arrived at the mine an hour later, spattered with mire, but leading both horses. The next day the Englishman rode back to the railway and brought out Mr. McNeil. The latter complimented Antonio on the tidy appearance of everything and waxed facetious about the good feeding and the good liquor at Pollok's house. He was introduced to Pablo Gomez, the Protestant contractor, and said that he was "verra interestin' an' a remarrkable sign o' grace," and Pablo smote himself on the bosom and replied, "*Si, señor. Presbeteriano* good fello', Goddam!" which Pollok translated into something complimentary about the ore.

I understand that Mr. John McNeil carried home a very favourable report on the state and future prospects of the property.

## THE STEALERS

“**N**EVER raise your hand in anger to a native,” said William Pollok, superintendent of the Santa Ynez Mine.

This was refreshing counsel from the lips of one who is yet wanted in one of the Mexican Gulf ports—Puerto Miraflores, to be exact—for two-thirds slaughtering the cousin of the *jefe politico*. Fortescue grinned.

“ I see what you’re thinkin’ of,” continued William piously. “ You imagine I am about to say how you should go to bend a crowbar acrost his head instead. No, sir! Nor that either! When you’ve been in the country ’s long ’s I have you’ll ha’ learned to observe how nice an’ polite they treat one another. It don’t matter how poor an’ humble, they always aim to talk gentle an’ courteous. You don’t see no bawlin’ an’ cussin’ an’ kickin’ about, among these people; an’ seems to me the foreigners in the country—— ”

What the foreigners in the country ought to do, or to leave undone, Mr. Fortescue was not destined to hear. Among the group of peons around the shaft-head arose a squeaking sound, and presently forth ambled an amazing little tatterdemalion with his hat respectfully clasped to his narrow bosom by both hands.

“ *Que queres?* ” said Pollok. Whereupon the

man checked his tumultuous complaint, ran back to the beginning again, and commenced his tale of sorrow anew.

Fortescue eyed him with interest, for Fortescue's real occupation is Work with his Pen.

He is expert at Eyeing with Interest, and the man was unique. He appeared to consist principally of trousers. He was so rabbit-like, so shrivelled and ineffective, and his nether wear so voluminous.

They were old, old trousers—hoary relics which, no doubt, had passed from father to son for generations. They were based on an original field of blue dungaree, but all the rules of heraldry had been broken since in the repairing of them. Old, patched trousers!

I mention them because they come into this story, which is a sad story, again.

The little peon hopped excitedly from one sandalled foot to the other before the stumpy, stolid American. In shrill and quavering treble he unfolded the iniquitous doings of one Pablo Chacon, the big Yaqui Indian, who "quitted me the dynamite *à fuerzas, señor*—by force, señor," and had called him—well, never mind the exact expression—and, by this dastardly conduct, "prevented me from performing a satisfactory day's work"—and had therefore imperilled his job.

"Is this true?" demanded Pollok.

The queue of men which ranged from the shaft-head to the self-important *velador*—who searched them one by one as they came off shift—laughed heartily. "Si," drawled the laconic accused—his face suggested a highly cultured flunkey who has



just discovered a tadpole in the teapot—" *Si-i*, half a stick. That which he had saved to steal. *Si-i-i-i*; I robbed him—I had necessity."

His frankness rather took the wind out of Pollok's sails.

"Give him back a stick to-morrow," he grumbled. "*Basta!* Enough!"

The be-trousered one replaced his hat and started for home at a brisk shamble, with the hems of that masterful garment trailing in the dust. He had reached the edge of the dump before Antonio the foreman called him back. "Oh thou," said Antonio—his hands in his pockets, his back propped on a leg of the gallows-frame, and a dreamy, non-committal smile on his swart features—"Hernando Ysabel Gavaldon, have they searched thee?"

Hernando, etc., hopped nervously back into line, and spread his pipe-stem arms, as if in mute appeal, before the *velador*.

"What is his name?" said that official to Antonio, as he performed the usual perfunctory stroking process.

"Hernando," observed Antonio, fishing for his packet of cigarettes in his hip-pocket, but resolutely determined to fall down the shaft rather than move his back an inch from its perilous leaning-post. "Why do you ask?"

"I had thought it was Joseph," explained the *velador* gravely. "*Hombre*, of a truth dost thou not remember if these thy pantaloons were not at one time a *saco*—a jacket?"

"No, *señores*," piped Hernando. "Coat never! Pure pantaloons!"

They did not look very pure.

“ He has forgotten,” observed the *velador* sagely. “ This José, of whom I speak, was a very evil man. He wore a coat—or trousers, it is the same—of the identical factory that turned out thine, the pattern being the same. Therefore his brothers sold him to a hirer of contract labour, who sent him to the United States—or Egypt—it is the same—— ”

“ Where he was put in jail,” interpolated Antonio, taking up the parable.

Hernando shivered.

“ With the motive that he had made improper advances to the señora of his *patrón*,” continued the delighted *velador*. “ *Pues*, of a truth thou must be he. Tell those girls that are hanging about the store to go home, Antonio. I am about to release the Señor Don Hernando José Ysabel Potifar Pantalones y Gavaldon. Look how he eyes them ! ”

He shook Hernando’s breeches in derision, and turned him loose. Away he trotted—amidst the laughter of the women—a sorely flustered mannikin.

“ To return to the original subject o’ discourse,” resumed Pollok. “ I say it ain’t in accordance with *my* principles, nor the custom o’ the country, to strike no native. No sir, not even if I was to find who it is liftin’ that high-grade ore from Number Seven stope.” He glared savagely at the line of innocents. “ Search ’em well, Julio,” he said. “ Search ’em well ! Ain’t they the thieves though, Mr. Fortescue ? ”

They drifted off into the office, and Pollok endeavoured to explain how much could not be expected of a people who could not be restrained, even, from robbing one another. He spoke also of his “ high-grade,” and the extraordinary facility

with which the peon manages to hide his most unlaundried conscience under a front of mild and guileless stupidity.

“ Niggers ain’t in it with ’em,” said Pollok, and passed easily to a prayer for the future of the race which, I regret, I cannot submit before a decently censorious public.

“ Let’s go down,” said Fortescue, when the cursing had died away. “ It *must* be supper-time.”

John Hop, the Chinese cook, was on the porch of the house in the canyon below.

“ Misigan come,” he intoned, as they drew near. “ Say my gibbum dollah. You sendum ? ”

Pollok denied, and John Hop broke into strange high-palatial Chinese.

“ No gettum ! ” he cried triumphantly at the last. “ No catchum ! Go’ dam’ liah ! ”

“ Imagine folk,” said Pollok, sinking wearily into a chair, “ what’ll go to the vexation o’ perjurin’ their souls to work a dollar out o’ a Chink—oh pshaw ! My God,” he continued devoutly—his mouth being then full of steak and onions—“ there ain’t but one man in the whole o’ this camp, ’sides myself, that’s honest. And *you’d* never guess who that is.”

“ Perkins ? ” suggested Fortescue, as the most improbable man.

Perkins was superintendent of a rival company next door.

“ Perkins ? Huh ! Barrabas ? Perkins may be straight in the lit’ry sense o’ that word, but, jollyin’ apart, how about that same Hernando Ysabel Gavaldon—commonly known as ‘ Pantalones ’—what you saw on the dump a half-hour ago ? ”

Fortescue laughed fatly.

“ I mean it,” cried William, to Fortescue’s amazement. “ He’s straight, simply because he ain’t got the nerve to be nothin’ else. He’s a *barratero* too, not a peon. It’s kind o’ strange havin’ an honest miner, for they’re the boys that know the ore.”

Strange Hispano-Chinese discourse arose without. “ *Quita! Fuela! Patlón ya ocup’ao!* ”

“ The *Patrón*’s not as occupied as all that, John,” shouted Pollok. “ Who’s there? Antonio? ”

Mr. Hop was understood to imply that doubly damned “ Misigan ” had returned for triply qualified “ dollah.” Pollok flushed with vexation, and suggested that John Hop show the culprit in, that *he* would give him a dollar, in a manner of speaking.

The door opened, and Pollok staggered back with one hand upraised as if to ward a blow. In the full glare of the lamplight stood Honest Hernando Ysabel. “ And *thou*,” said William weakly. “ Didst *thou* tell the *Chino* that I sent thee for money? ”

Hernando’s hat was only held in the customary respectful manner—chest-protectorwise—by one hand. The other was employed supporting his overalls, the cheap woollen sash which usually rendered such service having disappeared. He made an abortive attempt to rotate his hat—instinctive, but impossible under the circumstances—and quivered pitifully in his terror.

“ But yes,” he warbled. “ But of a manner privately. That is to say, *patrón*, I besought a little loan—of a manner that my papa is dead—and I very poor—very humble. I did not say it was an *order*, *patrón*. I did not say you *sent* me. Order—no! *Chino no sabe.* ”

“What do you want now?” interrupted Pollok, before Mr. Hop had time to resent the slur on his linguistics.

Hernando's dog-like eyes sought the superintendent's, and the dozen or so hairs which adorned his chin shook with emotion.

“*Pues*—they have quitted me the sash, *patrón*—what can I do? Now am I robbed, and have not that wherewithal to uphold me the pantaloons.”

“What a beastly shame!” cried Fortescue.

Hernando understood that he had gained sympathy, and his lips trembled. He improved the occasion by suggesting that Pollok should now open the store—on the summit of the mountain, be it said—to sell him another sash. A cheap sash, suitable for a poor man, recently robbed and with but one pair of trousers in all the world.

“Look here, Hernando,” said Pollok, “if you imagine I'm a-goin' to climb eight hundred feet at this time o' night, just to sell you a *faja*, why, you've got another guess comin'—*no sabe?* Well, wait here a minute—*espere te.*”

He vanished into his bedroom, to return with an old leather belt; and when Hernando understood that there was nothing to pay for this he was glad to the depths of his little heart. He shuffled about undecidedly for a minute or so, and then his gratitude began to take definite form.

“*Patrón,*” he murmured, “very thievish, this people.”

“Should keep more of an eye on your things,” reproved Pollok.

“*Si-i-i. Pues—patrón—other things!*” He blinked, and wagged his head knowingly. “Here—

thus ! ” He slapped his shirt on either side above the belt. “ The *ore, patrón, the ore !* ”

“ Who ? ” snapped Pollok. Hernando’s voice dropped to an alarmed whisper.

“ *No sé.* I do not know. *Pues—Patrón—I* a man very poor, very *frightened.* Very thievish, this people. They quit the poor labourer the powder; *pues entonces,* they quit the *gerente* the ore.”

“ Well ! ” remarked Mr. Pollok to Mr. Fortescue.

Fortescue held an option on a worthless claim, the “ *Ampliacion de Shaw,* ” which he was working in a desultory fashion with two men and a boy on contract. It came about that he rode over to this claim of his, next day, and he did not return until late.

He was riding down the bed of the *arroyo,* or ravine, just below the Santa Ynez on the north side of the mountain, when he imagined he heard a rustling in the underbrush overhead. “ Fox ? ” said Mr. Fortescue nervously—he does not believe in ghosts, but it was very dark—and he reined in to listen. There was a moment’s silence, and then a faint metallic sound, as if some one had gently deposited a tin vessel on the stony ground.

“ Who is there ? ” cried Fortescue.

No answer.

Fortescue rode on.

It so happened that Pollok was delayed at the mine that evening. Fortescue is a deliberate thinker, and the absence of the superintendent gave him an opportunity to revolve more thoroughly two incidents which otherwise might have been allowed to drop from his memory. It had just occurred to

him that his experience in the *arroyo* might bear on a few chance words overheard around the *peon's* quarters.

"What is a *bote*?" was his first remark as Pollok ambled in to supper.

The word is pronounced "bó-tay," by the way.

"Coal-oil can," said Pollok.

"One of those big square tins?"

"Yeah. What's troublin' you?"

"I just remembered," said Fortescue, "hearing that big Pablo fellow asking Juan Ramirez for the loan of a *bote* two or three days ago. It sounded a simple enough request, but they both seemed to find it funny. I wonder what he'd want that for?"

"Carry water, probably," said Pollok, removing his coat and drawing up his chair to the festive board.

"They're very like the Irish in some ways, these fellows," continued Fortescue irrelevantly. "Curious kind of grin these fellows have—'s if they were too overpowering shy to live—but—but—very like the Irish—what?"

"So long as you don't mention it," said Pollok, "to any Irishman of yo're acquaintance, I see no harm in you holdin' such beliefs." He helped himself gravely to six tablespoonfuls of peas—for he had a good appetite.

"Talkin' of *botes*," insisted Fortescue, "what would a fellow be doin' with a *bote* full of stones, draggin' 'em around the old workin's at this time of night?"

"Heh?" roared Pollok, and narrowly missed swallowing his knife. "What's that you said?"

"*Bote* of stones," gurgled Fortescue. "Heard

'em shuggle, and the clink of the tin when he put it down—you aren't feelin' ill, are you? "

"No!" gurgled the superintendent. "I'm feelin' *bully*." He did not look it. "Proceed with yo're narrative. What did you do? Help him to carry 'em down to his house?"

"No," said Fortescue, "I shouted '*Quien es?*'"—Pollok almost screamed—"but since he didn't seem disposed to answer, I just rode on."

"The glimmerin's o' intellect!" mused Pollok, half aloud. He poured his coffee violently into the saucer and drank it down with a shrill, sucking sound. "If they ain't suspicioned——" he began; then paused sharply and twisted his features in visible thought. "No!" he murmured finally—still more to himself than Fortescue. "They'll be off by now, an' we'd only rouse suspicion. Pablo Chacon—eh? Well, I'll get ye this time, pardner, or—— See here, Fortescue," he broke off. "Not a word o' this to anyone else—*sabe?* You stay here to-morrow, an' we'll have a squint round when the men's in the mine. Makin' a deepo out'n my old workin's, are they? Now I wonder how in thunder they get the stuff out there?"

On information received from one Hernando Ysabel Gavaldon—supplemented by the narrative of Mr. Fortescue—Pollok took special pains to see Pablo the Yaqui safely down the shaft next morning. Then he and Fortescue strolled absently to the summit of the mountain, where—they were still in full view of the surface employees about the mine—they spent full five minutes in ostentatiously pointing out distant objects of no possible interest.

Then they fared north-right, down the other side



of the hill, until they encountered a thing like an earthquake fissure on the flank of the mountain. It was, in fact, the place where dead and gone miners had gouged out a superficial lense of ore from the more westerly of the two veins. There are two parallel veins on the Santa Ynez, and the workings are connected by cross-cuts.

Passing down-hill to the northern extremity of this colossal trench, Fortescue and Pollok were able to walk right into the three-foot gap between the rock-walls. They turned southwards down the steeply sloping floor of what soon became a narrow cave—shut off from daylight by the overhanging brow at the southern extremity of the open-work. Old steps—cut in the solid rock in days when ore was carried out in cowhide *zurones*—led them deeper and deeper into the depths of the mountain. In places they had to shuffle along with both hands on one wall and with the other overhanging like a threatening cliff—so strait and crooked was the working.

“So far as I remember,” remarked Pollok airily, as he lit his candle, “the roof’s fell in between here an’ the noo’ workin’s. Shouldn’t wonder if it did it agen. But you can go back if you feel like it.”

“I’m game,” said Fortescue—albeit through set teeth; for the air was sticky and heavy, and a small stone fell rattling in the depths beyond. The moral effect of that stone was tremendous.

“It sure has fell in—an’ not so very long ago,” continued Pollok presently. “Look here!”

Fortescue found himself in the presence of a pile of broken rock—perhaps two hundred tons—which he observed with displeasure had obviously descended

from above. Some of the blocks were as big as a chest of drawers ; and Fortescue began to perspire. He felt worse when his companion began solemnly to ascend the mound.

“ Holy Moses ! ” exclaimed Pollok, flashing his light upwards. “ But I draw little comfort from the appearance o’ this here roof.”

“ Then why stand in the most dangerous place you can find ? ” complained Fortescue.

“ Oh, pshaw ! If it’s goin’ to drop on us there’s no use grievin’ about it beforehand.”

The argument failed to comfort Fortescue, so he took his courage in both hands and herded the phlegmatic William as rapidly as he could to the other side of the dangerous ground.

They found the roof in better condition here, but much lower. In five or six yards’ progress it had dropped from perhaps twenty feet of headroom to a matter of three feet. For another yard or two they were able to continue crawling. Then the crawl became a wriggle, and finally Pollok stuck fast between the solid roof and walls and the debris below, with his head down-hill and the light of Fortescue’s candle reflected from the hob-nails which garnished the soles of his boots.

“ It ain’t far from here to a drift on the second level,” he explained thickly. “ There used to be a connection, but the fall—— The fall closed it,” he continued brokenly. He seemed to be struggling to thrust or wriggle his girthsome body into an opening never designed by Providence for the accommodation of such as he.

“ Hoo ! ” he said suddenly. “ Would ye look at this ? ”

“Don’t be an ass,” complained Fortescue. “How can I?”

“No?—Hoo!—I fergot!—nev’ min’—hoo—say?—HOO!”

He choked badly, and Fortescue, with great presence of mind, laid hold of his heels and withdrew him—an uneasy process for William—before he had time to suffocate.

“Son ’f he-goat,” sneezed Pollok. “Some son ’f goat ’s been opened up con-con-connecshion.” He drew a deep breath or two, and continued more coherently. “They’ve dug through the fall,” he explained, “an’ though there ain’t room for the likes of me, a native could get through all right. I could see right in to the drift beyond. What d’ye think o’ that now?”

“I don’t quite follow,” said Fortescue.

“Why, it’s as clear as mud! Pablo an’ his friends know ’bout these old workin’s, so they just nach’lly get to work an’ dig them a hole from the second level hangin’ wall drift, that’ll do to pass out the ore by—without goin’ near the shaft where the *velador*’s watchin’. I guess the way they work it is just to slip down nights an’ lift anything they take a fancy to. Don’t quite see how Pablo could get through that there hole, but maybe he sends a boy—or maybe—well, anyhow, here’s where my ore gets stole. Will you do me a favour?”

“Certainly,” said Fortescue.

“Then ride over to San Lorenzo, an’ tell Concepcion O’Rourke, the *comisario*, an’ his brother Patricio, the constable, to come over quietly after nightfall an’ have some fun. You’ll have to talk Spanish to ’em—Pat’s onfortunate face

ain't nothin' but heredity; like Concepcion's temper."

The rest of this tale is the sad part I mentioned. It exemplifies the Frailty of Human Nature and the Evanescence of Gratitude. About eight o'clock that night Fortescue rode up to the superintendent's house with the dark-faced, peppery little *comisario* and the enormous Patricio in his wake. Both the O'Rourkes were girt with vicious-looking hand-cannon of that reliable type known as the "Colt Frontier Forty-five," and the outlook for unsuspecting Pablo was gloomy indeed. The constable's hereditary feet were encased in top-boots, of which more shall be said anon.

It was obvious—the mine being emptied of men—that no steps were necessary until some one had been seen to return to the workings. Not trusting the night *velador*, Pollok concealed himself behind a tree near the old workings, and left the others to watch the shaft from the bushes below. Three whistles were to notify the party to concentrate—the scheme being to let the thieves enter the mine and catch them red-handed as they came out with the stolen ore. For some reason, however, the gang appeared to have altered its visiting hours; and the strain of waiting until three in the morning, without even the solace of a cigarette, was hard on Patricio.

At the time mentioned, 3 a.m., Pollok's liquid notes thrilled through the windless silence, and three anxious men rose from their lairs and crept upwards under the stars. The superintendent joined them in the *arroyo* below the old workings.

“ I only seen one man go down,” he said, “ but I guess there may be others goin’ down by the other rowt—down the shaft ladder-way. If the *velador* ain’t asleep he’s in cahoots with them, so he’d not see ’em in any case.”

Patricio was of the opinion that he also had seen some person go up toward the shaft—as distinct from the old workings—although he could not be very sure about it. This tended to confirm Pollok’s belief, although I myself incline to the idea that it was a goat.

“ Anyhow,” he said to the world at large, “ we have them now ; an’ I don’t mind bettin’ it’s Pablo Chacon an’ Maximino Betancourt for two. See here, Patricio, do you and the Señor Fortescue abide by the shaft-head, whilst I and the señor *comisario* watch here. Thus, at the going out, we shall hook them.”

“ What shameless ones are these,” remarked the *comisario*, “ that bite the hand which feeds them ! For this they shall suffer Yucatan—two years apiece.”

It takes a good deal of nerve to climb down into the depths of a three-foot wide cave, to await in the dark the arrival of a desperate and muscular Yaqui Indian. The Yaquis, not without cause given, have spread the fear of them throughout the Republic. Pollok, however, is no coward.

He left the *comisario* outside, to guard against possible surprises from the rear, and himself descended alone as far as the fall. Here he crouched, without a light, until the grating of rocks beyond, and the faint glow of a candle, advertised the advance of the enemy.

The man, or men, wormed through the rabbit-hole connection with deep gasps and the dragging of heavy bodies over the stones. Then came a serpentine sound up the further slope, and Pollok noted with pain that not in a *bote* alone, but in a sack, was his ore coming out. Suddenly he bit back an oath; the candle had been extinguished and blank darkness fell curtainwise.

“That means a scrap in the dark,” thought William, “an’ more’n an off chance o’ gettin’ cut. However, here goes——”

The sack-dragger was almost on him now; indeed, out of the thick gloom a sandalled foot had already flicked Pollok lightly across the nose—seeking for foothold—and a tremulous voice inquired of the Almighty as to “what (obscurity) was this.”

“Halt!” roared Pollok.

He sprang as he shouted—only to be borne back by what seemed to his excited fancy to be a section of chain-cable wrapped in sacking. This article—weight perhaps one hundred pounds—had been cast violently and clingingly around his neck. “Halt!” he shouted again, lashing wildly at the empty air with the long barrel of his pistol. “Pablo Chacon, I have *seen* thee! The *comisario* and his men wait without—all is lost!”

It will be noted that even William—a truthful man (*sic*) under normal conditions—was not above trifling with the truth in extreme difficulty. This is one of the sad features of my story; the other——

Presently it was borne in upon the superintendent that he was wasting kinetic energy. The enemy had fled back into the depths of the mine, and it

would of course be silly to attempt pursuit. He stopped ruining his good revolver-barrel on the insensate boulder, sucked his knuckles, and, after a bewildered pause, thoroughly to grasp the inner meaning of all this, he began to examine his strange new necklace. He found that what had appeared to be chain-cable—first appearances are notoriously deceitful—was in reality the ore-sack; a curious sack—long and narrow, and quite likely so constructed to pass more easily through the hole of wicked Pablo's digging. With a supreme effort he got it on his shoulders, and staggered out into the open just as the dawn was breaking.

"But this?" said Concepcion O'Rourke, as Pollok reappeared gasping on the hillside. "Señor Pollok, what is this that your honour bears? But Señor Pollok——"

William began to explain. Noting, however, that the polite Mexican continually kept one hand, sometimes both hands, before his quivering face, he stopped explaining to examine his catch more closely.

"In effect," said the *comisario*, when he described the incident to me, "it was trousers. Old trousers! *Very* old trousers!" His face became preternaturally grave, and his foot tapped testily as if he fought down some strong emotion. "This me brought the Señor Pollok in the *madruga*—the dayspring—huh—eheuh—hup—ahem!"

A second time he mastered his overbearing feelings, and glared at me most savagely. Pollok winced.

"So even down to that they robbed him?" I remarked.

"As to that," said Pollok, "*quien sabe* what the

glad years may bring forth? I hope some one does steal 'em off the ornery little raskel some day. At the moment they was full o' my best selected ore—hand picked, you bet—an' the waist was tied with one o' them cheap woollen sashes," he concluded.

"One of the legs was tied with a piece of fuse," added the *comisario*, who knew enough English to follow the conversation, "and the other secured itself with a leather belt—huh—huh—hrrm!"

There was only one robber after all, and the policy of guarding all bolt-holes emerged triumphant. Up at the shaft they found Patricio retaining by the neck a minute and trembling figure in white cotton shirt and drawers—no, it was not Pablo after all. The sun had popped up over the sky-line now, and his first beams cast limelight effects on the angry faces of the brothers O'Rourke.

"*This*," said Patricio, causing his victim to dance up and down before the *comisario*, "is what has quitted us the night's repose; and *I*, who as thou knowst am a man accustomed to smoke cigarettes, not one suck have I taken in all the night, until this moment—for *this*." From one corner of Patricio's hereditary mug a cigarette indeed truculently dangled.

He must have been an imposing sight—Patricio. He was wearing a heavily braided sugar-loaf hat of deep piled felt—almost like fur to look at—whereof the value was not less than a hundred and fifty pesos, with the gold braid and what not, and the weight anything up to fifteen pounds. He wore it on the back of his bullet head, and the far-reaching



brim made a circular frame for the face of an angry war-god. His broad shoulders were covered by one of those skimpy shell jackets the old-fashioned rancher-folk assume, and his legs by riding *chaparejos*—such as the American cowboy wears, but less voluminous—clasped upon the outside with single rows of silver-plated clasps nearly as big as tea-cups. Under these “chaps” were the riding-boots I have mentioned, and shall mention again.

“And the others?” inquired the *comisario*.

“There are no others. Alone came this *sin verguenza* by the ladders upward, and for this have I waited all night—*sin cigarros—demonio!*” Patricio’s warrior-soul had been looking forward to a little brisk “gun-play,” and the disappointment had combined with the deprivation of tobacco to corrode his temper.

“But, *señores*,” piped Hernando Ysabel Gavaldon hopefully, “who knows but in this there is something of an equivocation——”

“Silence!” thundered the *comisario*. “Thief! Robber! Ingrate! For this thou shalt suffer three years in Yucatan.”

“Look!” he continued to the world at large—a few peons had drifted up to squat, blanket-happed, on the *patio*, for the rumour had spread—“Look at that which this shameless has done. The foreign gentlemen bring us prosperity”—the *comisario* may have been thinking of his freighting contracts—“and here we guarantee them all manner of guarantees in order that we may rejoice in the prosperity they bring us. Then comes this *thief*, this *pilferer*, whom I shall send for four years to Yucatan”—a groan went up with the clouds of cigarette-smoke

from the squatters—" by *night* he comes, crawling by the ladders upward, to quit them the ore by stealth——"

" *Pues hombre,*" complained a mild, concealed voice in the background. " Put on thy trousers, so that we may know thee."

Everybody laughed except the *comisario* and Patricio.

" Put on thy trousers," said the *comisario*, " and afterwards thou shalt go to Yucatan for seven years."

The crowd groaned again.

" Eight!" suggested the hidden commentator. " *Señores, por el amor de Dios,* give him eight!"

Pollok shook the ore—good looking ore, for Hernando was a judge—out of the garment. With nervous, fluttering fingers Hernando adjusted his sash, tucking in the ends. During all this Patricio still kept one great hand on the scruff of his neck.

" Enough!" cried the *comisario*. " What value is it to waste words on one so valueless? Ten years in Yucatan! *Vamonos!*"

Patricio then suddenly released his hold and stepped back three paces. Three paces more he ran forward and swung his starboard boot. Still holding his hat to his breast—in his customary manner—Hernando Ysabel Gavaldon shot silently into the air, to land on all fours on the edge of the dump. With clashing of spurs Patricio followed and kicked him over.

The second flight seems to have landed Hernando on his feet. He arose and began to run swiftly down-hill; Patricio crashing in his wake. Four

more well-applied punts helped him considerably on his way to the bed of the canyon.

They saw him disappear into the live oak below, and presently he shot into view again running up the flank of the mountain on the far side of the gulch. A rancher, in *chaparejos*, top-boots and spurs, is no match for a mountain-bred peon when it comes to travelling up hill. For this reason they never saw Hernando more.



## CONCERNING ROUGH-NECKS

“**S** TRAIGHT goods,” said William Spenser Pollok, “I’d ought to been hung,” and he rubbed the back of his neck, which was scaly and coarsened by the suns and the winds of Mexico. He did not rub his neck because he felt that he had exposed it to grave risks, but he rubbed it because it—the rough skin on the back of it—saved it.

Now read that sentence again carefully.

. . . . .

Toward the close of an October day, in the year 1910—Mexico being then in a state of profound peace—a man called Herbert Jones, generally known as Jones the Englishman, was climbing a ladder. This ladder led from the bottom level of the Santa Ynez mine—of which property Mr. Jones was general manager—up a sort of chimney, technically known as a chute, to the working, or stope, above. It was a narrow chimney in the rock of the vein, one-half being boarded off for the ladderway and the other used for the passing of the ore broken from the workings to the tramroad in the level below. The Englishman had got half-way up the ladder when some person above inadvertently dropped a cold chisel on his head.

He fell. *You* would fall if a twelve-inch bar of

seven-eights-inch steel was dropped upon you from a height of twenty feet. Fortunately he managed to check his descent by falling on Mr. William Pollok—aha!—the American superintendent.

“ I’d ha’ bore him,” said Pollok, “ if he hadn’t come down so sudden. He ain’t no airy feather-weight neither. Th’ goddam’ rungs is loose, what with the mine water eatin’ out the nails, an’ *I* tore out two of ’em. We come a grievous bump on Antonio—who’s standin’ below. By Heck! I’m right glad it was me in the middle o’ the sandwich, an’ not underneath. After which,” said Pollok, “ the country goes into revolution.”

Which two events—the laying out of the Englishman and his consequent withdrawal from his duties, coupled with the unexpected rebellion of the native population—came near to dislocating the neck of Pollok. I feel I have drawn such a veil of mystery around this last matter that the reader must surely begin to despair. But courage—the trails are rapidly converging to the point where all things become clear. I must return again, for a moment or two, to a private hospital in the city of Corral and the Englishman, who remarked a month later that no more appalling thing had happened to him in a long and varied career.

“ So it *is* a revolution ? ” he said, throwing the bed-clothes peevishly off his chest. “ If it *is*, all I can say is that these people are quite impossible. When I was on the Gold Coast I had fever seven times in two years, but nobody wanted to change the constitution of the Colony on that account. It’s not right.” He stared at the ceiling for a few seconds, brooding on the impossibility of

the Mexicans. "Why did no one tell me?" he said.

"The doctor said I wasn't to say anything about it to you whilst you were unconscious," I explained.

"He said it might irritate you."

"But I *am* irritated," cried the Englishman. "Isn't it enough to irritate a plaster saint? Really, these people are *quite* impossible! First they stun one with a fourteen-pound hammer"—"It was a gad," I interrupted, but he ignored me—"and then they go and plunge the country into civil war whilst one is laid up. You don't realize how serious this thing is, or you wouldn't laugh like that. The Santa Ynez may have to close down!"

Jones has always looked upon this as the last horror immediately to precede the sounding of Gabriel's trumpet. It—the closing down of the mine—would have thrown quite seventy men out of work. There are fifteen million people altogether in Mexico.

"The Santa Ynez will close down," continued Mr. Jones, "and Pollok will be out of a job again. It is Pollok's own fault. It——"

"I have a letter for you," I interrupted. "A letter from Pollok."

"He has got himself into trouble," said the Englishman. "I knew it!"

He dropped the letter unopened on the floor, gathered up his bed-clothes again, and began to hum a stave. I considered he was well enough to read the letter, so I picked it up and gave it to him a second time. Reluctantly he slit the envelope and withdrew the enclosure. He frowned a little as he read, the frown gradually deepening.

The letter said :

“ DEAR MR. JONES,

Hoping you are feelin' recovered by now ; the ore has give out on us in number seven an' sixth heading sampels real bad. It's hell gettin' supplies with the railroad tore up. I wish they'd quit scrappin'.

Yours affectionate,

WILLIAM SPENSER POLLOK.”

“ I am now well enough to smoke a cigar,” said the Englishman. “ What the devil does Pollok mean by writing such a letter—which destroys all earthly hope—and then subscribing himself ‘ yours affectionate ’ ? I shall probably have a relapse.”

I think he would have been justified in relapsing seven times over, but there is no telling what Herbert Jones will do next at any time. He is the sort of man that fusses for a week over a cut finger, but I think that if—which heaven forbid—the revolutionaries took him out and shot him he would put in his last moments pointing out the artistic merits of the landscape to the firing party. It is not surprising, therefore, that I met him a week later on board a two-mule waggon with the bandages still showing under the sweatband of his hat. I asked him if this was the funeral, or if he was merely going for a drive.

“ I am going to the mine,” said the Englishman. “ I find that these unmentionable swabs have been good enough to burn all the railway culverts ; Pollok has been in some further trouble I can't



quite fathom, and Fortescue—you remember Fortescue—has done something appalling. I don't quite gather from William's letter *what* he has done, but it looks rather as if he claimed that there was ore in the Ampliacion de Shaw—his beastly mine, you know. It looks as if Pollok had taken it upon himself to take up an option from Fortescue. Well, anyhow, the only thing for me is to go out personally. What do you think?"

"There was nothing about all this in the letter I brought you," I remonstrated. It looked uncommonly like a relapse, to my way of thinking, for the Englishman was getting more and more incoherent.

"It was another letter," said the Englishman. "Came in yesterday by runner. Look here, come out with me and help me to set things straight. I *knew* Pollok would do something frightful whilst I was ill. Damn him!"

I promptly accepted the invitation, for I was curious to know how the mines had fared since the beginning of the revolution. The burning of the bridges on the railway had left them stranded in the sierras with what supplies they had on hand. I was rather surprised to find Pollok was able to continue work at all, especially in the light of the bad news about the Santa Ynez ore. I was more than surprised at the other piece of information with regard to this "Ampliacion de Shaw" claim of the man Fortescue's; I was disbelieving. Anyhow I boarded the waggon, and drove sixty miles across the plains to the south-west of Corral.

There was no sign in earth or sky of the revolution. Once a dirty little boy in a village street shouted "*Gringitos!*" after us, but I was glad to

observe that its mother slapped it for its pains. With the sun low among far-away pine trees, and a sharp chill in the air to remind us how we had imperceptibly climbed from five to seven thousand feet above sea level, we drew up in the main street of San Lorenzo.

San Lorenzo is a city of a thousand inhabitants. It is about two miles long and a hundred yards wide, the single street being sometimes on one side of the creek and sometimes on the other—and more than occasionally in the creek itself, to the detriment of wheels. In places, large cotton-wood trees have grown up in the thoroughfare, causing a certain amount of further constriction, for I doubt whether a true San Lorenzan would bother to remove a tree even if it grew up in the walls of his home. He would, more likely, move next door.

The people, you must understand, live in such houses as have not fallen down yet, and they gopher around the upper workings of exhausted mines for a living. The whole town is full of ruinous relics of former glory—of the days when it was a *bonanza* camp, and Mexico was a Province of Castile—pillared colonnades with the plaster peeling off in yard wide patches, and choked fountains by the roadside with the green slime thick on their rusted pipes. Thirteen miles of waggon road link this place with the railroad, and thirteen miles in the opposite direction—into the mountains—are the mines of the Santa Ynez district.

“ I suppose,” said the Englishman, as we clashed across the river-bed for the last time, “ we had better stop at Concepcion O’Rourke’s as usual. The hotel is too appalling.”

There was a man leaning against a post—a post which some person had set up, for reasons unknown, in the highway. He was a shabby looking rascal, and I imagined at first that he would be some American tramp, but when he caught the sound of the Englishman's voice and looked up I saw to my surprise that it was Fortescue. Fortescue used to be rather particular about his dress before he took the option on Old Shaw's alleged silver mine—the *Ampliacion de Shaw* before alluded to—and went into mining. He looked up and recognized us, but he did not remove his hands from his pockets.

“Concepcion O'Rourke's a rebel,” he said, without emotion. “Everybody's joined the revolution here.”

“But he's the *comisario*,” objected the Englishman. “How can he be a government official, and at the same time join the revolution, and—where is Pollok?”

“Pollok's in the hotel,” said Fortescue. “Everybody's joined the revolution here. Patricio O'Rourke was the first, and then the rest followed, and then Concepcion said, ‘How is it just that we of the North shall be taxed out of house and home that these disgraced ones may edificate edifices in the City of Mexico’—referrin' to the Government—‘that which is two hundred leagues away, very far. How is this conformable,’ says Concepcion, ‘with the Constitution of '57 and the guarantees of the immortal Benito Juarez—name by all the world held in reverence. I do not suffer it.’ Then he joined the revolution,” concluded Fortescue.

“But how——” began the Englishman.

“With two rifles and four belts full of cartridges,”

explained Fortescue. "It is, as it were, the fashion."

"First I am stunned," said the Englishman, throwing one leg over the end of the driver's seat and allowing his reins to dangle on the weary mules' necks, "and then there is a revolution. *Then* I am informed that you have found ore in your quite impossible mine." He glanced sternly at Fortescue, who had withdrawn one hand by now for the purpose of scratching his nose. "Then," proceeded the general manager of the Santa Ynez, "I take the trouble of driving all across the prairie to get to this infernal place, to find on my arrival that the only official one can slightly depend on has become a revolutionary and fled, in arms, to the mountains. I am naturally puzzled. Damn it all, it's not right!"

He paused suddenly, and pricked his ears. Through the wide portal that led to the inner courtyard of the tumbledown hotel blew gustily the tones of a man's strong voice uplifted in song. It was Mr. William Spenser Pollok, singing before supper in the dining-room. The song was about a rabbit—but that is irrelevant."

"That is Pollok," exclaimed the Englishman. "I will speak to him." He descended and went inside.

It was clear to the meanest intelligence that there was going to be a bit of a row, so I contented myself for the moment with lingering outside and pumping information out of Fortescue. He was a trifle difficult—wanted, in fact, to talk about the book he declares he is writing, or about to write, on Mexico; but in the end he acknowledged that he had indeed struck ore in the Ampliacion, that he

had allowed Pollok to take up his option on behalf of the Santa Ynez, and that both he and Pollok had narrowly escaped death at the hands of the revolutionaries. This last event appeared to have some subtle connection with the finding of the ore in what had been the worst mine in the district. I was puzzled—events had tumbled across one another's heels in such quick succession of late—but since I now heard Pollok loudly proclaiming that he had saved the fortunes of the Santa Ynez Company, and it looked like the truth, I went inside.

We found them in the dining-room, Pollok beating the table with his clenched fist, and the Englishman reading over the agreement whereby Fortescue turned over the working of the Ampliacion to the Santa Ynez.

“How did you find this ore?” remarked the Englishman, as we came in.

“Ask Fortescue,” replied Pollok, in a gentler tone than he had been using of late. “He's the doctor!”

“I took him for a filibuster myself,” said the Englishman. “How did you find the ore?”

“It was in a battle,” said Fortescue.

He added that he was not to be expected to ride the trail from San Lorenzo to the Santa Ynez in a frock coat and top hat, and that Pollok was a better liar than himself. Eventually we gave him up and let the superintendent tell us the tale in his own words.

“It was in a battle,” said Pollok, “an' I come mighty near gettin' shot, or hanged, or both. I guess you think three hundred dollars a month

covers that, though? You've another guess comin' next time." He poured a drink for himself. "It was last Toosday——"

"Morning," prompted Fortescue.

"Toosday mawnin'," continued Pollok, "bein' the day I'd promised to go help Fortescue sample his goat ranch—meanin' the Ampliacion de Shaw—along comes the Federal cavalry ridin' up the gulch the way we was figurin' on goin'. 'Let's not go,' I says to Fortescue, soon's I caught sight o' the uniforms, 'Antonio tells me the *rurales* is out t'ord Cerro Prieto,<sup>1</sup> an' I know for sure that Patricio O'Rourke, the *comisario's* brother, is between here and there with fifty men. Them fellows is out gunnin' for Pat,' I says, 'an' they figure on catchin' him between themselves an' the *rurales*. *Quien sabe*,' I says, 'but there's goin' to be heaps o' shootin'—an' I've lived in the country long enough to know not to mix in Mex. politics.'"

"Fortescue answers vulgar," continued Pollok. "'All right then—let's,' I tell him, 'but don't go to blame *me* if we strike trouble.' We hit it up for the Ampliacion then. When we got there we seen the cavalry two miles away on the next hill to the north. They was dismounted, an' strung out all along the crest o' the hill. If the *rurales* was over where Antonio said they was, it looked like harsh times for Pat. It was this way——"

"I want to know," interrupted the Englishman, "how you came to find that *ore*."

"Patricio an' his friends was down in the hollow between the hill where the cavalry was an' Cerro Prieto," explained Pollok. "O' course it was no

<sup>1</sup> Black Mountain.

business of ours, but seein' that Fortescue's men hadn't showed up to cut the samples—an' him bein' on the point o' writin' a book about Mexico—we thought no harm to climb to the top o' the hill, above the Ampliacion tunnel, to see what's happenin'. While we scramblin' up through the bresh, 'wack, wack!' goes two rifle shots in the dim distance. 'Th' Jew is fait,' says Fortescue. 'Rien ne vapour'—that's French for '*va corriendo—nada mas.*' 'What with the *rurales* an' the cavalry,' I says, 'I guess there's too many damn double zeros on the wheel for poor Paddy O'Rourke.'

"I beat Fortescue to the top." Pollok raised his voice a little, for the Englishman was again opening his mouth. "I take the glasses off Fortescue," he said, "an' from where we was lyin' I seen the *rurales* where I'd expected they most likely was. They come streamin' down the slopes of Cerro Prieto, in an' out among the timber, afoot an' a shootin'. Pat's men is engagin' them from below by now, for I seen one man roll over an' not get up. We couldn't see Pat's gang, but we hear 'em a poppin'. 'This is the real thing,' says Fortescue, an' he goes for his notebook. 'Gimme the binoculars,' he says. 'They're a good six miles away, an' it ain't likely we'll be disturbed.'

"I looked down the way we'd come, an' it looked a heap long distance to the mine *patio* below. We could just see end o' the dump, an' the ore car—the steepness o' the hill an' the thickness o' the bresh hidin' the actool tunnel mouth. 'Them fello's has glasses too,' I says to Fortescue, 'an' foreigners ain't invited to these swarrys. If you've done got all the lit'ry material you need, maybe

we'd better hike.' ' I'm goin' to stay here a week,' says Fortescue.

" Just as he's speakin', a mauser bullet happens along from nowhere in particular. It takes a slide off the boulder he's lyin' on—' phwit—zing—g—g '—an' two more breathes gentle over the nape o' my neck. ' Note them facts,' I tell him, ' for the book. A rikkeshaying bullet sings like a hornet, wasp or yeller jacket, thro' the preambulent air.' But when I looked round to see whether he gets them golden words I seen him half-way down the hill. I asked where he was a goin' so fast, an' he shouts back that he's goin' inside the tunnel for a breath o' fresh air.

" Maybe you don't quite get what's happenin'," continued Pollok. " I'm goin' to tell how we uncovered that ore in a minute ; but the way things was now we had Patricio's gang somewhere to the north of us, between the *rurales* an' the cavalry, an' the *rurales* was drivin' the rebels back on the cavalry, an' the rebels was drivin' the cavalry back on us. I took note, before I came down myself"—  
" Like a hopping landslide," interjected Fortescue—  
" that fresh firin' had broke out to the east, an' I guess it was that saved Pat's bacon, for we found later it was Concepcion O'Rourke—him that was *comisario* here—operatin' on the flank o' the *molestadores* o' Brother Patricio.

" Anyhow here's us now a beatin' it for the cool shades o' the Ampliacion de Shaw tunnel, whilst the native population an' one or two detachments o' Federal troops from Mexico City is operatin' in five or six directions acrost the lofty sierra an' the deep an' rugged canyons. All the time we're



approachin' the goal o' our desires the racket's drawin' closer. I guessed it was up to us to do somethin', so I make a grab for the tools in the shack by the tunnel, an' carry 'em in to Fortescue. 'What's that for?' asks Fortescue. 'Samplin',' I tell him. 'What else did we come here for?' We went in then an' began to cut a sample at the far end o' the tunnel.

"Meanwhile, the shootin' draws closer, we hear the cavalry pass down the gulch below at a gallop—an' the rebs a shriekin' 'whaich—hai—hai! *Que viva Madero!*' above—an' we guess rightly that the cavalry is whipped. 'We can't go home yet,' I says to Fortescue, 'not until these here gazebos is out o' the way, but seein' the shootin' is less frequent I'm a goin' to take a look outside.' I left him in the headin' an' stuck my nose out, cautious as a gopher comin' out o' its hole, an' I see some o' the rebels sittin' around above us where we'd been watchin' the battle begin about an hour previous. Suddenly they begin to shoot again, an' two men come a runnin'.

"It wasn't me they was a poppin' at—it appears it's two dismounted cavalrymen what'd been hidin' in the bresh up to now. Number one passes downhill to our right, get's cut just as he's past the lower prospect pit an' dies there, but number two avoids the bullets by breakin' through the bushes an' rollin' over the edge of the cut above the tunnel. I thought he'd broke his fool neck, but he just shook hissself an' ducked inside. Me an' Fortescue didn't feel we needed no publicity agent at the moment, so I took him by the neck an' abjured him to keep his mouth shut."

“ You didn’t suppose,” snarled Fortescue, “ that he’d be in the mood to start singing the National Anthem with the brush full of Maderistas ? Or did you ? ”

“ Well—I wasn’t takin’ no chances,” said Pollok.

“ His name’s Tiburcio Soto—this fellow we get,” continued William. “ He’s a corporal, an’ a right agitated *cabo* at that. You see, the rebels is shootin’ any Federal soldiers they catch to even up for them executions in Chihuahua ; an’ his *compañeros de armas* havin’ emulated the swallers, an’ flew south in extreme haste, Tiburcio feels lonesome. He come from th’ State o’ Michoacan hisself, he told us, havin’ got drafted into the army accidental—he cuts a friend at a *fiesta*, he says, an’ the police take him for unjustifiable homicide in consekence. ‘ Now,’ he says, ‘ *quien sabe*, what’s goin’ to happen to me next ! *Ojalà*,’ he says, ‘ that I’d died in Michoacan. A man dies more *à gusto* in his own country.’ I guess he didn’t consider so far north as the States o’ Durango or Chihuahua as bein’ Mexico at all.”

“ What did you do with him ? ” asked the Englishman, “ and what—— ”

“ Made him take his spurs off,” snapped Pollok. “ The rebels was comin’ down to look at the man they’d shot, an’ it wouldn’t ha’ been diplomatic for Tiburcio to go ringin’ chimes ever’ time he moved. Tiburcio goes one better, an’ takes his boots off too—Say ! Did you know that Mexican cavalry don’t wear no socks ? ” The Englishman did not seem to be interested in this striking discovery. “ He seemed glad to be quit of ’em,” continued Pollok hurriedly. “ We buried them jack boots, an’ beat it for the heading of the tunnel—where

the winze is sunk. There was some sticks o' timber stacked by this here winze, for Fortescue figgered on catchin' up the roof *mañana* or *pasado mañana*—the roof bein' heavy. We set down on these here sticks to see what would happen next.

“ They come down an' stand about on the *patio* outside—the rebs I mean—an' we hear 'em cussin' an' discussin' whether some one's likely hid inside the tunnel. Bein' rancher folks, what's usually scared o' mines, they wasn't eager to go in. I was hopin' it was all over, when what does this here Tiburcio do? This here Tiburcio ”—Pollok seized the opportunity afforded by the Englishman's awakened interest, and poured himself another drink—“ sneezes !

“ He turns the colour o' a dead nigger the minute he's done it,” he continued, “ but it's too late for repentance. ‘ Grab a holt o' them planks,’ I says to Fortescue, ‘ an' simultaneous I take Tiburcio by the neck again, an' drop him down the winze. It's not more'n fifteen feet down. ‘ Lie still,’ I tell him, for he begins to groan. ‘ Lie still or I'll do a heap worse than that. Hold your nose,’ I tell him, ‘ an' sneeze out o' your eyeballs if you must sneeze.’ Then we clap down planks over the collar of the winze until it's hid, an' we lay the sampling sheet on top. I throwed a few handfuls o' gravel on the canvas to make a start with, and we begin to cut down a sample from the roof above to help along the good work. Meanwhile some one's comin' in.”

“ You began to cut a sample ? ” said the Englishman. “ The *patio* outside was swarming with revolutionaries—according to what you have just said—

and you begin to hammer on the roof of the tunnel to let them know you were there? All I can say is that it was very like you."

"You don't *get* me," complained Pollok. "Ain't I sayin' that this here Tiburcio has snoze, an' some one's comin' in to find out about it. We hid this here Tiburcio in this here winze, *poso* or shaft in the headin' o' the Ampliacion tunnel, an' we put the winze canvas over that *poso* or shaft, an' we go to work in the ordinary way—with a 'double jack,'<sup>1</sup> an' gad—makin' out we're but samplin' the drift. *We* ain't heard o' no battle, an' we ain't volunteerin' no opinion as to whether the ground's solid under the canvas or otherwise. While we're engrossed in our divertin' labours, who should come slidin' along the wall with a match in one hand an' a gun in the other but Patricio O'Rourke hisself. 'Spell oh!' says I to Fortescue, an' he drops the hammer.

"Pat's in his well known *chaparejos* with the silver buckles—he's covered with cartridges—an' he looks as if he's stepped this minute out o' one o' them motion pictur' films in an El Paso the-ater. 'Why *hell!*' I says, surprised like. 'So it's *you*, is it?' he says, lookin' relieved an' droppin' the gun—which he's had it aligned thus far on Fortescue's vest buttons, an' Fortescue's gettin' restive. '*Carrajo!*' he says. 'How you all scared me! Why for didn't you let us know you were here before?'

"Fortescue chips in to explain that we're heap busy with this samplin' work, an' don't want to seem to be takin' too strong an interest in the family affairs that's<sup>1</sup> been in process of adjustment

<sup>1</sup> An eight-pound sledge-hammer used in mining.

outside. To show how busy he is he gets the hammer an' knocks down about two hundredweight more o' loose rock.

"Pat remarks that the rocks ring hollow on the planks below, an' asks if there ain't a winze underneath. 'O' course there is,' I tell him, 'but we're done with that now. Take note,' I tell him, 'how we're a samplin' the back o' the drift an' the headin'. We aim,' I says, 'to cut a big sample.' 'So I observe,' says Don Patricio. 'By the look o' things I leaps to the conclusion that you all have adopted a noo system o' *minin'*. There's about a half ton o' rock on the sheet already,' he says. 'What's the winze like?' 'Poor,' says Fortescue. 'If it wasn't the roof was so dangerous loose here—there's about half a ton fell already over an' above what we wanted—I'd shift the planks an' let you see for yourself,' he says.

"He then takes two more whangs with the hammer, an' brings down a regular landslide. I was in dread it'd stave in the planks an' kill Tiburcio in any case. 'It's dangerous work you two's playin' at,' says Pat—half to hisself—an' he grins. He grins," continued Pollok moodily," an' then he sits down by the pile o' rock an' takes a bit to look at. He spits on it to clear the dust, an' holds it to the candle. He's still lookin' at it, an' turnin' it over—an' me wonderin' how much he's guessed—when this here Tiburcio——"

"Good Lord!" cried the Englishman, aghast.

"He sure did," continued Pollok in a grave and brooding tone. "After all I'd said to him too! He don't even appear to have the sense to do it into his hat. He sneezes that violent that Fortescue

says he seen the planks lift an' the canvas belly up in the middle. Pat stops talkin', an' sits with the bit o' rock in his hand an' his jaw a saggin'. 'What's that?' says he.

"Well, gentlemen, I guess we might ha' laid on that it was the wind sighin' in the trees; but I ain't no novelist. I seen the game was up, an' I guessed it was no good bluffin' further, so I just nacherally remark that it sounded uncommon like a sneeze. Pat looks at me an' Fortescue, an' me an' Fortescue look at Pat. It's his turn to say somethin'. By Heck! It felt like an hour before he begins his spiel, an' I was sweatin' like a horse all the time.

"It ain't no comfort to me to think how there'll be a Consular inquiry, an' statements in Congress after they've done shot or hung me for harbouring the enemy. I'm a plain workin' man, an' I'd just as lief forgo the publicity in favour o' bein' let live a year or two more. At last Pat speaks. 'Maybe,' he says, 'it was the loose rock in the roof creepin'. I told you the work you're a doin' is dangerous. Better quit,' says he. 'You catch my meanin'?' he says. Then he gets up an' goes out again—still holdin' the piece of rock.

"Fortescue catches his breath," continued Pollok. "like he's goin' to cry; but I shook my head to him to keep quiet. I knew it wasn't all over yet by a long shot. We wait about a minute—which felt like ten—an' then we hear Pat comin' in again.

"He drags his spurs along the drift an' stops as soon as he's round the last bend, in the light o' the candles. He's still by hisself—which surprised me. 'I jest come back,' he says, 'to tell you fellows that

this is *ore* you've been knockin' down. I been examining it outside in the daylight,' he says, 'an' it looks awful good to me. You're sure lucky,' he says. 'More so that it ain't Jorge Chao, or Contreras, or Betancourt that's commandin' this levy. *Por supuesto,*' he says, 'and one o' them three would ha' had you tried by court martial an' shot—jest for bein' here—an' denounced the mine for themselves. *Adios,*' he says, 'an' *ten cuidado*. Take care,' he says; hands me the bit o' rock, an' stamps off. I didn't dare to believe they wasn't goin' to come in an' uncover the winze an' Tiburcio until I heard 'em mount an' ride off again. They went north to help Concepcion against the *rurales*."

"That was quite decent of him," I ventured to remark. "Do you suppose he guessed——"

"Oh, pshaw! Ain't you a sure 'nough Johnny Bull, now? If I'm to put in the rest o' the night tryin' to explain these here incidents to three Britishers at once—so's they'll understand—why, why I guess I'd ought to get a raise o' salary. Do you suppose Patricio's a damn fool—oh, pshaw! As it is, I've give Patricio a present o' a horse that cost three hundred pesos."

"Why did you do that?" asked the Englishman, who still seemed to think Don Patricio a fool. He is a hard man to convince.

"Count o' somethin' he told me last March—seventeenth o' March to be exact. He told me he was in the habit o' gettin' a skinful that day; that his popper had incultur'd the habit.

"He was drunk at the moment, an' I frankly admit how I wasn't far off it myself. He tells me

how old Maximino O'Rourke, before he died, instructs him not to let this day pass. 'Also,' says he, '*Americanos* is pison, an' other foreigners ain't any better; but,' says Maximino, 'don't forget that though the uninitiated might take you for a cross between an orang-utan an' a Yaqui Indian'—I suspect Mr. Pollok of translating in the freest way—" 'that you, me son, are an Irishman. Take pride in it,' he says, 'an' never hesitate to trust your fellow countrymen when you meet 'em. They're a fine lot o' men,' he says, 'an' any one of 'em can whip ten Dutchmen or five English, other things bein' equal. They're a trustworthy lot,' he says. 'How am I to know when I meet one?' asks Pat.

"I guess old Maximino was about at his last gasp. He motions Patricio to bend closer so's he can hear what he's goin' to say. 'By their noble an' distinguished manner,' he says, 'an' if that ain't enough for you—by the skin on the back o' their necks. It's rough,' says he, 'an' scaly.' Then he died."

"I see what you mean," remarked the Englishman. "Lucky thing for you that Maximino happened to mention about the skin—what?"

Pollok looked hurt.



## BROTHER WILKINSON

“A FRENCHMAN o’ th’ name o’ Cohenstein has bought the Santa Ynez,” said William Pollok.

“And yourself and Jones?” I inquired.

“Oh, us? We’re canned. His Nibs”—he referred to Mr. Herbert Jones, his consulting engineer—“has gone to Nigery, or some such place, an’ I’m holdin’ down this here seat. Gimme a match.”

“This here seat” was one of many provided by the municipality of Corral—a mining town in Northern Mexico—for the benefit of those who wandered in the *plaza* with or without visible means of support. Pollok curtly refused to deal with the seventh bootblack that had offered his services in the last five minutes, and began to explain how he had disposed of his finances.

“I ain’t spent it all,” he said. “I salted down two thousand pesos, durin’ the time I had that job, in first mortgages. Mines? No, *sir!* Them mortgages is took in the name o’ my little girl, an’ you bet Popper’s worked too long around mines to touch anythin’ so damn chancy—what’d be th’ interest on that lot in U.S. currency?”

My brain grappled with the problem for a moment.

“Two thousand pesos—roughly, two hundred

pounds," I said. "Six per cent? Well, that'd work out at twelve pounds, or sixty dollars, gold, per annum."

"Then that'll make four hundred an' sixty she's drawin' now," said William triumphantly, "'sides what she earns. Ain't so bad—what?"

"And the balance?" I asked—not without misgivings. He had been earning, on the average, three hundred to three-fifty pesos a month for the last two years, not to count a whacking bonus on a deal. "You have been out of employment for three—no, four—days. Surely, William——?"

"Oh, I spent *that*," he replied airily. "Yesterday was my *birthday*. You'd not think I was fifty to look at me, would you?"

"For shame!" I cried. "William—for shame!"

"I spends most of it in a poker game," quoth the burly reprobate, "an' I had to give a wad o' bills to this noo-fangled ex-revolutionary police—what's more rapacious than the old-time article—on account o' a fellow sassin' me in Belinda's an' me beatin' him a spell for it. But it's no use your askin' me to work at any o' these mines nearby—if that's what you're figurin' on now—for I won't do it. Me for the mountains.

"Times is damn hard, though," he added thoughtfully; for I forbore to interrupt, although I doubted myself whether a job near town would be other than harmful to my playful friend. "What with the revolution," he continued, "an' the counter-revolution, an' the light trimmin's thrown in by the greasy *bandidos*, it's been roughish of late at the Santa Ynez; an' they say Sinaloa's hell——

"Tell you what I'm goin' to do."

A sparkle of resolution lit in his somewhat weary eyes.

“ I’m a goin’ back to th’ hotel to sleep some—  
an’—an’ then I’m goin’ prospectin’.”

This daring resolve he carried into effect, in spite of all that I could do to dissuade him. The manner of his prorruption from Corral was that he first persuaded a confiding person to buy him a burro. A burro is a donkey. He loaded this beast of burden with supplies that were paid for partly by himself and mainly by the confiding person ; and I made him a present of a good pair of boots.

Of course the man who bought the burro—it didn’t cost much—had the idea that William would presently discover a lost mine, or something of that nature, and that in four or five months’ time he would be drawing from ten to a hundred thousand per cent on his original outlay of thirty or forty pesos. William, on his part, probably believed with absolute sincerity that he *would* discover a mine, and was quite willing to give his written agreement to remit half the profits of such discovery to his “ grub staker.” But where he ultimately turned up was in Guaymas, Sonora, a seaport on the Gulf of California, and I regret to say he was poorer than ever in material wealth.

Spiritually he was richer. He had acquired a friend of a new type. I imagine the circumstances under which he acquired this new friend were as follows.

There is a strange break in the western part of the Sierra Madre plateau. The traveller may have been journeying for weeks on end among pine tree and high mountain valleys ; and may well have

forgotten entirely that he is within a few degrees of the Tropics of Cancer, especially if it be in the winter season and he has had to break ice to get his breakfast coffee water from the creek, and to wash his livid face. After days of this sort of thing, however, one comes out unexpectedly on something not unlike the edge of a mantelpiece on a large scale. The country drops—anything from three to five thousand feet—and one can look down from the heart of a snowstorm to orange groves and sugar-cane patches in the deep *barrancas* below.

After this first breakaway the country goes clean crazy. It is all up, down, and sideways—pine along the knife-edge ridges and palm in the tropical gorge—until the last chain of hills is passed and one rides forth at leisure on the broad plains of Sinaloa and southern Sonora. You must imagine that William Pollok and the burro have passed Guadalupe y Calvo and slid and scrambled down the herring-bone trail that takes the *cuesta*—the mantelpiece—north of Muinora. It was in the rainy season, and the Bazonopa River below was in flood. At the first ford that William encountered he beheld a spindle-shanked mule in the middle of the roaring water. It was ridden by a dried-up little fellow in khaki overalls, and the rider didn't seem to know quite what to do.

Pollok paused; looked at the mule critically, and sent forth a brain wave to test its psychology. "Hold his head up, an' hit the son of a gun!" he shouted finally. The rider then hit the mule, and the mule immediately stepped backward into a concealed hole. It rolled over in a cloud of spray, and continued rolling until the muddy water had

borne it out of sight. The rider came up about five yards down stream, and began to swim; and Pollok abandoned the burro to race parallel along the bank.

In an eddy, caused by the roots of a big cottonwood tree, he was able to slip down waist deep in the stream and grasp the hand of the stranger. It was a near thing, but it was accomplished without unnecessary fuss, and Pollok drew the fruits of his own evil advice gasping from the flood.

“Saved! Saved!” murmured the salvage excitedly, when he had found his breath again. “My friend, how can I thank you sufficiently? You who have, so to speak, brought me forth out of the deep with a strong arm.”

“A missionary,” said Pollok, “by Heck!”

“I am a missionary,” affirmed the stranger.

He was a missionary, and his name was Wilkinson. What particular sect he elected to represent, or what his line of endeavour might be, are matters as vague to me as Pollok’s own conduct in adopting him. I have cross-questioned the latter on the subject, and his replies are not satisfactory. One would almost imagine he had forgotten most of what had occurred on that transmontane journey. If the truth be known, Pollok would adopt anything on two legs as his “pardner” without question or suspicion, provided they did not actually attempt his life at the first meeting. I think he just took Brother Wilkinson for that the gods sent Brother Wilkinson across his path. Yet cast your eye on this one incident that I have culled from a very sketchy narrative—and draw your own conclusions.

They were trudging along an airy trail—eight

thousand feet above sea-level on one of the before-mentioned ridges—when they were accosted by a wandering Englishman on horseback. The Sierras are full of British. This one rode out from among the pines, and very naturally paused to pass the time o' day.

“Where are you going?” he inquired, after the usual salutations.

“To sow good seed in the vineyard,” said Brother Wilkinson sombrely. “Allow me to present you with a tract.”

“I asked,” continued the Englishman, “because there's a rancher fellow at my place—about ten miles along the trail—and he's making a great fuss. I didn't exactly leave home on account of his language, but I'm glad, all the same, to be out here where the air's fresh. It seems some Gringo lifted a mule off his place two weeks ago——”

Brother Wilkinson again fluttered the tract, but Pollok caught his wrist.

“And he's looking for that man,” continued the Englishman. “I don't say either of you two fellows stole the mule, of course,” he continued politely, “but it just occurred to me to warn you that a mule *had* been stolen; for if this rancher fellow is still drunk—as he was when I left—he might be inclined to be rude to strange foreigners. Also, the country's so unsettled that I doubt you'd get much redress if he murdered you on the impulse of the moment. However, I see you are men of peace”—he glanced cursorily at the tract, the tract which depicted, on the cover, a scene in a bar which made William's mouth water—“so I'll say no more. I suppose, under the circumstances, I

can hardly offer you two fellows a drink, so I'll say good afternoon—have to make San Manuel de la Cumbre by sundown." Before the outraged Pollok could get his breath, he was off and out of earshot.

"See here!" exclaimed William, after a long pause during which he had ineffectively endeavoured to stare Brother Wilkinson out of countenance. "See here—who the hell——"

"Stole the mule?" fluttered Brother Wilkinson nervously. "Oh *indeed* it was not I. I got——"

"Oh, *pshaw!*" roared Pollok. "Looky here, Brother Wilkinson, I ain't goin' to argue with you; but any more o' this here missionisin' talk while a gennelman's in th' act o' offerin' me a drink, and you go on alone—savvy?"

"Oh, I shouldn't like *that!*" cried Brother Wilkinson. "Oh, indeed—I had no idea—I—where are you going?"

"Goin' to that fellow's mine—or whatever it is he's workin'. *Come on!* If you think I'm a goin' to bother with a little, sawn-off mass o' misery like you—an' me dog weary—you've another guess comin'. *Come on, I say!*"

He walked a few paces up the trail and began to express his private opinion on the supercilious burro, with a soapweed stick he carried for the purpose. Brother Wilkinson sighed, and fell in at the rear of the procession. Presently he broke into song again.

"There is another rancher," he began. "That is to say, has it occurred to you that the route we are now following leads by Bacubirito to Culiacan?"

"Heh?" grunted Pollok, and stopped again.

"Culiacan," repeated Brother Wilkinson less nervously, "where Banderas is committing such

dreadful acts of violence. I had hoped you would prefer to keep north. There is also the question of this *ranchero* our friend mentioned—but I do not count the personal risk that might arise from any misapprehension on his part—er—I believe that there is another ranch not four miles north, and they stock a good brand of *sotol* and are very hospitably inclined.”

Pollok began to push the burro's stubborn head round to the hopeful north.

“There is also a pump which is continually going on the er—blink,” concluded Brother Wilkinson. “You being skilled as a machinist——”

“Geedap! *Burro!*” exclaimed Mr. Pollok. The procession reversed itself, and trudged heavily north as the sunset brightened the dark crags of distant Muinora.

I imagine that—after mending the pump—William and the missionary decided to keep on to the north. They held the mountains as far as the Fuerte, where they struck the railroad. The country was full of brigandage at this time, but since they had nothing really worth stealing they were unmolested. By various routes they then came down at last to the flat, bush-grown plains of the west coast; and I suppose they sold the burro and beat their way on the railroad to Guaymas. About four months from the time of Pollok's first leaving Corral they sat upon the pier at the south end of Guaymas inner harbour—El Pozo—and watched the big brown pelicans diving for fish.

“The hell of it is,” said William to Wilkinson—for he was always very frank—“that whereas in Corral I wasn't more'n straight broke, *now* I'm in



th' —— —— hole for the price o' that there burro an' the tools. Oh, pshaw !”

“ I wish I could help you,” said Brother Wilkinson.

He whistled a bar or two of a hymn, and as he whistled a white-painted motor-launch glided out across the blue waters of the harbour. Both men followed her with wistful eyes, Pollok because she savoured of activity in some guise, and Wilkinson because he was returning to Guaymas after a temporary absence—of which more anon—and he wished the two dollars and thirteen cents they owned between them could be stretched to cover the hire of her for a day or two. As she disappeared round the point, he made his great resolution.

“ I am an honest man,” he began.

“ So'm I,” grunted Pollok.

“ But sometimes I almost wish it were otherwise,” proceeded Brother Wilkinson. “ Would you believe that the price of one of those vessels—just for a day or two—stood between us and opportunity ? ”

Pollok stared, for the intense heat that is reflected into Guaymas by its close circumscription of bare red hills produces curious effects—yet none quite so curious as this. Brother Wilkinson flushed slightly, and took up his tale.

“ Some years ago,” he said, “ I had the fortune, that is to say, I nursed a dying prospector. I—er—shudder now to think of the dreadful words that man used on his deathbed, and the utter lack of—ahem—Christian resignation that characterized his last utterances ; but before he shuff—that is to say before this man died, he gave me, in gratitude, you understand, a—a chart or plan. This chart, or

plan, was drawn for the purpose of locating a cave on the Lower California coast, opposite us, and I—er—I have reason to believe that there is treasure in the cave ! ”

There was a silence fell upon the quay at these words. A pelican dipped lightly, and Pollok spat in the water.

“ Who put it there ? ” snapped Pollok.

“ Pirates, I suppose,” said Brother Wilkinson glibly. “ I suppose you will now ask me how the prospector came to leave this treasure alone ? ”

“ I will,” said Pollok.

“ He left it,” continued Brother Wilkinson luridly, “ because the bars of bullion were too heavy to carry away ; and before he could return he was called to his account. I have the plan, at least, I *had* the plan, but have destroyed it for security, after memorizing the—the—er—details. I would not, of course, tell you all this ”—he coughed apologetically—“ but that I feel I owe you my life. The—the accident in the Bazonopa, you know. It is a pity we cannot afford to hire a launch.”

“ This here treasure—hum—— ” said Pollok, after another pause, in which it became apparent that Brother Wilkinson intended to drop the subject.

“ Of course I have only the man’s word,” explained Brother Wilkinson, “ though, of course, he was dying, and had cause for gratitude. The site is nowhere near Magdalena Bay,<sup>1</sup> incidentally, which would incline me to believe it is hidden somewhere north of here on the opposite coast—if it really exists—south-west of Tiburon Island, and

<sup>1</sup> A traditional haunt of pirates and buccaneers in former days.

north of the steamer routes. A very secluded spot. If you could see your way—— ”

He paused again, and let the unspoken thought sink in. Only the pelicans saw that he made a strange, sarcastic grimace at Pollok behind his back.

I am not here to apologize for William's misdeeds, for that would be the labour of a lifetime. The only extenuating circumstances I can bring forth on this occasion are that he was out of work, in debt, and game to attempt any desperate act. In his defence I may say also that his part of the transaction might be glozed over as mere "borrowing."

Pollok "borrowed" a gasoline launch from alongside the wharf, at 1.30 a.m., and with a home-made paddle he paddled it far enough out to sea to avoid waking the watchman by the dint of the engine. An hour earlier Brother Wilkinson had set out on a long tramp past the end of the street car tracks into the dry and dusty country. He sweated freely as he jogged along in the tropical night, for he carried an enormous pack of supplies in the bight of a tump line such as is used by native *cargadores*. The bulk of his load was gasoline in cans.

Just beyond the range of hills which lie between the inner harbour and the sea, Brother Wilkinson turned off to his left on a cart track. He crossed a dry and thorny waste, then skirted a swamp, and climbing over a ridge of sand found himself upon a short stretch of deserted beach. Gratefully he tipped his burden on the sand, and removing the leather pad of the tump line from his forehead sat down to wait. He had hardly drawn his third deep

breath before he heard the thudding of the boat's engine.

"Did you get it?" asked Pollok, as he ran her nose up on the beach.

"I did—five cans and some beans and bacon. I left the water to you; but I've got coffee and a bottle of the best." This last was strange talk from a missionary. "I think I've done well."

"How d'ye manage it?" inquired the wondering Pollok.

"Oh, I'm not *altogether* unknown here," replied Brother Wilkinson evasively.

William asked no more questions thereafter, and the hot dawn came up out of Mexico and found them alone upon a glassy and deserted sea. West of them the barren mountains of Baja California lay dim along the horizon. This land—Lower California—has an area twice that of Scotland, and just manages to support a population of forty-eight thousand souls in its whole arid length. For administrative purposes the territory is divided midway, and our adventurers were now off the *northern* half—where eight thousand of the gallant forty-eight cultivate their lonely thirsts—so there was no alarming risk of detection and capture. Nevertheless Pollok felt relieved when Wilkinson suggested spending the afternoon hours under shelter of a small island which lay near the mountainous shore. The sight of a steamer's smoke had reminded him that they now held the legal status of pirates; and other matters also were disturbing his peace of mind.

Just as they were rounding the end of the island the engine stuck—as engines sometimes will.

“Curse!” said William Pollok, and poked at the valves with his hard splay fingers.

“I think,” said Brother Wilkinson diffidently, “it is this—er—‘dofunny’ here—so to speak; the locknut on the air intake spindle’s worked loose. Allow me.”

His hand shot fluttering under the gaping Williams nose, and with a curiously deft touch he located and remedied the mishap. Pollok narrowed his eyes, and for the first time since their first meeting he looked hard at Wilkinson.

“You’re a strange brand o’ missionary, ain’t you, pardner?” he inquired gravely.

“I know a little about machinery,” said Brother Wilkinson—and he forgot to blush this time—“why shouldn’t I?”

Come to think of it, what more natural? Pollok felt more at ease again.

They anchored in a quiet little cove, and drowsed away the broiling afternoon bottom fishing with the lines that they found in the boat’s lockers. Conversation was sparse, and often acrimonious, for the heat was bitter and Pollok’s patience was all but frayed through under the sledge-hammer blows of the violent sun. He particularly wanted to know—the thought had just this moment occurred to him—why it was that a credit which was good to equip the expedition was not also elastic enough to cover the honest hire of the boat.

“Plain steal I call it,” said William mutinously—and rather unjustly considering who did the stealing.

“Your insinuation,” said Brother Wilkinson, with a touch of haughtiness, “grieves me. Ah, my

friend, do you suppose I should leave undone anything that lay in my power? The man who found the stores for us was a small trader—a Chinaman—and it is a rare sign of grace——”

“Cut it out!” said Pollok sulkily. The last strands were parting, and Wilkinson’s stilted phrasing mingled with the light wash of the swell on the hot rocks in a dreary dream.

“Perhaps, however, you are right,” pursued the undaunted labourer in the vineyard. “Perhaps we should turn back and deliver the boat to its owner. You have made me feel that there can be no blessing upon this trip.”

“Cut it out!” said Pollok again.

“I will,” replied Brother Wilkinson with equal abruptness, and thereafter fell a thinking. About half an hour before sunset he suddenly asked if Pollok could swim.

“No,” said William, “but don’t let that hinder you, if you feel like a bathe.” He grinned over his shoulder at a brace of big black fins that had been jigging round the boat since their arrival in the cove. “I guess it’s about time to feed the birds anyhow,” he said.

Brother Wilkinson suddenly laughed a most un-missionary-like laugh.

“Pardner,” he said gravely, in a strange new voice, “I hope you don’t think I was aimin’ to encourage you to any such exploit?”

“No tellin’,” retorted William drearily. “I was dreamin’ you weren’t no —— —— missionary after all. Say—now cards is on the table—how much o’ this here pirate treasure spiel is straight goods? I’d like to know, for I’m hopin’ for the sake o’ the

man this boat belongs to that you ain't over fertilized it. I ain't stole before, an' the habit don't appeal to me none."

"Guess you'll know to-night," said Wilkinson curtly. "Say—lend's your gun a spell. I want to take a crack at these here *tiburones*."

"Lend nothin'!" growled Pollok. "An' thank you for warnin' me. You might ha' known by now I ain't the man to lend my gun to a fellow like you what says he's one thing when he's really somethin' quite different—'specially in a place like this."

"Straight goods!" said Wilkinson, with some show of candour. He began to haul up the grapnel, and in so doing brought the boat broadside on against the rocks. "Do you take a pop yourself, then," he added. "I sure hate them devils."

Pollok, nothing loath, drew his weapon and punched a clean hole in one of the shark's fins at twenty yards, without hanging on his aim. Brother Wilkinson congratulated him; and perhaps abandoned a half-formed plan to get William ashore and maroon him. They took up their journey north.

It was cool enough—with the breeze of the passage to help them—on the water in the dark. Broad to port lay the dim outline of the mountains which run sharply down to the shores of that uninhabited, waterless coast. The stars above were like sparks of incandescent steel in a velvet background, and the spirit of adventure was afloat upon the deep. Pollok's fine imagination was briskly at work.

He could not doubt—however much he doubted the actual man—that Wilkinson had some definite motive in making this trip. Perhaps the pirate treasure part of it was all bunkum, but anyhow it

must be something of value. Placer gold, perhaps, or a lost mine. The lost mine theory pleased William greatly.

He was perplexed a little to account for his own presence in the boat. On this point two rival theories strove for mastery in his brain. The more plausible of the two contended that Wilkinson could not have stolen the vessel, *and* got the supplies on board of her, without assistance. The other was that Wilkinson was grateful toward the man who had saved his life. William peered for'ard in the dark—he was at the tiller—and tried to deduce from the silhouette of the little man in the bows whether this was a grateful sort of a cuss. Considering that he had enjoyed ample opportunity to study his subject by daylight for months past, I think this was very like Pollok.

Anyhow he would soon know ; and in any case he felt that nothing but the lure of great wealth would have brought such a wideawake card as Brother Wilkinson out on such a quest. His own share would be half of the wealth. “ That is to say, supposin' we find a million dollars,” thought Pollok, “ I get five hundred thousand, an' if it's *two* million—— ”

Joyful thought ! His little girl would no longer work a typewriter at the behest of purse-proud merchants of the effete East ; men who—so like as not—might be liable to speak disrespectful to her when her Popper was not at hand to beat them. She would leave such work, and marry a decent American, of his own choice—none o' your fortune-huntin' lords and dukes. William bristled in anticipation as he prepared his speech to greet the first



duke who should fling himself at Miss Pollok's feet.

Or supposing she *did* commit such folly—against his better judgment—then this is how it would be : the guests would be assembled at the ducal board—set with golden cutlery and ringed with beaten silver cuspidors around the wainscot of the room—and on a sort of throne or dais at the head of the table would be Miss Pollok with the duke to starboard. Suddenly the door would open, and an old man of dignified—though rough—personality would stand in the hall looking at the glittering assembly with wondering eyes. His homespun clothes and weather-beaten features would proclaim the pioneer.

He would make some break in good manners, this fine old man—forget to take his hat off, or something—and suddenly the gilded guests would begin to sneer and make “cracks” at him. With strong self-restraint he would refrain from bowling them out in turn. Then the duchess would see who it was, and her startled cry of “Father!” would bring a sudden silence in its train. With sneering looks the guests would rise and take their departure from the presence of the daughter of such a rough-necked man—all except the duke himself, and the few real Britishers William had actually met and made friends of, who—Pegasus had grabbed the bit and bolted now—would be there as guests. An affecting scene would follow, in which he would declare his intention of withdrawing from the Castle for ever, sooner than blight his girl's career. He would be urged to reconsider by the faithful few—but he would be adamant. This should be the greatest and noblest sacrifice of his life——

“ I guess,” broke in the voice of Wilkinson, “ this is the place.”

“ Huh ! ” snorted William, and woke up with a jerk.

Under instructions from the pseudo-missionary he put his helm over, and they ran the launch alongside a flattish rock on the north side of a deeply indented inlet.

“ I guess she’ll come to no harm,” remarked Wilkinson as he sprang ashore with the painter, “ There ain’t enough swell. The treasure’s over on the other side, but there ain’t no place to moor to there. We’ll just have to carry it round on our backs.”

Carry it round on their backs ! Pollok’s heart thrilled at the thought. “ Two million,” he decided. He felt he could not now be satisfied with less.

It was terribly dark, and the bone dry watercourse that intervened was full of thorny plants and prickly cactus. Once Pollok fell flat, and his “ gun ” rolled out of its scabbard. Wilkinson made a dive—presumably to assist him—but before the little man could reach him he had recovered his firearm. Perhaps it was as well. They crossed the ridge beyond, and descended to another *arroyo*.

Pollok was on the point of asking how it came to be that Brother Wilkinson was so well versed in the geography of this place that he had never once paused to take his bearings, when a match flared further up the gully.

“ It ought to be under this here rock,” said the “ missionary.”

“ Seems to me, bo,” remarked Pollok, “ you’re pretty confident for a fellow who’s nought but a

plan drafted by'n old prawspector to go on. Straight goods, now, what's the game? "

" Seems to me, pardner," retorted Wilkinson, " that if there was less casual chat an' more get-busy comin' forth from your bone head, I'd be saved a lot o' extra trouble. Gimme a hand."

Together they raised the slab, and the sand ran trickling into a small crevice beneath. Wilkinson sighed, thrust in both hands, and swung forth what appeared to be a brick sewn in sacking.

" We ain't been forestalled," he said, as it dropped with a dull metallic sound on the rocks. " We'll take one apiece an' carry 'em round to the boat. Then we'll come back for the rest."

Pollok could scarcely believe that this thing was real. He was conscious, dimly, of struggling over the spur and through the further *arroyo* in the dark with the heavy bar, but only as a sort of nightmare. After stowing their burdens in the boat they sat for a long time on the landing rock to recover breath, and when they returned for the second load a pale pink glow had sprung into being in the eastern sky. The second trip was even more laborious than the first.

As they came back for the third and last, objects were becoming visible. The dawn comes up very rapidly in the tropics.

A bird sprang up, and flapped noisily out over the gulf. The noise startled Wilkinson so much that he slipped and fell, and lay groaning for a long time. He was not hurt so much as he thought, but by the time he felt equal to continuing the work the sun was almost peeping and it was broad daylight. Pollok caught hold of the last bar—Brother

Wilkinson being a few yards down the creek—and as he swung it the covering ripped. It ripped so badly that William removed it altogether, and the shimmering brick lay exposed to the beams of the rising sun. Before burying it, the pirates had apparently punched an inscription on the face of this bar. “M. S. M.” they had inscribed it, “No. 1563, 4—4—10.” How strange it was that on reading these hieroglyphics William suddenly went deep beetroot, and called sharply to Wilkinson, on the rocks above, to halt.

“What’s your trouble,” grinned that gentleman.

Pollok still held the brick in his hands; and he looked alternately at the brick and up at Brother Wilkinson.

“These here pirates——” began Pollok; and paused.

“Yeah?” said Brother Wilkinson. He made a funny wry face, and stooped towards his bootlace.

“These here nee—furious *pirates* o’ yourn, pardner,” continued William gravely. “Whereabouts would you say they was operatin’ now about—about——” he consulted the inscription again “April the fourth, 1910——”

Wilkinson had done with his bootlace now.

“Around the zinc room o’ th’ Miguel Sanchez Mine,” he remarked with perfect sang-froid, and simultaneously drew a knife about a foot long from his boot and cast it at Pollok in a highly skilful manner.

Before the outraged William could grasp that an attempt had been made upon his life—he had stepped aside in the nick of time, but quite automatically—his assailant was off like a deer. More

like an indignant hippopotamus William thundered down the *arroyo* and up over the intervening spur to avenge his wrong. He reached the summit in time to see Wilkinson take a header off the high rock wall at the south end of the cove into the blue water below.

He came up again immediately—unlike Pollok he could swim very nicely—and he now struck out on a trudgeon stroke for the white boat that lay moored against the red rocks beyond. It flashed on William that the road round to the forestalling of Brother Wilkinson was long, thorny, and stony; simultaneously it flashed upon him that the first man to reach the boat held the whip hand and four bars of bullion to boot; simultaneously he drew his pistol.

The flat report rolled along that most desolate coast, and the water splashed to the right of the swimmer's ear. He paid no heed.

Pollok took his right wrist in his left fist, and let all his soul, so to speak, flow along the sights of that six-inch tube of blue steel which held his four remaining chances for life and liberty. He did not want to kill, if possible, and so the second shot snicked the swimmer's ear. The swimmer shook his head and swam on.

“ I guess,” said Pollok miserably, “ I'll just have to kill the ornery little cuss dead. Hold up, you—Huddup! Or—— ”

“ Oh hell!” said William all in one word, for Brother Wilkinson had vanished.

Naturally enough I cannot get him to speak of this incident very freely; but as far as I can gather it was like, “ a fishin' float a bobbin' under.”

“ No,” says William, “ he didn’t scream any ; I guess he hadn’t time. I didn’t see what happened after, for I was sicker’n a dawg at the tho’t o’ any man goin’ out that a-way. He always had a sorter repulsion at them *tiburón* sharks. Funny—what ? ”

“ Oh hell ! ” said William Pollok on the Lower Californian coast ; and that was the epitaph of “ Brother Wilkinson.”

And then he realized that he was alone in a desolate place with six bars of silver-gold bullion, and a motor launch. He knew the bars were stolen, of course ; but one does not expect a rough miner fellow to be *too* punctilious. They were stolen some years before ; the company had resigned itself to its loss by now ; anyhow findin’s was keepin’s ; anyhow he didn’t know whereabouts the bally mine was ; and he had his little girl to consider.

It is a pity—a great pity—that just as William was considering the last two points, most earnestly, a small breeze sprang up. It was a breeze from the interior, whisking down the ruddy mountain-side, and it lost the world a most dramatic and heroic scene in a ducal palace. It carried to the ear of the man on the shore a sound like far-away breakers ; the harmonious roar of a distant stamp battery.

William swore very vividly this time ; and the dawn looked cold and grey in spite of the bright colours of land, sky and sea, and the rapidly rising temperature. He had been a mine manager himself, and the awakening of established instincts was inopportune. Rather reluctantly he collected the bars and hid them again. Then he turned inland,

in the direction of the sound he had heard—to report his find.

He walked slowly and wearily, for he was getting on in life, he felt, and *now* his daughter could never marry a duke—against his wishes—and he could never be a hero.

. . . . .

How did I find out all this? I got a letter from the Englishman, Herbert Jones, who did not go to Nigeria after all. He said, in effect:

“It is a most extraordinary coincidence. Here am I, hardly two months in this beastly place—I’m assistant manager, you know on the ‘Miguel Sanchez’—when who should come prancing in but old Bill Pollok. He *is* an extraordinary chap. It seems he got tight in Corral—as I knew he would—and spent all his money. *Then* he goes prospecting, and makes up to a *frightful* scoundrel called Holy Joe that used to work here. Holy Joe left a few days after they robbed the zinc room here last year. They never fixed it on him—but everybody had their suspicions, which are now confirmed. The actual robbery was carried out by two Mexicans—we suppose—who vanished along with the bullion and have not been seen or heard from since.

“It seems Bill met this appalling person—who has been devoured by a shark—and he showed him (Bill) where the swag was hidden. I can’t get to the bottom of the matter—it is too complicated. Bill, as you may expect—knowing him—has got me into all sorts of trouble. He has prigged a motor-boat, it seems, and I have had to square what few authorities are left in this revolution-ridden land—and the owner. Also there has been a bur-

glary in Guaymas and a report from the interior that a white man has been stealing mules—rotten, what? Bill says *he* did not commit these last-mentioned offences.

“ He is working as a shift-boss on the cyanide plant now, and the company have stumped up pretty handsomely for the recovered bullion. He sent the money to his daughter. Why has he grown so bitter against the House of Lords? ”



## MAUD: A STORY FOR THE SENTIMENTAL

“**H**IS brand of talk,” said William Pollok as he braced his knee against the patient pony’s abdomen and took a pull on the cinch, “is sure instructive—Whoa! ye town bred ——! I just—Stan’ still, will ye?—goin’ get doctor,” he mumbled with one hand on the saddle horn, and his mouth full of tobacco.

“Typhoid?” I asked.

“Yeah.” Pollok swung himself aboard with uncommon agility—considering what a stumpy little lump of a fellow it is. “I’ll be back to-night,” he shouted over his shoulder; and horse and man vanished in the live oak which fills the canyon below Santa Ynez Mountain.

Minutes later I saw them cross the bare patch half a mile lower down. They were several sizes smaller, but every movement was distinct, for this is the nature of the Mexican atmosphere—especially in the Sierras. The pony was travelling at a brisk jarring trot, but William sat easily back in his high cantled “Texan” saddle apparently without suffering the slightest inconvenience thereby. He rides well for a mining man—in fact, I believe Pollok used to be a cowboy once upon a time.

“There is no financial reason,” quoth a high-pitched voice within, “why you should not die.

I feel I have made a mistake. But you must forgive and forget me. I am very happy—I am very happy—I am very happy.—G—d d—m !”

There was a sound of feeble struggling, and I shot indoors to where, in the seclusion of Pollok's own bed, a wasted stranger fought Death in concrete forms invisible to me. John Hop, the Chinese cook, drifted soft-footed into the chamber with a glass of water, and the patient promptly inquired if that was Maud. Then he used abominable language because Maud was not forthcoming. Maud, apparently, knew how to circumvent his manifold visionary foes. Why had Maud deserted him ?

John Hop giggled.

“ My thinkum him die plitty soon,” he explained as he smoothed down the sheet.

The yellow-cruled lips moved in a faint attempt to articulate the word “ Swine !” and the stranger appeared to sink back into a torpor.

I went outside—after reproving the Chinaman—and sat down on the porch. It was rather distressing ; for the man was dying and we could not get him the one thing his soul most earnestly desired. We knew nothing about him beyond the bare fact that he had walked in out of the hills two days previously in a very dilapidated condition. Pollok had discovered him in the hut of one of the Santa Ynez Silver Mines peons—the hospitable occupier of which residence was nourishing him on boiled beans fried in lard.

I sat on the porch and smoked. Towering above me on my right was the eastern slope of the Santa Ynez Mountain. It is covered with the brittle

*manzanillo* shrub, with the smooth blood-red bark and little dark green leaves. Far up the bushy hillside I could see the graded waggon road, and above that again the ore-bins. At intervals a mine car appeared on the edge of the bins, and then would come the clink of a hammer as the *carrero* knocked the catch loose, the car would tip forward, and there would be a crash and rattle of falling rocks and a little puff of dust. When the sun had hidden itself behind the mountain, and a distant whistle had blown, and the car no longer appeared on the top of the bins, now blue and indistinct against a clear blue background—Pollok and the doctor came riding back up the trail.

“How’s pardner?” inquired the blithe superintendent of the Santa Ynez Mine as he dismounted and handed the horses over to the *mozo*.

I explained that he had been asleep all the afternoon. “I haven’t looked at him for the last hour,” I added, “for he was so quiet that I didn’t like to disturb him. I just sat out here listening in case he moved.”

The doctor nodded approvingly and removed his spurs, lest they should jingle.

Antonio, the foreman, had now taken the roll at the shaft head on the other side of the mountain’s crest, and I could see the white-clad employés of the company trooping down the trail. Some of the older men walked slowly with their blankets wrapped round their shoulders and the lower part of their faces—for there was just a suggestion of chill in the air, and the native has a holy horror of pneumonia—but the majority came skylarking down in nothing but their white cotton drawers and shirts.

"Another day, another dollar," quoted Pollok. "Them rascals is active enough when it comes to quittin' time—what?"

Somebody touched me on the shoulder, and I saw the doctor smiling whimsically at me.

"I guess your patient came off shift with the others," he said. "No wonder you found him pretty quiet. I guess it was the beans that finished him."

A week later I was in my upper chamber where I used to edit the *Corral Clarion*—the *Clarion* is the most progressive weekly of the most progressive mining town in Mexico. I was reading proofs, and Enrique, the compositor, had gone out to get the mail. To me then came Pollok, just in from the mountains, and Fortescue. They made complaint of non-delivery.

I expostulated.

"Why come to me?" I said. "Get after the post office. We send 'em out all right—it's the postmasters of your infernal little one-horse camps in the mountains that use 'em to paper their office walls. As for you, Fortescue, I found your last week's copy unopened in the bar of the Foreign Club—*where you had left it*. I advise you to shut up before you give yourself away further."

"I intend," said Fortescue nastily, "to discontinue when my subscription runs out. In future I shall take in *El Clarin* and improve my Spanish."

"You may take in *El Clarin* as much as you like," I retorted, "but you will *not* improve your Spanish, not the spelling part of it anyhow. The editor is as phonetic as yourself."

"You have not," complained Fortescue, "put in a word about my Ampliacion de Shaw property for five weeks. Do you imagine I buy your paper to read about Mrs. Tod's muffin worries?"

"You ought to know better," said Pollok, "than to go an' blow about the Santa Ynez holin' in on La Rosa—the way you did. *That* information was strictly confidential as between gennelmen. I thought better of you. Why ain't there more society noos?"

This is the sort of thing one has to put up with on this class of periodical.

Happily Enrique staggered in with the mail at this moment, in time to stop Pollok playing with the typewriter, which he does not understand. I gave them, or rather they took, the "Exchange" newspapers to keep them out of further mischief. Fortescue immediately began to grumble at the absence of Sunday Comic Supplements.

"No Buster Brown," he complained. "No Howson Lott. Nothing but railway accidents! Why don't you get more interesting papers? What's that you've got hold of there?"

"It's a letter from Ireland. I shall read it when you heathen are out of the way——"

"Sorry!" said Fortescue. "Why are there no pictures of Happy Hooligan and Maud the Mule in these papers of yours?"

"The supplements only come on Mondays," I said. "You may look at the official correspondence if you like. Here's a sportsman wants me to buy a linotype machine. I will if Enrique cares to pay for it out of his wages—and here's another—Holy Smoke!"

Pollok heard my cry and looked up sharply.

“ Cincinnati beat St. Louis—— ” he began.

“ I am not interested in immoral wagers,” I said.  
“ Listen to this—— ”

“ Is it about Happy Hooligan ? ” inquired Fortescue hopefully.

“ It’s uncommon about Maud anyway—listen :

“ ‘ The Editor, *The Corral Clarion*,

Dear Sir,—Kindly insert the enclosed notice in your esteemed paper, and forward account for same to above address. I am

Yours faithfully,

1 Enclosure.

(MISS) MAUD MONAGHAN.’ ”

“ That ain’t nothin’,” said Pollok.

“ I haven’t read the enclosure yet : ‘ Will Paul Jones, who went to Mexico to prospect for gold in Oct. 19—, kindly communicate with M. Monaghan, No. 4573, 99th Street, Chicago, Ill., for information which may be to his great advantage.’ ”

“ *Paul Jones !* ” commented Fortescue. “ That wouldn’t be the Englishman, would it ? ” By *the Englishman*, be it distinctly understood, he referred specifically to Pollok’s consulting engineer and general manager—at the moment out of town on the examination of a distant mine.

“ ‘S name’s Herbert,” muttered Pollok absently.  
“ *Paul Jones—eh ? An’ Maud Monaghan !* Did you see the letters on the sweatband o’ that hat ? ”

“ I did,” I said. “ You showed it to me after the funeral.” The same unspoken thought was in both our minds.

“ This is a circular letter,” I went on. “ She must have sent a copy to each of the English newspapers in Mexico. Name of the paper’s filled in in ink. Rest printed to look like typewriting. Took a lot of trouble to find him apparently.”

“ Oh, hell ! ” said Pollok, and his eyes, I noticed, were suspiciously bright. He dropped the lids when he saw me looking at him, and spat unrebuked upon my clean floor.

“ Oh, pshaw ! ” he exploded suddenly. “ Damn them women ! Ain’t it entirely her own fault now ? She waits until the boy’s dead—an’ him cryin’, ‘ Maud, Maud, why did yeh leave me ? ’ ” he spat again—‘ an’ now she goes slingin’ advertisements into the papers when it’s all over. She’s too late ! Write an’ tell her to go t’hell ! ”

“ Good God ! ” cried Fortescue, at last catching the drift of the conversation. “ You don’t think—— ”

“ I know it ! ” said Pollok. “ Wasn’t his hatband marked ‘ P.J.’ on the inside—punched in on the leather. His shirt—what there was of it—was marked ‘ N.B.,’ and he has ‘ A. G. L.’ stencilled on his handkerchief ; but I’d go on a man’s hatband any time where there’s a doubt. Bein’ a minin’ man he’d be liable to get his clothes mixed up a bit.”

“ How do you know he was a mining man ? ” objected Fortescue.

“ If he was anything else,” said Pollok, “ how would he come to be afoot in the mountains with no money, an’ not much clothes, an’ typhoid fever into the bargain ? ”

The logic of this was unanswerable. It became

clear to the meanest intellect that 'P. J.' could be none other than the advertised-for Paul Jones who had gone prospecting in Mexico. We decided, therefore, to lay the facts as gently as possible before Miss Monaghan. I wrote the letter myself, and I hoped the thought of his passing with her name on his lips might serve to comfort her a little. Eight days later I received a sad little epistle thanking me for my kindness. She said that my description of "P. J." made it unquestionable that he was the man she sought—allowing, of course, for the wastage of the fever. She added that she was coming down into Mexico herself; and might she be allowed to plant a few flowers of her own gathering—she supposed we had wild flowers in Mexico—upon the grave. Pollok snivelled openly when I showed him the letter, and he promised to come to town to meet her on arrival.

Curiously enough, the same train which brought Maud Monaghan to Corral brought back the Englishman. We were all three at the station—Pollok nicely shaved, in a newly purchased shirt, and Fortescue with a flower in his buttonhole—and we were peering expectantly as passenger after passenger came down the steps of the end platform, when I observed the afore-mentioned Herbert Jones, C.E., Mining Engineer, making a violent dash from the second-class car to the nearest cab. It was so strange to see such an eminently respectable white man as the Englishman electing to travel among the sandal-footed that I left the "Welcome to Our Town" party to follow him. I was in dread that he might have given offence



to the police; although this seemed hardly possible.

Instead of driving directly to his office, the cab which bore the Englishman turned sharply to the right at the bottom of the hill. My own Jehu was lashing his horse across the Iron Bridge, which spans the generally dry bed of the river hereabouts, when the Englishman leaped to the curb before the offices of the Corral and San Lorenzo Power Co., ran up the steps and hurled himself against the door.

It was locked, unfortunately, for it was after office hours. By the time I had arrived on the scene of action he was dancing excitedly on the flower beds in front of the building, and calling luridly on the name of Albert Peel. At intervals he stooped to gather handfuls of garden mould which he cast at an upper window.

"He will be shaving himself in the bathroom," I suggested. "Let me assist you."

We both shouted together, and presently the head of Albert peered cautiously over the sash. It was wrapped in a bathing towel, which gave him a distinctly Oriental appearance. He explained that he had been washing it.

"Come down quickly," I said, "and open the door. The Englishman has shot a fellow, and the police are on his track."

Peel removed his glasses from his aquiline nose, polished and readjusted them. Then he looked severely at us.

"I'll be down right away," he said, and closed the sash.

It is very agonizing having to wait for a man like

Albert Peel—a man whose pulse never exceeds fifty-five and whose temperature is set at three degrees subnormal—especially when the avengers of the Law may turn the corner at any moment; but at last the door opened. The Englishman at once tore upstairs and proceeded to get into Peel's bed as he was, drawing the covers well over him.

“Hi!” cried Albert. “You said yourself the other day—when you were telling that Canadian story—that people don't get into other people's beds with their boots on. It's not done.”

“This is no joking matter,” mumbled the Englishman.

“I was not aware,” said Peel coldly, “that I was joking. If you must lie down *in*—not on, but *in*—my bed, you might at least have the decency to remove a part of your clothing first.” Peel's abhorrence of dirt in his room or on his person is very singular in a man who hails from a Western state. “Who did you shoot?” he asked.

“I haven't shot anybody,” complained the Englishman. “I am pursued by an appalling female.”

“In that case,” remarked Peel, “there is no reason why you should not get up and undress yourself properly. I would not allow her to come up here even if you asked me to.”

The Englishman arose from his resting-place at these words and began to remove his coat.

“I saw her when I was getting aboard the train at Rosario,” he said. “Fortunately I saw her first. She was in the Pullman, so I fled to the first-class chair car. At Empalme it was more difficult on account of there being no Pullman car on the local.

I had to get in among the peons, for the baggage man is a swine I fired from the Santa Ynez, and I knew I would not be allowed to travel in the baggage car. I got in the second-class among the peons. I am, most likely, in a frightfully diseased state at this moment owing to the ailments I have caught from them."

On hearing this news Albert Peel declared his intention of not permitting the Englishman to go back to bed until he had bathed himself. Fortunately the cashier of the Company—who lived across the way and kept a dog—had a cake of dog soap in his possession. This he declared to be unused, although it was suspiciously moist. I brought it back without needlessly stirring up the Englishman's prejudices by hinting at the probable last user; and we prepared the bath.

"I don't see why you should fly from this woman," continued Peel, as he stood in the doorway and wiped the condensed vapours of the bathroom from his spectacles. "Apparently she has not even seen you yet. By the way, she must be a singularly homely old bird."

"She is," said the Englishman. "I met her in Chicago some years ago. Her name is Monaghan, and she goes in for living for others."

Both men turned round sharply, for at the mention of the name I had uttered a startled cry.

"It's nothing," I said hastily. "Only a passing pain. Go on with your narrative."

"I was staying in Chicago some years ago with some people I met in Mexico City," continued the Englishman. "American doctor and his wife. This monster of a woman—whose name is Monaghan

—seemed to be a sort of friend of the family. She insisted on following me about and asking foolish questions, for she was casting her benevolent eye upon the abandoned mining population of the south-west, and it occurred to her to prosecute her endeavours further afield into Mexico. She could not get it out of her head that I was a prospector—do I look like a prospector, I ask you? Furthermore, she could not even get my name right. Insisted that my Christian name was Paul. It's not—it's Herbert. Hang it all, you'd think that even a woman would have the sense to learn that much in two months."

"Did you stay with the doctor as long as that?" I asked in mild surprise. It seemed a fairish holiday for a busy man like the Englishman.

"I—er—was detained," he explained. "My Christian name—my Chris—the reasons for the futile mistake of this abominable female were as follows: That is to say—er—an American girl who chanced—who was stopping at this doctor's home used to call me Paul Jones after the Pir—the Father of the American Navy of that name."

"And so you stayed in Chicago for two months to break this American girl of this pernicious practice? Quite right too! Was she a nice girl?"

The Englishman looked vexed.

"I was stopping with the American doctor," he muttered incoherently. "This old crow—who insists on calling me Paul Jones—that is to say this frightful female had the cheek to attempt to reform what she was pleased to call my drinking habits. *Now* she has dogged me down here, and I shall have to hide until she goes away again. Pollok

will come in to town and leave the mine to look after itself. Antonio will get drunk. The pump will break down. The mine will be flooded—no, that can't happen now since we holed into La Rosa. Anyhow some frightful accident will occur, and I shall have to shut down. Hang it all! It's not right!"

I began to see that we had, perhaps, been over precipitate. I therefore left them at this point and went to look for Pollok. On my way down I met Fortescue. He appeared puzzled.

"Miss Monaghan"—he began. "Er—she's hardly—er—he was quite a young fellow, wasn't he—the fellow who died?"

"He was," I said, "about thirty, I should judge."

"Pollok's with the lady," he remarked irrelevantly. "They are down at the hotel."

I advised him to apply at the Power Company's office for further information, and went on to interview Miss Monaghan.

She was seated stiffly in a straight-backed chair in the geometrical centre of the room, Pollok cowering pitifully in the corner. I noted that he wore grey cotton socks and did not use suspenders. He had hold of his trousers at either knee, clutching at them through the badly crumpled brim of his hat with a furtive movement; and his face shone with the dew of extreme terror. Miss Monaghan—a rawboned lady whose apparent age I politely pass over—seemed to have been weeping.

"He spoke real nice at the end, Ma'am," repeated Pollok as I came in. "I guess he regretted it a heap—not havin' married you. I guess maybe

he'd found religion from knowing you, for he spoke so nice—— ”

I recalled fragments of the “ instructive brand o' talk ” I had overheard, and I shuddered. Pollok's speaking eye pleaded dumbly for the aid his lips dared not ask ; and I bowed to Miss Monaghan.

“ Would you mind very much,” I said, “ if I took Mr. Pollok away for a little. His consulting engineer, Mr. Jenkins—— ”

“ Mr. Who ? ” gasped William.

“ Mr. *Jenkins*,” I said sharply. “ Your consulting engineer. He has come in on the train and is in bed at Peel's place.”

Pollok appeared too stunned even to reason coherently.

“ Mr. Jenk— ? ” he repeated wildly. “ What's he doin' there ? ”

“ He is,” I said, “ in a very serious state. We have had to give him a hot bath and put him to bed.” I abhor falsehoods.

Pollok arose and stumbled blindly out into the *patio*. I hoped Miss Monaghan might consider this the effect of grief at the bad news.

“ What's happened ? ” he wailed. “ Oh, do tell ! ”

“ The matter is beyond telling,” I said. “ The best thing you can do is to get back to the Santa Ynez before Jones catches you—prove an *alibi*. *Jones* is the man she is after—Jones the Englishman—not ‘ P. J.,’ ‘ N. B.,’ ‘ A. G. L.,’ but Herbert Jones, whose given name she has misconstrued into Paul ! ”

“ Jones,” repeated Pollok inanely, in a dull, monotonous voice.

“ What have you said to her ? ” I asked.

“ Jones,” murmured Pollok. “ Eh ? What ? Her ? I said he’s dead—that’s what I said ! Now he can’t marry her without me appearin’ to be a liar—a class o’ *gente* I despise. What are you going to do about it ? ”

“ It is your fault,” I said brutally ; for he was dazed with horror and astonishment at the moment and I am a strong believer in the effects of hypnotic suggestion applied at such times. “ It is entirely your own fault.”

“ It is entirely your fault,” echoed Pollok in the same flat toneless voice. I looked vexed, and Pollok swayed gently toward the bar. “ You can’t do that here,” I cried, caught him by the shoulder and hustled him along to the club. Fortescue came in and caught us there.

“ It’s all right,” he said. “ At least it’s all right for everybody except Albert Peel. Jones says he’s too sick to move from the Power Company’s building, so he intends to stay in Albert’s rooms for a week if need be. We’re having his meals sent in to him, and he wants you to send along his pyjamas and his tooth-brush. Also send a message out to Pollok on no account to leave the mine until he’s well enough to get out there himself—and not to say a word about him being in town. He’s pretty talkative for a sick man. He said quite a lot about you, Bill.”

“ Whyfor does he run around dodgin’ an’ hidin’ from his girl this way ? ” inquired Pollok sourly.

“ Do you seriously imagine,” said Fortescue, “ that Miss Monaghan is the original of the photograph over the Englishman’s washstand ? ”

“ Well, she comes from Chicago.”

It is unexhilarating to watch a strong man's brain power breaking down under severe strain. Fortescue and I spoke gently and kindly to Pollok for the next half-hour, at judicious intervals administering a little mild stimulant. When we had finished with him there seemed a fair hope of his ultimate recovery.

“ You must go back,” urged Fortescue, “ to-night. I know a man who has a waggon, and he can drive you as far as San Lorenzo—No! You *can't* wait for the train!—and when you get there you must lie doggo until she has quitted the district. Otherwise Jones will have to marry her, and she will come to live here and will force you to sign the pledge.”

Pollok shivered.

“ I'd promised to show her the grave,” he said weakly. “ How about it ? ”

“ Have you mentioned the existence of any other Joneses in this camp ? ”

“ Nope ! ”

Fortescue breathed a sigh of relief.

“ You're doing well ! ” he exclaimed. “ Stay with it ! ”

Later, under a shining white moon, a waggon drawn by two straining mules crashed through the dry bed of the river to the west of the sleeping town and rolled echoing past the crumbling *adobé* walls of the Chinese gardens on the outskirts. Once on the stretch of prairie beyond the two outriders, who had escorted the outfit thus far, drew rein.



“Remember,” said the voice of Fortescue, “if you make any slip you’re liable to break the heart of the girl in the photograph that looks like your own daughter—also you will have to sign the pledge.”

“I ain’t goin’ to touch a drop till after it’s all over,” promised Pollok.

The driver whipped up the mules, and the waggon rolled and rolled and rolled—getting smaller and smaller on the empty plain—toward the moonlit mountains to the south-west.

“Just as well to get him out of town,” said Fortescue. “If he’d got tanked—as he’s liable to at any moment—the fat would have been in the fire in five minutes. But he doesn’t drink when he’s working, does he?”

I shook my head.

“Happy thought to remind him of his daughter,” I commented.

Pollok is a grass widower with one grown-up girl to whom he was managing to give a “college education” at the time whereof I write.

As we rode back past the Power Company’s office we saw a light shining upstairs. Peel had been trying to get his guest interested in astronomy, but the Englishman refused to “participate in any manly pastime”—the quotation is from Miss Monaghan—which included looking out of the window. Accordingly they had fallen back on the gramophone. It was appropriate that we, as we rode by in the silent night, should be greeted by the voice of a well-known tenor. There is enough professional jealousy flying about without my specially mentioning which particular one. He sang:

“ Maxwellton’s braes are bonny  
Where saftly fa’s the dew ;  
An’ ’twas there that Annie Laurie  
Gi’ed me——”

Fortescue’s pony was overcome with emotion, and stumbled badly.

“ Curse *you!* ” said Fortescue to the horse.

“—— which ne’er forgot shall be ;  
An’ for bonny Annie Laurie  
I would lay me doon and dee,”

concluded the gramophone.

“ As a matter of—ahem !—Annie Laurie married another man,” said Fortescue, as we picked our way over the uneven planking of the Iron Bridge. “ It has just occurred to me that there may be two stories in this incident. One for you to write—about ‘ Maud ’—and one for me about—— ”

“ Well ? ”

“ About ‘ P. J.’ ”

Somehow we managed to keep the secret ; for Albert Peel is a reticent man—otherwise he would not hold the high position he does, for the Corral and San Lorenzo Power Company are no sentimentalists. That Miss Monaghan became interested in the mysterious sick man at the Power Company’s offices, and that Fortescue felt compelled to head her off a personal visit by picturing Peel as a sort of satyr resident in a low neighbourhood where violent drunkards momentarily robbed the passer-by, was unfortunate. The sin, however is Fortescue’s—not mine.

On the third day we got Miss Monaghan on the train and took her to San Lorenzo, where she looked

with pity on the inhabitants and made invidious comparisons between their unhappy lot and the prosperity of American cities. Old Shaw—who is reported to have been an English gentleman, about fifty years ago, before he took to booze and lost his identity in the West—heartily agreed with everything she said. He even wept senile tears over the degradation of the peons, who, not understanding English, smoked cigarettes in the shady corners and smiled happily at the visitors. Shaw was in his usual state, but fortunately she failed to observe closely in this instance.

Then we got her on the back of a gentle horse, and I may say that aged female stood the long trip out to the mine fairly well. She was a bit stiff when she climbed down at Pollok's, but she was game to go down to the new white wooden cross in the *arroyo* right away. Some of the peons followed us, and I overheard Antonio, the foreman, explaining to his friend the *carrero* that this was the mamma of the American who had died.

“ Look,” he said, “ how she weeps—*Probrecita!* ”

The peons stared, and murmured sympathetically.

“ I told the *velador*,” began Pollok, who seemed to have lost his head again in the near presence of a respectable spinster, “ to keep an eye on the place in case—— ”

I silenced him with a look. It was not meet that Miss Monaghan should be enlightened as to the coffin-snatching habits of Monsieur le Peon. Pollok looked more miserable than ever, and to make confusion worse confounded began the recital of a “ noble act ” the alleged Jones had performed six months ago.

“ A fellow gets crushed in the shaft bottom by a premature blast—— ” he commenced.

“ But I thought he only came here to die ? ” sobbed Miss Monaghan.

“ Sure ! ” cried William hastily. “ I was gettin’ mixed. It’s on account o’ the names bein’—— ”

“ So similar,” I explained. Miss Monaghan looked dazed. “ It was Mr. Jenkins, Mr. Pollok’s general manager, that saved the man,” I went on. “ I suppose his being sick in Corral made Mr. Pollok a bit confused. He is naturally anxious about Mr. Jenkins, and has, perhaps, been brooding too much.”

“ He spoke so nice,” blurted William, falling back to safer ground. “ Allowin’ he’d loved you right along. It must be a fine thing to win the love o’ a good fellow like that.”

May God forgive us—but I cannot see what harm we did. We left “ P. J.” all glorious to behold ; a regular garden bed among the underbrush. We conducted a chastened Miss Monaghan back to Corral, and saw her safely into the first train north. I think, perhaps, the thought that somebody had loved her at last may serve to cast a little more human sympathy into her good works. The rest nobody knows but ourselves and——

Oh, yes ! I *was* a little anxious about that part of it until a girl from Chicago discreetly exposed two lines of a letter, keeping her pretty fingers well over the more private part of the contents. The lines read :

“ You won’t give me away, dear, will you ? It is too appalling—but you won’t give us away, will you ? Anything on earth—— ”

That is all she would let me read.

I think we can trust her to keep it dark ; and perhaps Fortescue will write the other story about " P. J." Pollok says he " picturs " the other Maud as having married " a dry-goods clurk what excelled in manly pastimes."



## PUMPING CHARGES

**I**N the good days of *Cientifico* government—when people who made disturbance were shot forthwith, and peace and the revenue stamp reigned throughout Mexico—William Spenser Pollok was superintendent of the Santa Ynez.

This is the name, not of a virgin martyr, but of the wettest underground proposition in the State of Durango. The mine was so frightfully wet that it paid no dividends—except indirectly to manufacturers of pumping machinery—and current rumour had it that natural selection, and the survival of the fittest, had produced a race of web-toed miners among the native population. All this was very sad for the directors of the Santa Ynez, who mainly lived in Scotland where money is not easy.

It is a very peculiar vein—the Santa Ynez. Except in Mexico it would be impossible. One of the funny things about this vein is that it is—or was until Pollok got tinkering with the geology of it—far wetter in its upper parts than lower down—which is against reason. It has other notable peculiarities ; but of these you shall hear anon.

Pollok, as I have said, was superintendent ; and a man called Jones—whom men call the Englishman out there—was general manager. A man called Fortescue told me most of the story.

“ I had taken an option on the Ampliacion de Shaw—— ” began Fortescue.

“ I know you had,” I interrupted. “ The scandal was all over the town within twenty-four hours. Old Shaw makes his living by selling options on that mine to people like you—— ”

“ Well, I had it anyway,” he continued, as if it were something to be proud of, “ and since it is in the Santa Ynez District I had to be out there quite a lot to prevent those fellows on the Boston Philanthropic from stealing my ore.”

“ They couldn't,” I said. “ There is no ore in the Ampliacion. It is far more of the nature of a goat ranch than a mine.”

“ It was on one of these trips,” proceeded Fortescue, unabashed, “ that I first heard Pollok and the Englishman discuss the water difficulty—— ”

But I refuse to tell the tale except in my own way. Fortescue is so long-winded.

I imagine them to have been sitting in the office—over against the shaft head. Through the open door they could see the dripping iron cage clanking to surface with its cargoes of muddy rock, to drop once more to steaming and mysterious depths. From below came strange throbbing sounds, and a constant drip and trickle. In the blazing sunlight a pulsating stream foamed from the end of a cast-iron column of piping, and a gang of draggled pumpmen—just up—screwed mine-dazed eyes against the glare. Water ran from the cotton clothes of the pumpmen in streams, and their hands and sandalled feet were bleached and shrivelled.

You will perceive in this the evidences of a certain humidity about the underground workings.



The Englishman shook his head, as one of the gang smiled a twisted smile and spoke a few words in the vernacular.

“It’s not right,” he frowned. “Hang it all, it’s not right! I shall have to advise them to close down. John McNeil refuses to spend any more money. The mine is too wet.”

“In any country,” said Pollok broodingly, “where geology an’ common sense had a kinder affinity it would be different; but here’s the Boston Philanthropic—lower down *on the same vein*—pumping one gallon to our three. As you say, Mr. Jones, ‘dammit an’ blow! It ain’t right!’”

“The Boston Philanthropic is on a different vein,” announced Fortescue.

“Who told you that?” asked the Englishman and Mr. Pollok together.

“Old Shaw. He was explaining it to me yesterday. He has studied the formation——”

“Ain’t it strange?” said Pollok to the Englishman, and nodded meaningly at Fortescue. Both men regarded him as though he had been a reptile. “Oh, pshaw!” said Pollok.

“Oh, Ampliacion de Pshaw!” corrected the Englishman, and Fortescue leaped as if he had been stung. “Explain it to this tenderfoot,” he added. “No! Wait! I shall try once more to do so myself. If you listen to Shaw,” he continued, “you can never go to heaven. I have told you all about this vein before, but you were thinking whether one over infinity is greater or less than infinity over one, so I wanted my breath. This vein we are attempting to work—under frightful difficulties—is like this——”

He picked a slice of bread from Pollok's dinner pail—they had lunched underground in company with a burst steam pipe—and stood it up on end. "Are you paying attention to me?" he asked.

Fortescue wasn't, and he sighed heavily as he realized the hopeless nature of the task he had undertaken.

To carry the unhappy reader through all the heartbreaking phases of an attempt to show Fortescue the outlines of Santa Ynez geology would be more than inhuman. It is necessary, however, that some idea should be formed as to the Englishman's argument. I have said that the Santa Ynez is peculiar in more respects than one, and indeed it is. Many eminent engineers, who have not so far buried a Johannesburg reputation among the tricksome reefs of Mexico—the land where there are no fixed rules—will say that I am merely a vulgar liar. A few, who have been there before, will be inclined to allow me the benefit of the doubt.

To proceed, then, on the lines of the Englishman's demonstration. A mineral vein is even as a slice of bread—rather crumpled and of irregular thickness—stuck in the earth in a more or less vertical position. It is an old earthquake fissure which has become filled with quartz or other mineral during the course of ages. Sometimes the values are in the bread itself. In other veins they are in the butter.

In the big Santa Ynez vein the silver is in the butter. Moreover, the Santa Ynez is *battered on both sides*. This sounds very luxurious and prosperous, were it not that the quality of the lubricant varies so much. Briefly the vein consists of a core

of barren quartz, about fifty feet wide, with a two-foot ore zone on either wall. It inclines to the west, and has been opened up to a depth of two thousand feet, exposing the fact that from the outcrop to about eight hundred feet the only workable ore comes from the eastern, or footwall zone. From that depth downwards the ore switches across to the western, or hanging wall zone, and the footwall becomes practically barren. This is why the Santa Ynez workings, which owing to the aforesaid inclination may not be carried below a depth of eight hundred feet—the depth at which the vein crosses the boundary of the rival company—are on the footwall. The Boston Philanthropic people tapped the lower reaches of the same big vein from shafts further down the mountain, and took ore from the hanging wall. The two zones, though distinct, undoubtedly form part of the same vein. One always finds the same core of grey quartz—fifty feet from wall to wall—between them.

“ Tell you what I’m goin’ to do,” said Pollok. “ We’ll drive a cross-cut west from the bottom level to the hanging wall. I guess the B. P. has trespassed already. If they ain’t they’re figurin’ on it. From the end o’ this cross-cut we sink a winze to meet ’em—an’ there’s your water problem solved. All our superflous drink runs down into Brother Perkins’ workin’s; an’ the connection is made in our own ground, so they can’t kick.

Brother Perkins was the superintendent of the thievish Boston Philanthropic.

“ Won’t do,” demurred the Englishman. “ Why should they trespass where there is no ore ? ”

“ Well then, *we'll* make an error in our surveys, an' go a bit deeper—what ? ”

“ If I catch you,” said the Englishman, “ performing any tricks of that nature—I'll—I'll—— ”

“ Raise me wages ? ”

“ You mustn't do it, Bill. We'd get had for sure in the law courts. The Governor of the State has a raft of shares in the B. P.”

“ I aim to do 'em up some way,” persisted Pollok. “ Also it don't seem right to shut down after all the trouble we've took. Even if—— Come in ! ” he broke off abruptly. “ Come right in, Mr. Dermot ! There ain't no need to be sensitive about it.”

The surveyor of the Boston Philanthropic—a lanky, pallid youth with a long prying nose and khaki overalls stuffed in the ends of fifteen-inch ochre-yellow lace-up boots—stood in the doorway. He wore an air strangely blended of a forced self-confidence and an underlying conviction that he was in reality a bit of a fool—which he was. He also carried a visible pistol in his hip pocket on all occasions, which would make it appear he was new hatched from his mining school. If the “ old timer ” goes armed—except on the trail—you would never suspect the presence of the “ gun.”

Dermot shoved a section of his neck round the doorpost.

“ I just looked in,” he said, and grinned sheepishly at the company. Nobody seemed to discover any apposite response to this plain statement of facts, so he took up the thread of his discourse. “ Nice ore you've been shippin' these last few days.”

“ Ain't so bad, son ; ain't so bad.”

“ Where d'ye get it ? ” with a grin.

“ Down in the mine,” answered Pollok, with the gravity of one imparting priceless inside information.

“ Smart to-day, ain't you ? ” jeered the visitor. “ How's the pump doin' ? ” Another grin.

“ Mindin' its business as usual. Anythin' else ye'd like—cast your eye over the cost-sheets, for instance ? ”

Seeing that nobody loved him Dermot withdrew his neck, and they heard his feet crunching down the side of the dump. Pollok spat viciously through the window, and tuned his voice to a mocking falsetto.

“ Oh, Mr. Perkins ! ” he mimicked, “ please, Mr. Perkins ! Guess what I seen at Pollok's place this mawnin' ! ”

“ Is that his game ? ” asked Fortescue. “ He ought to be a good hand at it. He's fresh enough to all appearances.”

“ Fresh ? My God ! If there's such a thing as a bump o' nateral diffidence, Dermot's got a hole where it ought to be—— Not that he gets much by it,” he added. “ Antonio tells him the most amazin' lies, which the same is reprehensible in Antonio—but expedient. Personally I'm a truthful man—— ”

“ Good heavens ! ” said the Englishman.

“ Well I am then ! If there's one kind o' man I despise it's a habitual liar.”

“ Pollok,” said the Englishman, “ let's go underground before some awful judgment falls upon you.”

Fortescue was rising to bid them good-bye, but the Englishman invited him to come along.

“ We don’t exactly extend these courtesies to everybody,” he said, “ but I think I know when I can trust a man—you’ll find an old suit of mine in the locker.”

Fortescue thanked him, and climbed gingerly into the mildewed garments proffered, Pollok grabbed a handful of candles, and the three men stepped out into the sunlight and boarded the cage.

“ Second level,” said Pollok. The Englishman held up two fingers to the engineer, and with a sudden sinking sensation they shot into the splashing depths.

Said the voice of Pollok from out the shaking dark :

“ This’ll be a chance for you, Mr. Fortescue, to see what Mr. Jones here was talkin’ about. We’re goin’ to the second level, where the old timers have driven cross-cuts from the footwall vein—the one we’re workin’ on—to the one the B. P. works lower down in their territory. None of the cross-cuts they drove cut other than barren stuff, but there’s one in the end, all choked with old fill and rubbish, where the water comes runnin’ out under the fill. Maybe they opened her up a bit at that point—drove a bit of a tunnel on the hanging wall—so there’s a chance you can see what we were talkin’ about. Antonio’s gettin’ it cleared now.”

The cage slowed down, and the station—dimly lit by a mud-spattered electric globe—rose into view. Beyond, the gloomy portal of a cross-cut—a seven by five-foot tunnel driven at right angles to the course of the vein—led to the actual workings. They lit their candles and fared forth.

Presently the gallery twisted sharply to the right,

quartz appeared in the untimbered parts of the roof above them, and they were now in what is technically known as a "drift"—that is to say, a gallery which follows the vein. On their left they occasionally passed other cross-cuts driven to the west, but these—when not refilled with broken rock—were invariably "blind." The hanging wall zone had not appeared sufficiently promising to warrant further exploitation.

Nor was work in progress now on the level on which they were travelling. The mouldering timber overhead, and the solitary mine-car—broken and red with rust—which stood forlornly beneath a broken chute, proved that ore had once been encountered; but now the workings on the second level had been exhausted and abandoned these many years, the track had been ripped up, and Pollok's ore come from the sixth and seventh—two to three hundred feet lower down on the same vein.

At the end of the gallery Antonio, the Mexican foreman, sat in state upon a piece of plank and superintended the operations of two damp fellow-mortals in straw hats. These were languidly shovelling the "fill" from the last of the westerly cross-cuts, and had by this time cleared a space large enough to give access beyond the pile of broken rubble which the "old timers" had thrown in here out of the way.

In fact, the mud on Antonio's breast and back showed where he had already adventured the passage. He seemed, by his self-satisfied air, to be in exclusive possession of strange and thrilling news.

"*Que hubo?*" inquired Pollok.

Antonio grinned,

“ There is another working,” he said, and held his lighted candle in the entry.

Through the narrow aperture between the arched roof and the pile of “ fill ” on the floor came a distinct current of air, flickering the flame.

“ That’s strange,” said Pollok. He motioned the peons out of his way, and crawled up on the rock-pile, thrusting his guttering candle before him. “ By Heck ! ” he cried. “ There sure is ! I can see the opening.”

There arose a heavy puffing sound, and a grating of stones. A button rent sharply from its moorings. Pollok was now worming his serpentine way over the obstruction.

“ It’s the old hangin’ wall drift that was on that plan you showed me,” came a muffled voice from the interior. “ Hell ! Ain’t it wet ? ”

They followed him—not with ease—and were astonished to find themselves in a drift similar to the one they had just quitted—also equally wet. Drops splashed from the roof to the sluggish stream which ran ankle-deep below, and a million tiny facets flashed back the light of the candles from the untimbered walls. Beyond the tunnel itself there was no sign of work having been attempted. The vein which showed itself in the roof had proved unproductive.

“ Now this,” said the Englishman, “ is just what I was telling you about. Here we have a drift driven on the hanging wall side of the big barren core—on the zone, in fact, which Perkins is working five or six hundred feet below this point. Further in, I imagine, we shall find a little winze, or shaft. Where the devil is Antonio ? ”



“ He’s gone on ahead with Pollok,” said Fortescue. “ He—— ”

His remarks were suddenly interrupted by a heavy walloping sound—as of some dread, cave-dwelling beast, disporting in deep water. Mingled with this came a splutter of Spanish vulgarity.

“ That’ll be the winze I was talking about,” said the Englishman fretfully. “ It’s on the old plan. Why can’t Antonio look where he’s going ? ”

They splashed along the drift to investigate the disturbance, and arrived in time to see Pollok drawing the foreman from the deep. It was indeed the little winze marked on the old plan. Judging by Antonio’s appearance he had been down in several fathoms, and his hat yet floated on the ruffled waters which veiled the gulf beneath.

“ *Dios!* ” quoth he gloomily. “ One more lowering and it would have been ‘ *Adios, Antonio!* ’ ”

“ In my conception,” said Pollok in Spanish, “ the loss would have been insignificant. Go to the cross-cut, and tell one of your good-for-nothing men to bring a ball of twine and a plummet—to plumb the winze.”

Antonio retired grinning, and in not more than twenty minutes a prompt peon came splashing along with the scientific appliances ordered and the customary excuses for the delay. Behind him a companion bore a ladder which Antonio’s thoughtfulness had added to the list of things ordered. This last was stretched across the inundated shaft, and squatting on it Pollok paid out the line.

“ How deep did you say this was ? ” he inquired presently.

“ The old man put it at fifty feet,” said the Englishman.

Pollok let out another fathom of line.

“ That must make nigh on two hundred an’ sixty,” he remarked. “ Oho, them native engineers ! Ain’t this place got no bottom at all ? ”

“ What a job we’d have had dredging up Antonio,” ruminated the Englishman. “ He must be spoken to severely.”

“ Bottom ! ” said Pollok. “ Three hun—— No, it ain’t ! ” he broke off. “ Hit a ledge I reckon. Three—ten—twenty—three-thirty—three-fifty, by Heck ! Ah ! ”

The line slackened, and no amount of manœuvring would induce the bob to sink deeper.

“ Goes down quite a way,” said Pollok. “ This looks like the whyfor o’ that extry wet spot on the seventh—eh ? ” He whistled gently to himself for a minute or two ; then burst into loud and joyful laughter. “ Just thought on a new stunt,” he explained to the amazed onlookers—who feared for his sanity.

Further inspection of the old hanging wall drift thus accidentally rediscovered revealed a fall of ground which effectively checked the level. The Englishman gave it as his opinion that the drift itself, and the submerged shaft, represented the last efforts of some wild-eyed enthusiast to find a continuation of a superficial lense of ore known to have existed in former days. There seemed no prospect of encountering better fortune than this person had met with, so the Englishman contented himself with suggesting the filling up of the shaft, to mitigate the seepage below, and returned to drop to the seventh level.

Near by a chute on this lowest working of the

Santa Ynez mine Pollok paused, and slapped the wall of the drift on the western side.

“ I guess that shaft’s about opposite here,” he ventured. “ Cross-cuttin’ fifty or sixty feet to the west, we could tap it at two hundred an’ fifty feet from the collar, an’ get a better idea o’ what it’s really like.”

“ That would be a silly thing to do,” said the Englishman. “ You’d flood the workings.”

“ Guess so,” murmured William absently. “ That water’d come through with one great hell of a rush, wouldn’t it ? ”

They again returned to the shaft, and rang up to surface. Pollok was communicative in the cage, but as soon as they reached daylight and he beheld the ubiquitous Dermot standing on the edge of the dump, he became violently active. He hurried into the office, where Fortescue followed him in time to see him snatch a hand specimen of high-grade ore from a drawer. This he dipped in the ewer—dabbling it about to remove the accumulated dust—and thereupon commenced to examine it closely with a pocket lense.

“ Gee ! ” said Dermot, entering. “ That’s a tony lookin’ piece ! ”

“ Pretty, ain’t it ? ” said William, passing it over.

Dermot gazed at the wet lump of rock in his hand.

“ A ton or two like that’d cover your pumpin’ charges, all right, all right,” he ventured. “ It’s a pity the vein you’re workin’ is so wet.”

Outside the office the voices of Antonio and the *carrero* on duty were heard in conversation. One

well versed in the manners of the country might have detected a painful precision and clarity in the way they chose and pronounced their words. Said Antonio :

‘ But yes, man ! I tell you. It is metal of the most rich. It is on the hanging wall. Between the second and the third. By supposition we shall find it goes down to the boundary.’

“ *Cuidado!* Have a care ! ” replied the *carrero*. “ This señor understands Castilian. That is to say in his conception,” he added hurriedly, slurring the last sentence into one word.

“ Funny the footwall’s so wet,” repeated Dermot.

“ Lots o’ funnier things in this world,” said Pollok darkly.

Months later Mr. Fortescue once more rode up the winding trail to Pollok’s house. John Hop, Chinese culinary artist, was washing his shirt in the saucepan, and on William’s bed a stray pariah dog snatched a few moments of uneasy slumber. Otherwise the place was deserted.

Fortescue pointed out the presence of the hound, and whilst John Hop administered a rude introduction to the luxuries of the bath by emptying the extemporized washtub over it, he swung back into the saddle and rode on to the shaft head.

A Gentleman who was engaged at a small salary to push a car from the shaft to the ore-bins—the same who conversed with Antonio—informed him that “ Don Guillermo ” was below. Fortescue is well enough known at the Santa Ynez to have unquestioned access to the workings, and presently

he discovered the great man in an atmosphere of steam, murky lights and evil temper, on the seventh level. For a space the sinker pump was the principal theme of his intemperate utterances, but on seeing Fortescue his face cleared.

“Hullo?” he cried. “What’s the good word?”

Fortescue shook his head. “Jones was coming out with me,” he said, “but he was detained. He said to tell you it’s all U. P.”

Pollok snarled.

“When’d he get the letter?” he asked.

“Day before yesterday. McNeil says to draw the pumps and let her flood. Jones is to look round for a more suitable property to invest the remainder of the Syndicate’s funds.”

“They ain’t got but two thousand pounds left!” cried Pollok. “’Pon my soul, them old women make my feet weary! An’ just when I’m solvin’ the water problem for them too!”

Fortescue stared.

“Your pumping charges were up twenty per cent for last month!” he expostulated.

“Don’t I know it? It was me an’ Antonio made ’em go up that way—doin’ evil that good may come of it. Just step in here a minute.”

Fortescue followed him; and there, where on a former occasion Pollok had spoken of cross-cutting to the flooded shaft, he stopped and stared aghast. Thirty feet up a new opening to the west stood a strange contraption of timber and boiler plate; through the oakum packed joints between wood and metal spurted hissing streams; and in the silence of the mine ominous crackling sounds advertised the pressure of the column of water—two

hundred and fifty feet of it—thrusting on the other side.

“ Merciful heavens ! ” cried Fortescue. “ Why did you do that ? ”

“ I wanted to examine the shaft, ” explained Pollok solemnly. “ Jones don’t know about this cross-cut. This cross-cut was drove by me an’ Antonio, an’ it cuts that there shaft about two-fifty feet from the collar. The shaft goes down a heap further than that though, for we rigged the spare sinker pump an’ got her cleaned out to bottom. It goes down to an old stope, which same is in our ground, but it wouldn’t take much sinkin’ to hole out in Perkins’ workin’s. It’s all filled up again now—with water. ”

“ So I perceive, ” muttered Fortescue.

“ Shouldn’t wonder, ” continued Pollok, “ but Dermot’s got a hunch we get our best ore thereabouts. I ain’t said nothin’ to him—but Antonio tells a heap o’ lies. It beats me how that chap thinks o’ the things he tells Dermot. ”

“ But—the water—they wouldn’t dare—— ” stuttered Fortescue.

“ As for that, ” explained Pollok, “ Dermot tells me there ain’t no water on the hanging wall vein. Sides it’s not morally certain Dermot knows just *how* deep that old shaft goes, or how far down that old stope is. Hark to that now ? ”

Against the boiler-plate, or through the boiler-plate, sounded a muffled knock—a telephonic suggestion of the stroke of a hammer. Antonio laughed, and as he did so the sound was repeated. A third and a fourth followed in quick succession, and the bulkhead shook.

“ Quite loud ! ” remarked Pollok unctuously. “ You’d never think that blastin’ was three hundred feet below us, would you ? ”

A fifth report beat its way through the deadening liquid, and the barricade crackled so alarmingly that Fortescue took a hasty step backwards. Pollok jumped simultaneously, but despite the most disconcerting volley of creaks and groans the bulkhead stood. Whilst they hung undecided, uncertain whether to fly or await further developments, Antonio gave a startled cry.

“ *’l agua !* ” he croaked. “ Senores—the water—look ! ”

As he shouted a strange thing came to pass. The spouting streams dwindled and diminished, the former vicious hissing died to a murmur, a trickling sound, and finally to a slow and solemn drip. The spectators looked at one another open-mouthed.

“ I guess,” said Pollok reverently, “ Brother Perkins is even more o’ a hustler than I took him for.”

It was at this moment that Fortescue properly realized the nature of the “ good ” which had sprung from the evil deed of Pollok. The benefits which seemed about to fall upon the Santa Ynez, however, could hardly be said to extend themselves to the Boston Philanthropic. The eternal and immutable laws of compensation have decreed that “ the sweet ”—as the Chaplain o’ th’ *Cloud i’ the Sun* explained to Black Bill—“ hath need of the sour.” Apparently a new outlet had been opened for Santa Ynez water, but whither had that water gone ?

Men came around Mr. Fortescue ; eager hands tore at the supports with pick and crowbar. Almost

in less time than it takes to relate, the steel plate fell clanging. In a dream of dark faces and grinning white teeth Fortescue found himself in the centre of a gloomy chimney which slanted off into the dark overhead, and yawned mysteriously at his feet. Somebody dropped a rope ladder, and lashed it in place. A short scramble down the shaft brought Fortescue to an irregular-shaped working—the old stope mentioned by Pollok. At the bottom of this narrow, rock-walled shaft, was a ragged hole into which a steady stream still ran. From the depths came a white man's voice uplifted in bitter oaths; and, peering down, they caught the distant glint of candles.

“It's devilish wet in here,” said Pollok. “I guess Antonio must ha' stopped the pump already. No need to be in such an indecent hurry. Hullo down there!”

“Hullo!” boomed back a voice from amongst the distant candles.

“What's happened? Anyone hurt? It's Perkins himself,” he added in an undertone.

“My God!” cried Perkins. “Is that you, Pollok? Guess we hit a cloudburst or somethin'. I've just come down myself to find out. All the timber in Number Three Stope's gone to Hades, an' Dermot—he was down when it happened—'s about half-way to San Lorenzo by this time, I guess. They tell me he went into the cage over the heads of fifty-six men that were waiting their turn to go up in the station, an' five cars of ore. There's about a hundred feet of water in the bottom of the mine! My God! If the nen hadn't been comin' off work we'd 'a lost half the shift! What shall I do?”



“ Get busy an’ pump,” said Pollok cruelly. “ I guess there’ll be some more comin’, for this here hole connects with *all* our workings. I’m right sorry for you, Mr. Perkins, but I guess your men must have trespassed into our ground. I guess they holed out in our old shaft which we don’t use, ’cept for a sump to let the mine water run into. I hope none of them ain’t drowned, Mr. Perkins ? ”

It is better to suppress Mr. Perkins’ reply, for it is charitable to suppose that he was not quite himself at the moment. Not wishing to vex him further, Fortescue and Pollok withdrew to the level above.

“ Shut off the steam from the pump, Antonio,” ordered the latter. “ *El Señor Perkins* will do *that* work for us, *gracias à Dios*, in the future ; the which will be in the nature of a great economy in working costs. By accident the people of La Rosa mine have trespassed into our ground, and have made a communication down which the water will run into La Rosa workings.”

“ Haw ! ” exploded Antonio, and slapped his thigh. “ Haw ! Haw ! Haw ! ”



## ENCINILLAS

## ENCINILLAS



## ENCINILLAS

“ I SEEN a man,” said Henderson, “ do a funny thing, oncet.”

This was told to me by the headwaters of one of the creeks which run nor'-west into the Bazonopa River—on the extreme edge of the Sierra Madre of Northern Mexico. A mile to the west of us the rolling mountain country broke suddenly in a colossal step, full five thousand feet, to a gorge where banana palms and orange groves clustered round the little thatched ranch houses. But that was to our west. Where camp was made the great pine trees rose solemnly toward the stars, and the water of the creek was icy cold with melted snow from the higher slopes of Muinora.

I mention all this, because Henderson—who now proceeded deliberately to light a cigarette—has moved among such surroundings all his life. It may help to explain him. At the moment he was lighting a cigarette in the dark—splash of match-light on one human face against the immensity of the night—and he had come to the conclusion that once he saw a man do a funny thing.

“ What did he do ? ” I asked. “ Forgot to draw his money on pay day ? ”

“ I ain't met *that* man yet,” observed Henderson, “ tho' I pictur' *you're* quite capable 'f doin' it—

quite capable. Yu forget most things, don't yu ? ”

“ Most things,” I agreed. “ Not *all* things though. Otherwise I might be holding down a decent job, instead of chasing round the Sierras with an old heathen like yourself. Proceed with your parable.”

“ It ain't a parable. It's a plain statement o' facts. It happened up in Sonora, which same is no country for poets. It happened way back in—in '93, I guess, I get a bit mixy in my dates sometimes—growin' old.

“ 'Y'ever hear o' Encinillas—'bout five miles acrost from the Chihuahua state bound'ry in Distrito Montezuma, Sonora ? It's a sure tough camp—always was ; an' it was tougher then, before the railroad come to Casas Grandes. It's a *new* camp ; for I discovered it.”

“ Come now, Henderson ! A drop of whisky to calm your mind ? I've never been to Encinillas myself ; but I know the fellow who *did* discover the mine well enough by sight. Drives his own car in El Paso and he keeps race horses in Juarez.”

“ Shah ! ” grunted Henderson contemptuously. “ Yo're four generations later'n the actool fellow who jumped my claim. I get too bust to pay my taxes, an'—an', other things happens, so natch'lly the mine goes *caduca*—falls open to re-denouncement. Maybe when yu've lived long enough yu'll learn it's not the fellows as *make* the discoveries get to drive bubble waggons in El Paso. Yu ought to know that ; for weren't yu a kickin' to me how a fellow dies poor in London after he's struck a noo

brand o' poetry? Nobody takes the trouble to investigate close, till after he's croaked—*then* they find out maybe it'd paid better to get next to what he's doin' sooner—but it's too late. Now, that's the same in minin' an' ever'thing else."

"Publishers are swine," I remarked.

"No they ain't," continued Henderson oratorically—now well astride his philosophical hobby—"leastways not more'n the next man. Listen to me. I figure how literature an' prospectin' has a kinder affinity, both them callin's bein' apparently persecuted by fellows like yu an' me with a disinclination to steady work. Yo're poet friend, deceased, gambles on he's struck a noo brand o' po'try—'riginality?—s'pose that's the word—*yu* oughter know. Ain't that just the same's findin' a mine?"

"Yu can take it from me that ninety-nine per cent o' the prawspectors in this country was born dam' liars an' ain't been able to shake the habit since. 'Bout eighty per cent o' what's left is got no sense—ain't got sense enough even to take a fair sample—an' can't tell a good prawspect frum an indifferent goat ranch. Result is that when *I* blow in—needin' capital to develop—folks is so fed up they just say, 'Oh hell! Here's another o' them blame prawspectors. Quick! Out by the back door before he sees us!' Them 'sure-'nough-greatest-mine-ever-was' bunch has got 'em so natch'lly peevish it takes a heap of encouragement to make 'em risk even a little money; an' then, chances is, they don't risk enough; an' that, o' course, makes 'em peevisher'n ever. I figure it's the same in literature an' ever'thing else."

“ Supposing the man you went to set himself up as a person that knew something about it ? ” I grumbled.

“ If he knows anythin’ at all he’ll know yu can’t tell much about a noo discovery till yu’ve spent money an’ opened it up a bit. Yu can tell a little—but not much. Stakin’ fellow’s like me is no job for the cold-feet brigade, an’ I tell ’em so.”

“ By the way,” I remarked, “ this was to be a plain tale and no parable. The poet’s dead—no amount of talk can ever raise him again. Proceed to the funny thing you saw the fellow do.”

The working of Henderson’s mind is as the grinding of the mills of God. He lit another cigarette and drew a blanket over his shoulders. Then he spat in the fire.

“ I’m comin’ to *that*,” he said deliberately. “ When yu’re as old’s I am maybe yu’ll have learned patience—an’ to take note when a fellow tells yu things that is so. I come to Encinillas in ’93—or maybe ’92—I forget—walkin’ weary up the trail behind a burro ; *an’* I discover the Encinillas Mine.

“ It’s funny lookin’ ore—the Encinillas ore—more like dyke rock to look at than anythin’ else I ever see. But I seen the ‘ lead ’ ; an’ I says, ‘ I got a hunch Gawd puts mineral in this here rock—what looks so strange—when He jines up the world.’ So I go to trenchin’, an’ cuttin’ samples along the outcrop ; an’ then I hike over by Casas Grandes to Chihuahua—afoot an’ drivin’ the burro.<sup>1</sup>

“ I ain’t got no money, nor nothin’—just a little grub an’ the burro—so when I get to Chihuahua I

<sup>1</sup> Donkey.



sell the burro ; an' I look about for a man what'll take a chanst on my noo mine.

" A fellow that's holdin' down a seat on the *plaza*—broke—puts me next to another fellow that has an office on Calle Libertad. I thank him, an' stand him a breakfast for th' information ; an' then I blow in on the other fellow with my samples.

Good mawnin', says Mister Man. I guess he's a Johnny Bull by his brass collar ' Henglish h'airs,' an' the fancy ridin' pants—he'd been out on the trail hisse'f it'd seem—— "

" All right, Henderson, I can imagine that part."

" ' Good mawnin, me good fella,' he says." Henderson assumed the extraordinary throaty articulation which he fondly believes to be the " English h'accent." " ' Wat kin ai dew for yew, bai Jove, dontcherknow.' ' I ain't so certain,' I says, ' as you can do anythin'. I'm a prawspector.' ' Saow ai perceive,' says Mister Man, lookin' like he's swallered his glass eye.

" ' But I ain't a god dam' liar,' I says, ' on which pre-mises we will begin negotiatin'. In these here sample sacks, which you see before you, I hev sundry samples of ore from a lead that I encounters in the course o' my preambulations.' ' Well, turn 'em out,' he says. ' This is me busy day.' Henderson began to forget to put in the English accent at this point. " ' Turn 'em out,' he says, ' an' let's have a look at 'em.' ' Which,' I says, ' not bein' a god dam' liar, I ain't goin' so far as to say that this yere ore is *good* ore, nor that the lead wharfrom I cuts them samples is the noo Dos Estrellas ; but I aim to pint out my privit opinion—which same is

that so far as I know from jedgin' what I hev seen—Gawd maybe put ore in that lead. Mister Man begins to turn the samples out hisse'f——' ”

“ I don't blame him,” I interrupted.

“ Then he begins to laugh,” resumed the unruffled Henderson. “ ‘ I've a pretty wide experience,’ he says, ‘ but I guess you've a wider if you can tell me this stuff'll pay. Why,’ he says, ‘ that ain't nothin' but ornery dyke rock ! ’ ‘ Which,’ I says, ‘ is how it appears to me ; but after studyin' the ways o' Gawd in the Sierras since afore yu was born ’—he was a young fellow—‘ I comes to the conclusion that maybe that there dyke rock is mineralized. So if yu figure on takin' a chance——’

Oh, pshaw ! ’ he says, sharp like. ‘ Me good fellow, yu'd oughter kno' better'n that. Now *here's* some-thin' more like,’ he says.

“ ‘ It's off'n another vein,’ I tell him. ‘ I 'low it don't run.’ ‘ I can't deal,’ says Mister Man. ‘ It's no use talkin'. But, seein' yo're disappointed,’ he says—‘ I ain't,’ I says—‘ I'll have the samples run for you in me own assay office,’ he says. ‘ Just to show I'm right,’ he says. ‘ I ain't sayin' yo're *not* right,’ I tell him again, ‘ but maybe yo're wrong. An' I thank yu.’

“ Well,” continued Henderson, “ he sends for me next day, an' I come up to his office, an' he shows me the results o' the assays. They run about how I'd guessed they'd run—some tol'ble good ; others not. I was right about the stuff from the other vein what he'd looked at last. It run a trace o' silver, an' no gold. Mister Man seems kinder stand-offish.

“ ‘ Well,’ he says, ‘ me good man, I've a kinder blawsted hunch you put one over me yesterday.

Seems yo're—aw—dyke is kinder out o' th' ordinary. Case o' secondary enrichment, I s'pose,' he says—an' he looks at me hard. 'If yu mean I salted them samples,' I says, 'yu're off yo're base. Freely an' frankly—I done nothin' o' the sort.' 'Oh no!' he says, shocked like. I seen he means 'Oh yes.' 'If I'd gone to salt them,' I says, 'I'd have shorely run the values up higher. If yu want to come in on this now's yo're time; an' the terms is largely up to yu. I want that land denounced, an' I want enough o' a grubstake to do some devel'pment—to see whether she's li'ble to improve in depth.' 'Good mawnin',' he says, pretty sharp. I seen he's made up his mind I *had* salted them samples; so I come away."

Henderson made such a long pause that I thought we had come to the end of the tale; but apparently not. After perhaps five minutes of profound meditation he spread his horny hands to the fire and resumed his dreary narrative.

"S'pose yu think that's the on'y man I go to? Why no! I go to twenty more—takin' along the assay paper the Britisher's give me. It gets to be quite a joke around town—me an' my samples."

"And did you find anybody to back you?" I asked. It did not look very likely that he *had*, considering his business methods.

"Sure!" said Henderson. "That's what I aimed to tell ye about from the beginnin'. Fellow called Le Noir gets an interest in my discovery, an' another fellow called Carpenter—'yever hear tell o' them two boys?"

"Not I!"

"Well, yu can find all about 'em up aroun'

Encinillas, or Casas Grandes for that matter. Not to say exactly as how they *live* there; but that's the place to go look for them.

' Them two boys hadn't got much cash to spare; but we fix it the way they're comin' out with me themse'ves—an' we're all to work as pardners, an' they'll pay for the denouncement taxes, an' grub, an' minin' supplies an' so forth—just enough to develop the Encinillas. I told 'em how I wasn't *promisin'* nothin', an' how it's a dreary place to live—but they guessed they was game.

" Trouble with most young fellows is they frequent got another guess comin'—an' don't know it. Le Noir an' Carpenter ain't been long in the country, it develops subsequent, an' they've been readin' up about the wild, free life o' the minin' camp. Maybe *yu've* noticed the fellows come off shift in some o' them wild-free camps, an' sit down on the doorstep wonderin' what in hell they're to do with themse'ves till it's time to go to work again. I guess it takes just about a month o' that to convince the average tenderfoot how the wild, free life o' a cannin' factory 's the thing after all. I'd learned patience by this time; an' Le Noir maybe he'd 'a learned too if Carpenter 'd give him time. I guess Carpenter's the cause o' all the trouble.

" I guess it's Carpenter's stomach's weak, or suthin'—*frijoles* an' bacon don't agree with him. He's a kind o' weak constituted fellow; but Le Noir's one o' the strongest men I ever see. Maybe that'll account for the funny thing I'm goin' to tell ye about.

" We get on well enough for the first month,

We've got a mule, an' a hawss; an' we pack supplies out over the mountains from Casas Grandes. We'd sunk the shaft down maybe twenty feet on the vein, an' she didn't seem to improve much. Carpenter begins to get peevish. He says he can't eat the food, an' it ain't right to be pickin' on him for not doin' his share o' work when he's sick. Nobody *was* pickin' on him. I tell him he'd better take the rifle an' have a day 'r two up among the tall timber—up in the mountains—an' shoot a deer. That'd have he'ped him a heap—but Carpenter 'lows he's too sick to go on no huntin' trip. *We* tell him all right—to please hisse'f. Another month goes by, an' we've but sunk the shaft maybe ten feet more. That rock's the hardest rock I ever see.

“ Le Noir—who's a big, strong fellow—he takes two ore sacks one day, an' fills 'em full, an' totes 'em on his back from the shaft to the tent we have—that'd be about three hundred yards up hill. I guess he just did that for fun—to show how strong he was—but Carpenter he takes it as a personal matter. He's grievin' all that week over how Le Noir done that as a hint to him to get out—figurin' he's tryin' to show Carpenter's not up to the work. He was a hard man to live with—Carpenter—an' Le Noir never meant no harm.

“ Then Carpenter starts in pickin' on Le Noir about the quantity he eats. Le Noir says thank Gawd he's got a healthy appetite, an' Carpenter bounces out'n the tent spittin' like an angry bobcat. I luffed the day Le Noir carr'd them sacks up the hill; but now I spoke to him. I says: ‘ Le Noir,’ I says, ‘ I ain't no alarmist; but that man's

gettin' dangerous. I'd hate to have to stop work now, but either it's that or else one of yu two'd better get out o' here fer a spell.' It was a lonesome place then—Encinillas—before the mine gets boomed. There was a bit o' a *pueblo* three miles down the creek, but no other white men near—jest red rocks, an *mezquital* an' white oak. The natives what lived in the *pueblo* was quiet, innercent folks *then*; an' they never gets drunk, nor offers to molest us any.

“ ‘ Oh, pshaw ! ’ says Le Noir, after I warn him. ‘ After all the time an' money I've spent, d'ye suppose I'm a goin' to get run out by a little sawn-off scoundrel like that ? Oh *hell* ! ’ he says. ‘ I don't want to butt in on yo're privit affairs, ’ I says, ‘ but I'm just warnin' ye. I sure hate to hev trouble in camp ; an' yu can take it f'um me, boy, there ain't no silver what's worth a man's life. ’

“ Le Noir laffs an' giggles fit to bust. ‘ *I ain't* goin' to kill Carpenter, whatever happens, ’ says he. ‘ Give yu my word on that, ’ he says. He was a big, strong fellow ; an' bold. I liked that boy a heap. ‘ I take yo're word, ’ I says ; an' we let it go at that.

“ Now don't yu go to beleave Gawd don't take a hand somewhere in any game that's goin'. I'm an old man, an' have travelled far ; an' maybe yu think I'm nothin' but an old — — prawspector that's most fergot how to talk even—let alone think. Maybe yu're right—I ain't promisin' nothin'—but agen maybe yu're wrong.

“ What I means to imply is that, five days later, a rancher fellow comes ridin' down the trail, when I've gone down to the crick for water.

“ ‘ *Buenas tardes,* ’ he says, an’ I seen to my ser-  
prise it’s a fellow called Ridolfo Peña—(I am well  
aware that your Spanish book spells this name  
“ Rodolfo, ” but Henderson did not learn his  
Spanish from books)—“ what I’d known years  
before. He was a Yaqui Indian—so it’d be nat’ral  
for him to be livin’ thereabout—an’ he was pretty  
well fixed for an Indian. ‘ *Buena tarde,* Ridolfo, ’ I  
says. ‘ Hell ! ’ I says. ‘ Yo’re a nice fello’ to be  
ridin’ by with no more’n a “ good afternoon ” for  
yo’re old *amigo.* ’ ”

“ Is a Yaqui Indian an act of God ! ” I inquired  
peevishly. The “ funny thing ” seemed as remote  
as ever, and I wanted to turn in.

“ Maybe I’ll learn *you* patience too, ” said Hender-  
son mildly, but firmly. “ This here Ridolfo climbs  
down f’um his hawss—when he sees it’s *me*—an’ he  
embraces me—— ”

“ And you have a drink. ”

“ That was right smart of yu to guess that. ”

I heard the old man chuckling in the gloom beyond  
the dying embers, and I had now perforce to wait  
until he had his laugh out.

“ Go on, ” I said finally. “ Time is money. ”

“ Not for me, ” quoth Henderson. “ *Poquito a  
poco, hilaba la vieja el copo* ”—Little by little, the  
old woman spun the snowflake. “ To come to the  
p’int briefly, Ridolfo says *yes*—he *will* come on up  
to the tent an’ have another one on me. I had a  
small bottle o’ rye hid away, which same was better’n  
his *sotol* he was carry’n. ‘ What you doin’ here,  
Ridolfo ? ’ I ask him as we strolls up. ‘ I ? ’ says  
Ridolfo. ‘ Why, ’ he says, ‘ I aim to raise a little  
corn, an’ a little *frijol*—what Gawd gives us—*Ojala*

He sends rain soon '—he says—' an' I got a few head o' cattle an' mewels, an' I marries the *jefe politico's* daughter. I'm a bit well knowed hereabouts,' he says, 'so maybe I kin he'p yu if yo're minin' here,' he says.

“ ‘ Maybe yu can, Ridolfo,’ I tell him ; an’ then I see Le Noir comin’ up the other way from the mine. ‘ That’s one o’ my pardners,’ I says. ‘ The other one’s lyin’ down inside—he’s sick.’ Le Noir jest glances at Ridolfo, an’ goes on to the door of the tent. Somethin’s got his goat, seemin’ly, an’ he’s as mad as he can be. I see him a cussin’ under his breath, an’ I hoped Ridolfo don’t think he’s cussin’ at *him*. I was ’bout three yards back o’ Le Noir when he opens the tent’s fly an’ looks in. I hear Carpenter say suthin’ I don’t quite catch.

“ ‘ Oh, you go ——— you ——— ———,’ says Le Noir, holdin’ on by the flaps o’ the fly with both hands an’ leanin’ in to the tent. He was ha’f laffin’ as he says it.

“ I read in a book the other day ’bout two fellows who gets to quar’lin’, an’ gets to shootin’. I guess the fellow who wrote that never seen real trouble, the way he had it put down. There ain’t much excitement in real trouble—leastways there wasn’t in Sonora in the days wharof I’m tellin’ ye. Le Noir says—— ”

“ You needn’t repeat it,” I broke in hastily.

“ Well, them’s his words, not mine. Then Carpenter gives a scream inside the tent, and Le Noir jumps back like he’s scared sudden. I notes how he ain’t got his gun on ; an’ I also notes how Ridolfo—who’s raised in them parts—is on his belly



by this time behind a rock. I'm slower'n a terrapin—as ye know—so I just stand there gappin'—an' 'Bang!' goes Carpenter's pistol.

"Le Noir stiffens, an' I see he's cut. He ain't had time to dodge clear. 'Christ!' says Carpenter inside, bein' frightened now at what he's done.

"Le Noir sort o' ha'f turns, an' looks at me blind like. I seen he was cut bad—an' I was wantin' to catch the boy—but I'm slow, slow. 'Remember yo're promises,' I tell him; for he's lookin' like he's met big trouble somewhere.

"Le Noir don't answer. He walks over to me; he pulls the gun out o' *my* scabbard; he shoots twicet through the wall o' the tent; an' he drops dead."

"Did he get Carpenter?" I asked presently. I had been trying to piece together the picture; the barren, rocky hill-side with the blue Sierra for background; old Henderson, the tent, the *ranchero*; and dead Le Noir with the reeking pistol in his hand.

"He sure did," said Henderson. "In the head—both times. That's where Ridolfo becomes an Act o' God. If he'd not been there—him havin' political pull owin' to his marriage—I'd ha' got the reputation o' havin' murdered them two boys. You see, Carpenter's shot plumb through the forehead, an' Le Noir's shot through the heart——"

"Le Noir—impossible, Henderson! You told me he walked back three paces after he was struck!"

"An' pulls the gun out o' my scabbard. I told yu he was a strong man. D'you suppose now that boy knew what he was a doin'? I guess not! He'd

never ha' broke his promise to me that a-way. He kills Carpenter, the way Gawd meant, after he's dead.

"Anyhow," continued Henderson, "that broke up my dealin's with the Encinillas. I got out o' there quick, an' Ridolfo fixed the *jefe* an' stopped folk from suspicioning there'd been foul play—but I was sicker'n a dawg; for I liked Le Noir.

"I forget the name o' the fellow that took up the mine—but either he or the fellow he sells out to sells it agen to another man, an' *he* runs into *bonanza* an' sells to the fellow I'd first went to in Chihuahua for two hundred thousand pesos; an' the fellow in Chihuahua sells to the man that drives the bubble waggon in El Paso for three hundred thousand—so he makes a good thing outen it. I been hikin' up an' down ever since, observin' the ways o' Gawd in the High Sierras, *an'* I have discovered other mines—but none like Encinillas.

"Now I was thinkin'," concluded Henderson, "that maybe yu could turn that funny thing I seen Le Noir do at Encinillas into a story. Maybe they'd be inclined to disbelieve ye; but yu just keep yo're temper, an' tell 'em how all they've got to do is to go to Casas Grandes. There's men there what's above lyin' for the fun o' the thing. Tell 'em to ask them men if it ain't so a fellow shot another fellow out west o' that burg, after the fellow was dead himse'f. It would be about '92 or '93—I forget the year—one year's pretty much like another to me. If yu like to go out to the mine yu can see the two graves, alongside o' the grave o' another man what died later—fell down an' broke

his neck when he was drunk. I been there since, once, to see Le Noir's grave."

. . . . .

Maybe I have salted the sample a bit—I ain't promisin'—but doubters can always go to Casas Grandes to inquire.



# THE FAITH OF HENDERSON

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IT was no extraordinary thing to me, having been for years a nomad of the Mexican Sierras, that an old and dissolute prospector like Henderson should become theological in the dawn as he raked together the ashes of last night's fire.

"Havin' constructed," said he, "such diverse things as that"—he nodded to where Venus hung, a ball of brilliant flame, in the crystal air—"the timber, hawses, coffee, whisky, an' even the native Greaser, is it nateral ter suppose Gawd takes no interest? Even," he continued, as the fresh chips of tarry pine crackled into life, and a reek of wood smoke permeated the sharp, resinous twilight of early morning, "when one's makin' a damn jackass of onese'f one takes interest in the product."

"You talk in terms of the finite," I remonstrated.

"And you in terms o' the tenderfoot. I say what I know. You think I ain't nothin' but an old —— of a prawspector that's laid around the mountains till he's clean daffy, an' you think how whisky an' women's the only two subjects engrosses the reasonin' functions o' my *cabeza*. Maybe yo're partly right—I ain't sayin' I'm free from carnal yearnin's toward them things—but a man can't hit the trail as often an' as far as I've done an' not learn a bit. I thinks detached about Gawd, an' I see how He won't stand for some things."

“ Such as — ? ” I inquired.

“ Such as blasphemy an’ deliberit wrongdoin’.”

“ Both of which you indulge in freely.”

“ I’ll take my chances. Actin’ foolish and actin’ mean is two different things. It ain’t *what* a man does, but *why* he does it, that counts.”

“ Not in a court of law,” I laughed.

Henderson spat a few lurid remarks and reached for the bacon.

“ It’s the continued existence o’ them lawyers,” he said, “ keeps me believin’ in a personal Devil. You don’t *get* me at all. What I mean is the fellow who sets himse’f to buck Gawd is due to get broke. You says ‘Be damn ! There ain’t no Gawd,’ and pretty *pronto* you find yorese’f thrown, an’ thrown hard ; but admittin’ there’s some one holdin’ the reins you find He makes allowance for nateral foolishness. Get that ? ”

“ I thought I owed you some explanation,” he continued, “ why I was so set on not goin’ near that Rey de los Indios mine. There’s a man there is what I calls deliberit bad. Figurin’ the things Travers has done in the last forty year, I comes to the conclusion he’s about reached the limit ; but figurin’ on the—what’s the word that Britisher used—personal factor, I felt a bit uncertain there mightn’t be trouble if me and Travers met. Some men yaps everlastin’ about their wrongs and grievances, an’ how they aims to take their vengeance, but I’ve grown out of that.”

“ You live,” I summarized, “ in joyful anticipation of seeing him soaked for you by Divine wrath.”

“ Oh, pshaw ! What d’ye take me for ? I’m an old man. I just want not to be bothered. I main-



tains, however, things don't happen by accident. Bet you five dollars I prove it before we hit town—seein' you're good enough to laff at what I'm tellin' ye."

"What did Travers do to you?" I inquired.

Henderson's face clouded.

"He did me dirt," he commented briefly. "Do you take my bet?"

I said I would on general principles. Picking a rope from the grass, my partner lurched off among the pine trunks to round up the horses. Presently the scandalized welkin heard how our vagarious pack mule had taken himself off—heaven knows where—in the night.

"I guess I'd better go hunt the son of a gun myse'f," said Henderson, returning. "I'll be back some time next week at the latest, so you can amoose yourse'f in the meantime. So long!"

As such occurrences are common, I had long learned the value of philosophical resignation. I left José, the *mozo*, to wash the dishes and stretched out under a tree to wait for the return of the wanderer.

I think I must have fallen asleep, for when I was aroused by the patter of hoofs the sun was a good three hours above the horizon. My first, and most natural, supposition was that my partner had found the missing mule, but José's face showed me that I was mistaken. He was looking in the opposite direction to the route taken by Henderson, and his features were puckered in a scowl of sheer cold-blooded, vindictive hatred.

"*Quien viene?*" I inquired in some surprise.

The scowl vanished at the sound of my voice, but his tone was sullen as he laconically answered:

“ Travers.”

I admit I was startled. I knew Henderson well enough to expect trouble should he return before I could get rid of the company of the man who had done him “ dirt,” my faith in the effectiveness of his belief as a controlling force being *nil*. Before I could form a plan of action, however, the manager of the Rey de los Indios had pulled up his horse—he rode alone, but, unlike young Lochinvar, far from unarmed, carrying the usual allowance of two “ forty-fives ”—and stood before me.

He was a gross, fleshy individual with a wavering eye, but beneath the patent trade marks of dissipation, one could still trace the remnants of superficial good looks. His worst characteristics were a chronic sneer and an irritating suggestion of bravado which radiated from his personality and tinged his every sentence.

“ Late getting a start on, ain’t ye ? ” he asked.

“ One of our animals got adrift in the night, and my partner is off hunting for it.”

“ Seems ye’d let your *mozo* do that—it’s his job,” grunted Mr. Travers. “ And you, José,” he continued to the boy, “ attend to my horse.”

“ This *señor* is my *patron* now,” answered the boy with courteous discourtesy, and displaying not the slightest intention of obeying the order.

“ Loosen the girths of the horse and walk it till it cools off,” I ordered him.

He rose at once, and Travers subsided, evidently appreciating the Mexican’s argument, little as he relished the snub.

“ Sassy son of a gun,” he grumbled. “ Used to work for me till he gets fresh about not wantin’ his

sister to do the cookin' any more. Guess he learned who was boss that time though."

"I find him willing enough," I said. I was more interested in trying to evolve some scheme to keep Henderson from appearing suddenly on the scene than in José and his sister; though I venture to believe José was amply justified in his objections. Travers had a reputation in the neighbourhood which stank to heaven. "I suppose you are trying to reach the railroad to-night," I suggested, hoping against hope he would say he was.

"Oh, no. I ain't hurryin' any."

I groaned. Unless the mule had spent the night in a bee-line cross country gallop Henderson's return could not be long delayed. Scheme after scheme I evolved and discarded. Finally I decided it must be *Kismet* and resigned myself to expect the worst.

"By the way," said Travers, breaking a silence which had lasted at least half an hour and during which I had felt most unutterably ill at ease, "who is your partner?"

A new hope sprang scintillating into my weary brain. "Perhaps," thought I, "like most braggarts, the man is a coward at heart." I told him, and my heart leaped, for he started visibly.

"What sort of lookin' fellow is he?" he asked.

"Short and stout. Grey eyes and a red moustache."

My gleam of hope went out like a shuttered lamp, for he laughed.

"Guess I know him," he remarked. "He'll be glad to see an old friend. I'll wait."

In the course of the next half-hour I passed from

a state of hoping for Henderson's non-arrival to a despairful desire to see him back and know the worst. During this period Travers regaled me with anecdotes selected from his past life, and I perceived that my partner had made no misstatement when he described him as being "deliberit bad." A more depressing recital of commonplace villiany may I never have to suffer. His voice droned on from one unsavoury tale to another as if it would never cease; the tethered beasts snorted in fitful impatience, the fire died to a faint glow, but still no sign of mule or man.

"Maybe he heard I was here," remarked the stranger at last. I had snapped the case of my watch for the tenth or twelfth time, and my impatience must have become obvious even to his self-centred mind.

"He ain't no *valiente*—Hen," he added, with his beastly sneer heavy on his features. "Now I come to think of it, there *was* a little matter between us——"

"*Ya vienne—la mula,*" announced José.

"An' blame my cats if there ain't ol' Hen a-followin'," growled Travers, as the missing animal cantered into the open.

In the distance I saw Henderson pause and shade his eyes with one hand.

"Seems kinder shy, don't he?" snarled Travers. His face had become even more sinister than Providence planned it in the first instance, and it took no keen perception on my part to see there *was* trouble afoot. He moved over to his horse and placed himself so that the beast stood between him and my partner—now approaching at a slow walk.

“ Hello, Hen ! ” he wheezed with assumed jocularity.

“ Hello, Bill ! ” said Henderson. His tone was infinitely gentle, but his steady grey eye never left the other’s face. “ I was hopin’ not to meet you.”

Travers laughed—a short, barking yap of a laugh.

“ I thought you seemed kinder shy. Why, there ain’t nothin’ to fear, Hen. I ain’t goin’ to hurt ye.”

“ I guess not,” replied Henderson broodingly. “ Wouldn’t make a heap o’ difference if ye did figure that way.”

“ Is that so ? ” queried Travers, still strategically keeping his steed between himself and Henderson.

“ Well, that’s as may be. There’s my hand—shake.”

Henderson shook—his head. Travers’s face became bloated. The insult is a grievous one.

“ They tell me yo’re married to a Chicago girl now, Bill,” meditatively announced Henderson.

“ What th’ hell’s that to you ? Shake, I say ! ”

“ So Mary’s dead ? ” persisted my partner.

“ That’s so. Anything else ye’d like to know ? ”

“ You lie ! ” said Henderson with terrifying calm.

“ Henderson ! ” I called sharply.

“ Sir ? ” he answered. This is the only time I ever knew Henderson to address me as “ Sir.”

“ I’d like to remind you that this is my camp.”

“ I ain’t forgettin’ it.”

“ But you’re well on the way to. Furthermore, I have an idea you were laying me a bet—— ”

“ That’s so,” he assented, adding with amazing simplicity and earnestness, “ Gawd’ll pay you, Bill. He don’t stand for no such conduct as yours.”

High and mocking came the laughter of Travers.

"Gawd might overlook the fact ye can't hit a sittin' burro at two yards' range," he cackled.

"That's true," assented Henderson cheerfully. "I ain't much of a shot."

"Well, look here, Mister Hank Henderson"—this with a sudden gush of uncontrolled fury—"you called me a liar a minute agone."

"I called you what you are. You're worse things than that, Bill, only I ain't sed them yet."

I sat paralysed with funk. Travers's face turned an ugly bluish tint, then flushed to crimson.

"You —— ——, you'll take that back," he gasped.

"Bill Travers, you hound"—I wish cold type could reproduce half the caressing sound he gave the insulting word—"you know me better than that. Let me pass. I ain't lookin' for no trouble with you."

"You mayn't be lookin', but you shore finds it," screamed Travers. "Apologize—by God!—or——"

I was on my feet as his hand went to his belt, but I was too late. I remember the blue flash of a pistol barrel—two sharp clicks and a deafening report. With singing ears I turned away in an unconscious effort to avoid the full horror of the tragedy.

As I turned I heard the thud of a limp-falling body.

Then rage mastered fear. Shame overcame horror, and still moving on the spur of impulses outside my own volition I whirled on the aggressor and drew.

The "gun" fell unused from my hand. I could

hardly believe my eyes, but there before me I saw Henderson—Henderson sitting in the same attitude, as motionless as the gentle horse beneath him. He seemed unconscious of his near approach to death, his forehead was wrinkled with childish wonder, and at his horse's hoofs lay the body of his would-be slayer.

“ Did you ever,” he asked, apparently addressing himself to the horizon, “ know a ‘ forty-five ’ to miss fire twice runnin’ ? ”

“ I don't understand,” I gasped.

“ Travers's gun misses fire twicet.”

“ And you—— ? ”

“ Maybe I'd a shot if I'd tho't to, but I hadn't time.”

He drew his “ gun ” from the holster and handed it over. It held five rounds, and the hammer was snapped on an empty chamber, not on a spent cartridge.

A new terror seized me. In my excited state I half expected to find that Travers had been struck down by some miraculous agency outside human ken. But the shot ! I had certainly heard at least one !

My partner read my unspoken thought and smiled grimly. Following his gaze I saw a swift-running figure in blue overalls about a quarter of a mile up the trail.

It was José.

“ Let him go,” quoth Henderson. “ I guess he had his reasons. Unless yo're anxious to sample the interior of a Mexican jail, Us for the U.S.A. ? And I guess,” he added with a smile, “ I win that bet.”





## A WARM CORNER IN MEXICO



## A WARM CORNER IN MEXICO

IN the southern part of the state of Chihuahua, Mexico, lies a mining town called Parral. The railway mentioned runs north-west to south-east across the central tableland, from El Paso, Texas, to the City of Mexico. Half-way from Jiminez to El Paso—a total distance of close on four hundred miles—is Chihuahua, capital of the state; to the south lies Torreon, and ninety kilometers to the west on a spur track is Hidalgo del Parral.

The name Parral signifies a thicket of wild vines; but the vines were probably cleared away by the eager prospectors who flocked to the district in 1600. To-day the picturesque old city nestles in the tawny bosom of its native hills, the only touches of greenery, save during summer rains, being those bestowed by the cotton woods along the river bed and the groves of the public *plazas*.

Two years ago this city of some twelve or thirteen thousand inhabitants was one of the most alluring localities in the country. Although but a few hundred miles north of the Tropic of Cancer, latitude and altitude are so balanced as to result in the production of a climate little short of ideal, and at an elevation of between five and six thousand feet the domed belfries of the churches and the rugged crests of the everlasting hills swim in the sempiternal

sunshine which is Mexico. In those bygone days the visitor, roving the narrow tortuous streets, could not fail to note the unobtrusive little gendarme on each corner; nor could he go very far without running into the somnolent victims of the law, listlessly cleansing the highway of the litter of an unthinking population. It was not until police and prisoners had been swept away that one realized what these things stood for—so detached and dreamy and unpractical did they appear.

Parral claims that it was the last town to surrender to Diaz in 1876. In November, 1910, it was the first to rise against him. The rebels, on the latter occasion, were driven out of the city; but on the 20th of May the small Federal garrison withdrew, and the militant supporters of Madero were accorded an enthusiastic reception by a population which was—as the departing general bitterly remarked—“Maderist to the very dogs in the street.” From that day the change became apparent, and the state of affairs grew steadily worse until even the most enthusiastic began to comprehend that it is one thing to upset established order and quite another to re-establish order in its place.

Hopeful they, of course, continued. Nobody can accuse the citizens of the Latin Americans of pessimism, so long as present necessities are supplied; but the old sense of security was gone, and robbery and violence daily became more frequent as the criminal element realized the impotence of the new authorities to cope with it. Added to this was another serious danger: owing to an excess of idealism in the character of the new ruler the revolutionary troops were permitted to retain their arms, with

the idea that they would be available to assist the defeated regular army in maintaining order ; but with the actual result that many of them continued on a career of brigandage, making their excuse in local injustices which the new executive had not had the beginning of the time to remedy. The remainder, ill-disciplined and unruly, constituted a continual menace.

There was always the feeling, however, that this state of affairs might be only a transient after-effect of the short civil strife which drove Diaz from the country, leaving the presidential chair vacant for the victorious Madero, duly elected thereto in October, 1911. Hugging this hope, and stimulated by a rising silver market and a firm faith in the future of the district, the numerous foreign companies operating therein forged stolidly ahead with the work of developing mineral riches which three centuries of exploitation have left unexhausted. But the town was not the place it used to be, and its changed atmosphere was ominously suggestive of the disturbed political state.

Gone were the policemen with their blue uniforms, leather spats, and the white covered *képis* which contrasted so strongly with their round brown faces, gone was the sweeper-gang from the now refuse-littered streets, gone was the evening concert on the *plaza* of other days ; and, although the sun shone and the loafers loafed as of yore, smoking the omnipresent cigarette in every available patch of shade, in the faces, actions, and conversation of the more responsible minority was a vague unrest. One could not but feel the depressing presence of the ponderous " Query ? " hanging like a thunder-

cloud above the business prospects of the country.

In the early spring of 1912, the cloud burst ; and by March the country was seething anew with revolt.

The state of Chihuahua, according to the agreement which terminated the first revolution, had been garrisoned entirely with ex-revolutionary troops ; and the leaders of these, with one exception, turned over to the new revolutionary party. Juarez, the port of entry from El Paso, was the first to go, and Chihuahua City followed, the leadership of the mutineers being taken by Pascual Orozco, Madero's " general " in command.

The solitary loyalist was " Colonel " Francisco Villa, who at the commencement of the trouble found himself in the vicinity of Chihuahua with a small body of less than one hundred men. This man Villa was at one time a fairly prosperous freighter in a mountain village ; but a short and stirring drama, in which Villa himself, his sister, the *jefe politico*, or mayor, of the village, and the mayor's brother were the leading performers, left the *jefe* and the *jefe's* brother in the village cemetery and Villa a fugitive from the law—I will not say from justice. For seven years he throve as a highwayman.

No man, however, be his hardihood ever so great, cares to live a hunted life for ever ; and the outbreak of the Madero revolution provided opportunity for an honourable return to the paths of respectability. Accordingly, Francisco joined the then insurgents, and whatever his past career his worst enemies cannot deny the fidelity with which he has maintained his cause ever since.

The situation then was as follows : to the north the new revolutionary party—self-styled “ Orozquist ”—held the country from the United States line to Chihuahua, Villa having fallen back from that city after a skirmish with Orozco and established himself at a small town called Zaragoza. To the south the Federal soldiers were in possession of Torreon but unable to advance until reinforcements should arrive ; and half-way between the two sat Parral trying to make up its mind to which party it might belong. The result of this indecision was that the town found itself cut off from railway communication with either point ; for the bridges were burned to north and south, and neither side was likely to reopen the connections with a place of doubtful loyalty. To the south-west, in the wilder parts of the State of Durango, the country was in a ferment, and refugees from the mountain mining camps were coming in daily. A disturbing feature of this revolution was that the rights of foreigners were not being respected as in that previous.

What made it appear pretty certain that Parral was going to attract attention was that the general in command of the small garrison of irregulars had recently received a large consignment of new Mauser rifles and ammunition, towards which commodities both parties turned yearning eyes. The general, however, sat resolutely on the fence, and no man could predict on which side he would ultimately descend. Cut off from communication with the outside world the unfortunate foreigner struggled on with his business if he could, or closed down when compelled to, awaiting the issue with as much patience as he had to command. The native,

having less business interest and more patience, faced the situation with an enviable calm.

Presently, on the twelfth of March, was heard the voice of "Pancho" Villa crying in the wilderness. He was determined to uphold the constituted government, it was untrue he had any intent to loot such as his enemies gave him credit for—and would the general be so kind as to permit him to enter Parral and join forces?

The general at once commenced to fortify the Cerro de la Cruz—Hill of the Cross—overlooking the town. It became common knowledge that Villa was about to attack us with one hundred, with two hundred, with a thousand men; and that victory on his part would inevitably precede sack and outrage.

Despite rumour, however, Villa failed to materialize. As a matter of fact, his forces at the time did not amount to more than about seventy men; and the idea of his attempting to carry a position held by a garrison of three or four hundred was nothing short of preposterous. Instead, he repaired to a place known as La Boquilla—the dam site of the Mexican Northern Power Co. Ltd., which he held for three days, and whence he was only dislodged at the tail end of a stiff fight against a force numerically superior to his own in the proportion of three to one. The honours of the day were undoubtedly with "Pancho" in this battle; and the rebels began to perceive that issuing proclamations branding him as a bandit, and an enemy of society in general, did not get over the painful fact that the ex-highwayman was a stubborn and determined fighter and a strategist of no mean ability.



His position at the time was not an enviable one nevertheless. The only place where he could obtain the much needed supplies for his ragged band of fighters was Parral, and daily it became more evident that Parral was about to renounce allegiance to the government. The policy pursued by the general in charge left small room for doubt as to his intentions, and the opposing forces being already in loose contact around Jiminez a decision one way or another became inevitable.

On Monday, March the 25th, the general made up his mind. Apparently he sent a telegram to Orozco intimating his desire to ally himself with that gentleman but expressing doubt as to the temper of garrison and population; accordingly, he added a request for reinforcements sufficient to "hold" the town—and, unfortunately, some one saw the message.

Those who have not lived in such countries as Mexico can never properly grasp the full horror of the general's sin as it would appear to the people of the city. In the first place he had compromised both citizens and garrison—all local men—with the revolutionaries who would be prompt to avenge. But far worse was the second indictment: he had deliberately paved the way for the entry of armed parties from other parts of the country; strangers who would rejoice in the God-given opportunity to steal far from the cold eye of public opinion at home—perhaps even men from another state.

The train came in from Jiminez that fateful Monday, and with it came an Orozquist officer to confer with the general. Alas, the general was no longer master of his own destiny.

The officer also they cast into prison ; whilst the train steamed off again to burn the culverts to the east, heedless of the cries of the abandoned American conductor spurning the ballast in hopeless pursuit. And without more ado Francisco Villa entered Parral and bundled the defaulter overland to Mexico City under close arrest.

On Tuesday morning, despite the dark forebodings of the peaceful citizens, the town still looked much the same as ever. The dreadful bandit was in power ; but the only changes noticeable were that all bars were closed and a mushroom police force patrolled the streets of what the Americans designate a " dry town." What the new policemen lacked in uniformity of appearance they made up for in efficiency.

Yet the townspeople were far from happy. The men who caused the arrest of the general and invited Villa in were Parral men, and at the moment Parral lauded their action ; now that the deed was done it suddenly occurred to many worthy souls that his presence would inevitably result in a battle in the vicinity—if not in the town itself. Faces fell and the names of the popular heroes of yesterday became anathema with surprising suddenness.

But the wail that then arose was in depth, sincerity and whole-heartedness entirely eclipsed by that of a few days later, when Villa coolly levied a forced loan of £25,000. In his defence it is only fair to mention that a fifth of this sum was money deposited in the Banco Minero for the use of the other party, the balance being collected from the more wealthy residents. Furthermore, he probably understood that what he did not take Orozco would

should the town have to be abandoned. All the same, the proceeding was a little irregular.

Apart from this, his conduct and that of his men was irreproachable. No liquor was sold during the ten days he held the town, the place was well policed, and he even went to the length of outfitting part of his troops in some sort of uniform so as to be easily recognisable. Vigorous recruiting and the seizure of arms and ammunition before noticed quickly raised his force to four or five hundred well armed men ; and so strong did his position seem that many began to hope the rebels would find enough worry on their hands with the advancing Federals south of Jiminez.

Even when late in the evening of the following Monday—April 1st—scouts announced the presence of a party of the enemy to the south-east there were some who scoffed. Others openly stated that Villa would not attempt to hold the place, should an attack be delivered, having achieved the main object of his visit in raising the twenty-five thousand of which the extraction had caused so much pain.

This was on Monday evening. At 3.50 a.m. the prophets had their prophecies cast in their teeth by the staccato stutter of a Colt Rapid Fire on the Cerro de la Cruz. In sequence came the sudden crackle of the Mausers, the gruff voice of a field piece coughing in the raw morning air and the following blast of shrapnel. Three times the gun spoke and then fell silent ; but the rifles whacked and roared, now with the noise of breaking sticks, anon concerting in the crash of volleys, until the sunrise. Then the tumult gradually died to a dwindling sound of popping corks and the town

knew that the enemy had come and gone. "Pancho" was living up to his reputation.

It was a brisk little battle while it lasted. "General" Campa had come all the way from Jimenez to take Parral with nine hundred men; and had it not been for the steadiness of a small picked band in the parapets which crowned the Cerro—the same which were constructed to keep Villa out—it looks as if they might have accomplished their purpose. As it was, the mortar they brought to shell the town was rushed up too close to the breastworks; and although the defenders' Colt jammed at the first few shots the sweeping cross-fire of the Mausers laid the gunner desperately wounded across the trail. Two more of the crew were killed before they had time to reach cover. The remainder seem to have bolted.

Five hundred yards or so along the ridge is the *patio* of the Europa Mine; and here the attackers suffered even more. Four dead horses lay on the *patio* itself, the artillery officer was stretched stark and cold beside the abandoned shelters of the riflemen, and the declivity beyond was stained with maroon splashes where a fifth horse and two more wretched mortals had tried to drag shattered bodies beyond the zone of danger. A flanking party worked round from the last, and the Jimenez trail bore the evidences of the accuracy of their fire and the precipitate nature of the flight.

Besides eight or nine of the enemy who had passed beyond the marches of mundane politics twenty to thirty prisoners, many of them wounded, were gathered in and lodged in the municipal jail. A grand haul of ninety horses in good condition, a

Mondragon 80 mm. mountain mortar, with forty rounds of shrapnel, and several stacks of small arms added to the satisfaction of the victors. Fighting continued in a desultory manner during the day between the defenders and scattered bodies of the enemy who found their retreat cut off, but the deciding battle was really over by nine o'clock in the morning.

On Wednesday perfect peace reigned on all the country-side. Even the wind neglected to blow, and the throb of a mine pump on the flanks of the Cerro came so clearly on the still air that it sounded like the heart of Parral sleeping off the effects of Tuesday's debauch. That pump voiced the higher courage of the twentieth century, for the steady beat was heard during the lulls in the firing of the day before; the middle ages might rise around it in battle, murder and sudden death, but it had a job to do and, as the Yankee idiom runs, it was "on its way."

Thursday saw the curtain rung up on the last act. Early in the afternoon came the news that a train was approaching the station of Morita, just beyond the burned culverts; and those who had no better occupation climbed the Cerro to see. Far in the distance rose the smoke of two engines, and from these swarms of ant-like creatures radiated across the brown fields. Ten or fifteen men and the Colt manned the rifle-pits on the hill. About a hundred yards to the rear, on the highest point and behind the original parapet, were five or six more with the captured mortar. The rest of Villa's forces were disposed in advanced positions without the city.

For Mexican irregulars they were an unusually efficient looking group, this handful on the Cerro. The leaders were two American filibusters, both seasoned men ; the remainder were silent and free from the taint of bravo, which forms part of the stock-in-trade of the native " patriot." Some spoke a little English and one was an ex-soldier of the United States Army. This man had the appearance of a half-breed. They were men of the Border ; not perhaps desirable citizens in time of peace, but useful in these emergencies when properly led.

At half-past two, whilst the enemy were still deploying to the north, a sound of firing arose to eastward, gaining in volume so rapidly as to make it certain that a large force were attacking. Whilst the available field-glasses were turned in this direction the hills to the north-west joined the chorus, and we knew that Villa and the enemy were once more at grips.

About three o'clock the mortar came into play. The first shell threw a cloud of dust some two hundred yards beyond the advancing swarm ; the second and third burst in the air without apparent effect.

The fourth shot was a hit. Right in the centre leapt the red flash, and, when the dun cloud of the explosion had cleared, two black dots marked the centre of a widening circle as the rest scattered. Somebody had dropped a pebble, killed two of the ants, and the rest were running about in high excitement. Apparently some one whistled through his teeth and a little cloud jumped from the baked ground near the gun. The men took the hint,

glanced at the wisp of dust comprehendingly, and slipped under cover.

Closer and closer crept the noisy battle, but from the hill the only response was the intermittent bark of the field piece and the windy cadence of the missiles as they whirled over the heads of those in the advanced trenches ; although by now the low-voiced bullets were whispering on every side. Spectators began to leave and drop down into the town ; for it is not advisable that foreigners should be seen with those of either party during a revolution. A few allowed curiosity to overcome sense of responsibility and tarried over long, with the result that some remarkably fine sprinting was done in the neighbourhood of five o'clock. The hill-sides are very bare and the " Liberals " were shooting at anything moving.

As the last non-combatants dropped off the hill the rifles of the defenders woke to angry protest, but the intensity and volume of the answering fire omened badly. Out on the hills men were crouching and running from cover to cover, firing as occasion offered, but ever retreating before the overwhelming force of their opponents. Down in the town the watchers gathered anxiously in the portals of the houses, listening to the turmoil and nervously awaiting the issue. Nothing could be seen ; but nearer every minute drew the fight.

Presently came men on foot with rifles, travelling in little detached bunches of two or three. They were weary and sweating, but they pushed on at a half trot, looking neither to right nor left and wasting no breath in idle conversation. Only on the Cerro were the defending force holding their ground, and

the report was that Villa himself had left by this time.

Just at dark the last man wearing the red, white, and green ribbon of the government on his arm passed through, and the cry of "*Orozco*" was heard on the outskirts of the city. Just at dark a bugle sang and the Cerro de la Cruz became momentarily alive with running figures, as, at the eleventh hour, the gallant few on top abandoned the hopeless defence. Too late to get clear away, they were forced to head into the town, losing their gun and horses, but not, as the sequel shows, their determination to inflict the maximum of harm on the enemy before quitting the struggle.

Down into the streets poured a rabble of two thousand maddened and, in most cases, intoxicated men. They had suffered in the attack and all the innate vindictiveness of Indian blood came to the surface. As the first rush passed the portal of a house at the end of San Francisco Street, a stupid servant opened the door and looked out. His red shirt caught the eyes of the oncoming rebels and without hesitation they opened fire on him as they ran. This idiot immediately darted outside and fled, and the owner had to run out to close his door under a heavy fire. No questions were asked and only the mad impulses of drink-crazed minds were obeyed. This may sound strange, but it is undeniable that many of the rebels came into town drunk. They must have adopted this means to spur their faltering courage.

Two natives of good family who were looked upon as men of some position were dragged from their home and brutally murdered. Both were of blame-



less character and, as a matter of fact, were supposed to be rather in favour of Orozco. How many innocent persons of humbler station perished in the streets it is impossible to say.

The clangour and turmoil were appalling. Guns had been brought into the city and were busy shelling the vacated Cerro ; and to these were added the noise of dynamite as the " patriots " located the banks, and the jangle of the Cathedral bells. Shops were looted without regard to the nationality of the owners, and for a time the foreigners stood in grave danger of a massacre. This was averted, in all probability, by the superior attractions afforded by the looting, always bearing in mind that the " Gringos " had a certain amount of arms and ammunition and might turn nasty should one carry the fun to the point of cutting throats.

In the midst of this excitement a damper was cast on the proceedings by the discovery that the pestilential Cerro men were still in the town. The first intimation was a hail of lead from housetops in the centre, and not till quite a few had fallen did the victors succeed in dislodging them. No fair-minded person can blame the plucky Maderists for continuing the fight, yet their so doing was unfortunate for the townspeople ; for the Liberals became alarmed and took to shooting into any house they imagined might shelter the enemy. In one case a distracted citizen sought the leader of this mob and prayed that he might have a guard to protect his home and family. He was detailed one drunken peon whose first act on reaching the house was to squib off his rifle in the air. In a minute the street front was riddled ; and the family, accompanied by the now

thoroughly scared sentry, had to escape over the roofs of the houses.

Gradually, however, the noise diminished, and presently occasional scattered shots only showed where some wandering "drunk" was celebrating in the usual manner. There were also cases of exasperated officers shooting their own men for attempting to break into liquor selling establishments to obtain fresh supplies. The looting continued nevertheless, and all night long watchers at the shutters of the houses saw men with rifles in their hands and bundles of merchandise on their backs staggering along the streets. Both electric light and the telephone service kept going, for which not a little honour is due to the employés of the company.

Mercaderes Street and the thoroughfares which lead to the main *plaza* of Parral as they appeared on the morning of Friday, April the 5th, afforded a remarkable contrast to the eyes of one who had known them in the halcyon days of yore. Where had been the show windows of the merchants nothing met the eye but blank spaces roughly shuttered with boards, the powdered fragments of plate-glass and the litter of wrapping paper and cardboard boxes strewing the pavement bearing silent witness to the respect which the flags of Spain, of Germany and of the United States had engendered. That no British place of business was touched was due to the non-existence of such. The only Union Flag in the town floated over a private residence, and a hot discussion as to its significance took place on the doorstep. One speaker proclaimed it a tricolour and consequently a sure sign that Maderists

were hiding within—the logic of supposing they would hang their colours over their place of concealment would present no obstacles to the peon—but another, better informed, explained that the banner appertained to “some red Africans of the south,” and having recollected that green and not blue was the third colour of their own national emblem, neither was it “rayed,” the meeting broke up.

Along the street, some mounted and some on foot, drifted the amazing soldiers of the revolution. The majority seemed to be more or less drunk still, and strangers walked abroad with their lives in their hands. One American was shot and severely wounded by some lunatic and more than one was threatened. It developed that the invaders were possessed of the notion that the foreigners had been helping Villa and they felt vicious in consequence. The general in command was angry and uneasy at the extent of the damage done, seemed inclined to saddle the blame on others if possible, and so did nothing to dispel the idea. In fact, an attempt was made to coerce us into giving up arms. The firmness and diplomacy of the American Consular Agent averted this.

About nine or ten o'clock a diversion was caused. A burst of musketry in the centre of the town announced that a few of the defenders of the Cerro were still with us and were making their presence obnoxiously felt. The excitement was tremendous for a time; but the stubborn band finally retired under cover of their own fire, and the government's withdrawal from the city was at last completed.

The fighting now definitely over, a slightly better

order was gradually established. The majority of the invaders—and a handsome bunch of scallywags they were—were shipped off out of the way. Affairs seemed to be taking a critical turn at Jiminez and men were needed to take part in the expected battle. Artillery which had been brought in during, and immediately after, the storm was shipped back, and only a moderate-sized garrison was left.

There seemed to be no inclination to pursue Villa.

On Sunday, April the 7th, one of the American *filobusteros* who had helped to hold the Cerro was discovered concealed in a private house. The general took a chance with Washington, and on Tuesday morning the prisoner was shot despite the efforts of his consul who worked untiringly to convince the savage general that the man was at least entitled to treatment in accordance with the usages of civilized warfare. His comrade, who likewise was concealed in the town, made his escape disguised in woman's clothes, and after walking three days across country without food and with three broken ribs he finally reached a place of safety.

Most of the business normally carried on in the town naturally came to a standstill, and in consequence the majority of the foreign population, and many natives, left on the first train the new authorities allowed to carry passengers. With them went the writer.

Some day, no doubt, Parral will recover. It will take time, for the banks were cleared out and one of them was burned to the ground ; but nevertheless the day must come when civilization will creep back to its own. Then there will be music in the *plaza* at night once more, the police will sun themselves

by day and slumber over their lanterns by night, and the well-to-do citizen who hid in his cellar—or perchance shot at the Maderists from behind, as at least one miscreant did—during the attack, will once more look down on the telephone exchange operator who stuck to his dangerous post through the thick of it. The tourist from the States will remark: “Why, there can’t be any harm in them people; they look such sleepy old things.”



# THE CASTING VOTE

## THE CASTING VOTE





## THE CASTING VOTE

**I**N a dun-coloured sea of tumbled hills the "gallows frame" of the shaft and the little iron-roofed engine-house stood out infinitely small and lonely. One looked twice before discovering whence emanated the sighing cough of the gasoline hoist. The landscape was so spacious and so miraculously clear. It gave a sense of the littleness of mankind and mankind's vaunted progress. The engine-house and derrick failed even to intrude on the majesty of the endlessly rolling hills.

Suddenly the engine stopped—abruptly. Far up on the mountain-side a woman—a rather pale, rather interesting appearing, petulantly pretty-looking woman, in a straw hat and khaki-coloured divided skirt—reined in a grey horse and shaded anxious eyes against the glare. She was only waiting to see the tiny figure she looked for step from the rim of the big iron bucket—step from the swinging bucket to good solid earth—and then she would ride off home, over the divide and down the other side of the mountain, laughing at her own too vivid imagination. Nobody would be a bit the wiser.

A fragment of earth detached itself and rolled across the trail. She could hear the breathing of her horse—almost could she hear the breathing of all

the living world. The stillness—now that the engine had stopped—was as vast as the sun-bathed land itself.

“ My God ! ” said the woman, and clenched her little hands with spasmodic nervousness. “ Ah, Bud, dear, yeh wouldn’t—— Guess suthin’s up with the hoist,” she added, to comfort herself.

There was no sign of man or bucket. Therefore her husband yet swung somewhere in the depths of the shaft. The air was so clear that she could discern the small rectangle of shade at the pit’s mouth. She could almost see the rope.

Suddenly a minute, blue-clad figure emerged from the engine-house and crossed to the shaft-head. With a moan of apprehension the woman drove the spurs into the horse’s flanks.

. . . . .

It was the engine that did it. When Henniker rode out with John Behring in the morning to inspect the old Hawk West shaft there was no man in Arizona he would more gladly have seen dead. But there was likewise no man in Arizona less likely to infringe the prerogatives of the Almighty than Bud Henniker. He was a mild-mannered man, not given to violent passions, serenely conscious of his own bodily and mental strength, and consequently good-natured.

The trouble was that he had been in love with Mrs. Behring for many years before she became Mrs. Behring. He had suffered the rejection of his suit and the triumph of his rival without rancour—supposing it made for her greater happiness. But he had not looked for subsequent developments.

Subsequent developments? A voice on the summer night—frame houses have thin walls—and a sobbing cry, “ Ah, Bud never would ha’ treated me so ! ” There was also an ugly sound, not unlike that of a blow ; and there had been gossip flying in the little mining town. Bud had gone to the door, in his undecided, bashful way, and knocked ; and Mrs. Behring had said that he was mistaken—there was nothing the matter.

It took Bud a week to come to the conclusion that Mrs. Behring had lied to him ; and for another week his slow brain had ground upon the problem. It was incredible that such things should be ! Would not he, Bud Henniker, and the strongest man in the camp, gladly suffer Mrs. Behring to beat him—with a club—ten times a day if she felt like it, and never dream of retaliating. And yet this Behring galoot——.

It was equally incredible that such things should continue.

Yet the simple and direct methods were not available. Arizona juries are lenient to the manslayer, especially when the late lamented stands convicted of discourtesy to the fair ; and small difference would it have made if they were not. But Bud’s instinct told him that the deliberate immolation of her spouse by a friend such as himself would be more distasteful to Kate Behring than his continued existence.

And then, whilst Bud puzzled and lay awake at nights on the problem, the general manager had ordered Behring to start work again in the old Hawk West. This was a shaft on an isolated and most unhopeful vein several miles of camp ; a

lonely and abandoned shaft where the coyotes stole up to stare at the silent engine, and the basking rattlesnake sunned itself on the rusty turnsheets. There was no ladderway down this place—this I believe is illegal, but, strangely, it was so—wherefore Behring had shipped out a can or two of gasoline, and the following morning rode forth with his master-mechanic, one Bud Henniker, to overlook and overhaul.

And now Behring was in the shaft—and—and there was no ladderway—and—and the further wallplate of the collar was badly sprung.

“It ain’t too safe—that timber,” Bud had remarked as the superintendent stepped on to the edge of the open bucket preparatory to descending. “It’s just loose fill an’ boulders behind it. Maybe it’d be wiser to fix that before——”

“Make the contractors fix it, then,” said Behring. “I ain’t ridden seven miles an’ wasted half a day to turn back for a thing like that.”

So Bud slackened the brakes, and let him down three hundred feet to the bottom of the shaft.

Whilst he was below Bud had time to think—he always needed *time* to think. From behind the drum of the little engine he could see—for the shed was open in front—the spidery legs of the “gallows frame,” the thin black line of the wire rope disappearing down the mouth of the pit, and the loosened wallplate beyond, all sunlit, all startling clear.

“It’d be Gawd’s Providence,” said Bud, “if——”

“Clank!” went the iron bar that served as a

signal bell. "Clank! Clank!" Behring was coming up again.

"It'd be Gawd's Providence," repeated Bud moodily, his eyes still on the wallplate along which a venturesome lizard had run, to lie basking in the warmth. Shaking his sorely perplexed head, he tentatively opened the throttle. Again the bar banged indignantly. Behring was getting impatient.

Bud stepped round the engine and threw his weight on the flywheel. With a jerk the machinery started. "*Cough!*—hah! *Cough!*—hah! *Cough!*—hah! Hah! Hah! *Cough!*" hawked the exhaust. Bud waited until she had gathered speed a bit, and over went the clutch. The drum began to revolve, grumbling sulkily to itself about having to work in such sultry weather.

You who have laboured on the night shift, drooping drowsily amidst whirling shafting and squeaking belts, must at one time or another have heard the machinery say unexpected things. Maybe some little bearing gets cantankerous for want of lubricant, or a belt-lacing is not quite right, but in any case something somewhere chips in and disturbs the harmony with original remarks—often mimicking a well-known voice, the better to call your attention. I think this must have happened in Bud's engine-house; for, although the event transpired in the daytime—the blinding, bright daytime of Arizona in which distant rocks and hills stand out like stereoscopic views—his mind was not at ease.

At first all went smoothly. "Gawd's Providence," rumbled the drum. "(Hot Day!) Gawd's Providence! Gawd's Providence! (Hot Day!)" and

“ Hah ! Hah ! Hah ! Cough ! ” fussed the impatient exhaust, as if it alone was doing all the work. Bud half closed his eyes. It was working out very nicely, and his mind was nearly made up. “ Nothin’ doin’.” In a minute Behring would be out of danger. The drum was right. God’s Providence (on a hot day) must decide the issue—Bud refused to jolt the arm of destiny.

“ Behring would be—— ”

“ A—a—ah ! ” sighed the drum. “ Bud never would ha’ used me so—o—o—— ”

In a flash the clutch was out and the brake was on. Bud’s breath was coming in choking gasps and his hand trembled until the sweat-damped fingers could hardly turn the small milled head of the throttle. Like a man stricken, he half staggered, half fell against the wall of the shed, to find that the devil had placed a crowbar conveniently to hand. Next instant, with short, nervous strides, he had crossed the intervening space to the shaft-head.

Far up the long gulch, that headed—where the trail crossed the divide—in the saddleback between Hawk Hill and the camp, a raving, white-faced woman drove frantic spurs in the bloody flanks of a grey horse. Bud could not see her—she was hidden from view at the moment by a bend in the trail—and the beating of the arteries in his ears drowned the hoof-beats. Besides, his mind was taken up with other matters.

Jamming the point of the bar between a boulder and the broken baulk of timber, the burly mechanic threw all his great weight against the lever. The lizard scurried to safety as a shower of shall stones

rattled down the shaft. From below echoed a wild inarticulate shriek of mortal fear.

A second time Bud heaved. With a rending crash the half-rotten timber parted; and a good ton weight of loose boulders thundered down the shaft.





**THE SUBJUGATION OF THE  
SKETTERING**

THE SUBMISSION OF THE  
SURRENDER

## THE SUBJUGATION OF THE SKETTERING

“FACT of the bally matter is you *won't* try,” bellowed Sir Reginald Skettering. “Pyng is the best of employers if treated with proper respect. You’re no damned good, Charles, if you want a brother’s frank opinion.”

Charles sneered.

“I don’t want your opinion, you bladder-faced ox,” he commented.

The ox’s bladder face became radiant gules, with a soupçon of deeper purple, and a deep choking sound gurgled up from the regions circumscribed by his sixteen and a half inch collar. Without further indications of annoyance he fumbled in the pigeon-holes of his desk, produced a cheque-book and scratched an order for fifty pounds.

“Take that,” he remarked, slamming the paper on the desk, “and get! Clear out of the country.”

“If it wasn’t for one thing,” said Charles, smiling as Satan smiles upon a new arrival at the gate, “I wouldn’t touch your frowsy money. Like most of my pals I happened to get bitten on your stinking Patagonian railroad fraud. As I’ve got about a tenth of one per cent of the loot back again the only decent thing I can do, as a gentleman, as a *gentleman*, you swine—term you do not comprehend

the inner meaning of—is to shout the drinks. Fiver to old Mactavish—skipper of tramp, personal friend of mine—for the passage, and forty-five to spend in Buenos Ayres. My word! They will be pleased when they hear where the money came from! I apologized at the time. Said ‘Dev’lish sorry, but I’m afraid it’s a do. You see it’s my brothah ’” —he spat the word rather than spoke it—“ ‘and I know the swab. I’m in as bad as the rest of you,’ I said, ‘although I ought to have known better. Beastly sorry!’ By gad, Reggie, they *will* be pleased! We’ll drink your bally health!’”

Sir Reginald emitted a hoarse scream and half rose in his chair—there was no entail on the Skettering temper. Suddenly recollecting that he was a man of sedentary habits, and that Charles—though otherwise inefficient—had shone as a blacksmith’s helper, he sat down again.

“Get out!” he croaked. “Clear out of here before I ring for the porter and have you thrown out, you—you——”

His voice trailed to an apoplectic murmur. With the family sneer still chiselled deeply on his otherwise not unpleasant features, Charles thrust his hands in his pockets and loafed out through the glass-panelled doors.

Arrived on the pavement he looked with scorn upon all living things. His expression—the typical Skettering face under the influence of the Temper—was not unlike that of an irritated rattlesnake. Hurrying clerks glanced once and sheered off the pavement. A stray costermonger eyed him wistfully, ran an appraising eye over his torso, and sighing deeply passed on his way. The world, ever ready

to take him by stealth in flank or rear, refused any challenge to a direct frontal attack.

Snarling contemptuously, the genial Charles took up his hostile journey westward to cash the cheque. His brother had thoughtfully drawn on his private account, Messrs. Klootz and Klootz of Cockspur Street, taxis were extravagance, and one cannot ask even a brother for twopence bus fare and at the same time make a dignified exit from his presence.

By the time he reached Trafalgar Square he was so annoyed that a very diminutive child made loud outcry at the sight of him, and eluding the clutches of a horrified nurse toddled out into the street.

Charles had at least one good point. He was endowed with that very rare gift of immediate action in an emergency. On one occasion this attribute had saved his life, and lost another man his. Before the frozen bystanders could grasp the import of the bus driver's oaths he, the original cause of the trouble, had saved the baby. Had he been the only prompt individual to hand this would have been a simple matter. Providence, however, ordained otherwise.

At the moment of the laying of his hands upon the infant, Charles discovered his possession disputed. From the heavens above or the earth beneath had materialized a stranger—a red-headed girl with intent similar to his own. Her advent flustered him; not much but just enough to disturb his nicely arranged schedule of time available. The bus passed on; the baby hurtled into the belt line of the sombre policeman—who should have rescued it in the first instance—and Charles and the

lady, wrapped in each other's arms, touched down in the gutter.

"Give 'em air!" said the crowd, more fruitful in precept than example. "Give 'em air—lidy's 'urt!"

Charles stifled an expression which might have passed muster in the byways of Buenos Ayres, but was unsuitable for use in mixed company in Trafalgar Square.

"'Pon my soul," he said, "I'm most awfully——"

"Oh it's nothing much—only—only—it's my ankle—oh!"

Charles's heart bled. Fortunately, the wheel had only caught the heel of the boot and twisted the enclosed foot. There was no question of broken bones; but a sprain is painful, and the lady was beautiful—so thought Charles—and he felt the fault was his.

"'Pon my honour I never saw you," he continued, about half an hour later, to a pallid heroine seated at his side in a taxi—his taxi. "You must think me an awful lout."

"Oh, please don't say that. If you hadn't pulled me out of the way I——" she shuddered. "I saw a man run over once," she broke off.

"I once saw a man caught in the cogs of a machine——" began Charles cheerily.

But in what manner of machine the man was caught will never be known for the lady said:

"Don't!"

Charles didn't. His prompt obedience rather surprised him. At this period of his life he would have questioned the orders of his master the devil.

"Where are we going?" he asked,

“ Chelsea, if you don't mind. I have rooms there. I—I'm an artist, you see.”

Quite three weeks later, perhaps four, Sir Reginald was singing “ lusty,” as Pepys would have it, in his pew at St. Jacob's in the Lane. The hymn was the one before the sermon, and referred to the vile-ness of humanity in Ceylon and suchlike outlandish places. The sentiment, with its suggestion of “ Buenos Ayres where Charles should almost be by now,” pleased his brother. His voice boomed high above the organ and the chanting of the choir.

Suddenly Sir Reginald ceased to sing. A new expression crept over his face—that of a man who, having swallowed a pumpkin whole, now finds himself unable to digest it. People edged nervously away from him, and the vicar—deeply distressed at the sight of one of his flock on the verge of an apoplexy—swept his customary glass of water from the edge of the pulpit to the bald head of Mr. Wilkins, the curate. It was a horrible moment.

Loath to believe the evidence of his senses, Sir Reginald wildly argued within himself the utter impossibility of what he seemed to behold. In the first place Charles would never dream of entering a place of worship, save, perhaps, by night and with the intention of stealing the plate ; in the second—“ No ! By gad, it was he ! The scoundrel ! The ingrate ! ” With fifty pounds of his brother's hard-earned money in his pocket “ Charles who should have been in Buenos Ayres ” stood within ten feet of him, visibly holding a hymn book and making a

mouthed pretence to sing words of praise. What further froze the senses of his gurgling kinsman was the perception that he was not alone.

“D—n it!” said Charles triumphantly in the porch after the service. “Talk of the Consolations of Religion. Did you see my brothah?”

“Hush!” said the red-headed girl severely. “You *mustn’t* talk like that! I didn’t know you had a brother,” she added.

“Oh, yes. Most frightful swine, as a matter of fact——”

“Mr. Skettering!!”

“Sorry,” said Charles with contrition. “You see, we’re pretty frank with one another—I and my brothah.”

Sir Reginald arrived on the steps in time to see her limp round the corner on the arm of her new acquisition. His face at the moment was quite suitable for a wicked baronet. His first wild impulse was in favour of instant pursuit; but, providentially he was pinned by the Dowager Lady Kilkattery before he could carry this desire into practice. Otherwise there might have been effusion of Skettering blood on that Sabbath morn. I do not mean that Lady Kilkattery seized him by the neck and screamed. She took him by the lapel and spoke at some length concerning bazaars and such light matters. One cannot off-hand tell a countess, however boring, that one must now be going to kill one’s brother.

So instead he went home to his house in Gloucester Road and surrounded by the viperiform physiognomies of his bad-tempered ancestors, he wrote a letter. He said:



“ CHARLES,—With regard to your conduct of late the least said the soonest mended, so I will content myself with reminding you that henceforth you can look for no financial assistance from myself *under any circumstances*.

Your affectionate brother,

REGINALD SKETTERING.”

A couple of days later he got a reply :

“ DEAR REGGIE,

Go to the devil.

Your aff. brother,

CHARLES DILKENWHISTLE MAUNDLEY  
SKETTERING.”

Sir Reginald promptly discharged the butler and the man who ran the errands and looked after the billiard room—a wage-slave with an enormous family. This, however, did him little good. His only consolation in a blighted universe was the pious hope that he might yet encounter Charles Dilkenwhistle Maundley selling bootlaces in the gutter. He resolved to make no purchase in such a case. Rather, if possible, he would give Charles in charge for obstructing the traffic.

Now it came to pass that Charles rose very early and walked alone by the Round Pond in Kensington Gardens to meditate. “ Eileen,” he said, by which he meant Miss Thurlo, which was the red-headed

girl's name, " is rather nice. If it were not for my brothah—— "

In some way he felt his brother was to blame. How exactly he could not say. His brother had certainly procured his late employment with Johnson, Snelgrove and Pyng. That Pyng's temperament failed to attune itself to his own, and that his consequent irresistible desire to tweak the nose of Pyng had lost him his job, was obviously not his brother's fault. And then there was the fifty pounds ; not very much for a man with a five figure income to bestow, yet nevertheless a gift. Still he felt his brother was to blame.

Eileen, on the other hand—Well, Eileen was quite different from any mortal Charles had ever encountered. He could not conceive himself being rude to Eileen. It was perhaps his innate chivalry——

" No, by gad ! " exploded Charles, too honest to lie even to himself. " By the Lord Harry, it's worse than that. I'm afraid of her ! "

This amazing revelation caused him to laugh. Whilst he was yet overcome with merriment to think that he, Charles Skettering, feared a human being—one weighing less than nine stone withal—a foot fell faintly on the sward. He turned and found himself face to face with his brother.

Sir Reginald, whose mother had once discovered a resemblance between her offspring and Napoleon Buonaparte, clasped his hands behind his back and solemnly eyed Charles across the tops of his rimless glasses. Charles flicked the gravel with his stick. The moment was too intensely gravid for common-places of greeting.

" What the deuce," said Charles finally, " are

you doing here at this time of day—floating a National Unemployment Insurance Scheme among the tramps ? ”

“ It is my custom,” said his brother uneasily. He felt he was confessing to a weakness. “ I have made it a habit to stroll out here in the freshness of the morning, so as—ah—so that I—ah—in fact I find the practice invigorating and healthful for a man who has had to work hard all his life, and is habitually chained to his desk.”

His customary office hours were indeed from 11.30 a.m. until 4 p.m., with an interval for lunch only.

“ Do you ? ” said Charles. “ By gad, Reggie, so do I ! Well, so long ! Don’t let me keep you.”

Sir Reginald made no movement to accept this dismissal. “ I—ah—expect to meet some one this morning,” he explained.

“ Hah ! ” quoth Charles. “ You dog ! You gay old dog, Reggie ! ”

The alleged gaiety of the dog did not prevent it from emitting a most unchristian sounding snarl.

“ If I were in the habit of making clandestine appointments,” remarked Sir Reginald, “ if I were in the habit of making appointments with women of—ah—the lower world, I would hardly choose a place and hour such as this. Any more,” he added viciously after a pregnant pause, “ than I would have the indecency to make them—— ”

“ Where ? ” inquired Charles with treacherous smoothness.

“ In places of worship, sir ! ” bellowed the baronet, forgetting himself at last.

As he spoke he was suddenly cognizant of a jarring

shock. His glasses flew tinkling to the gravel, and with a heavy plunge Sir Reginald vanished in the waters of the Pond.

I should like to be able to say that Charles was overcome with remorse when he saw what he had done ; that he plunged into the water and rescued his brother on the third time down. This is impossible for two reasons. First the water is too shallow, and secondly Charles was not disposed toward rescue work. He certainly did enter the pond, but I am sorry to say it was only for the purpose of standing upon Sir Reginald's prostrate form.

" Apologize, you swine ! " gritted Charles, stamping with a good heart.

There was no keeper in sight and the two non-descripts on the opposite shore, who formed the entire audience thus far, showed no intention of intervening.

" Murder ! " croaked Sir Reginald.

Charles deftly inserted his heel under his brother's chin and thrust him bubbling into the deep.

I really believe murder would have been done, had the Skettering family been left to adjust their differences undisturbed ; but at this critical moment two running figures broke from the cover of the venerable chestnuts to the immediate south. In the lead came a withered, but well set up old gentleman in a bowler and a brown homespun suit ; after him ran a girl in another brown homespun suit and a hat.

" Mr. Skettering ! "

The words were not uttered in a shocked tone. Rather they were sharp and subtly imperious.

Charles abandoned his prey and slunk ashore to face the music. This was the last thing he expected in the way of a meeting, and it was—so he said—the devil.

“ Mr. Skettering,” repeated the red-headed girl, “ are you mad ? ”

She got no further. There was a voluptuous sucking sound, as of a heavy body leaving deep mud, and with a low-pitched howl Sir Reginald spattered through the shallows, threw his arms around his brother and buried his teeth in his biceps.

Charles’s anguished eye sought that of his new lady for instructions ; but she, great as her *savoir faire* undoubtedly was, evidently found this problem—what to do when bitten by a baronet ?—too deep for her. Sighing heavily her slave swung his left to Sir Reginald’s jaw. The grasping teeth closed with a click and the assailant subsided in a heap of moist broadcloth and wilted linen.

“ By Jingo ! ” exclaimed the little gentleman, screwing in a monocle under his bushy brow the better to observe the scene, “ quite a punch ! What ? ” He hopped about like an excited sparrow. “ Might I ask who you are, sir ? I fancy our friend here can put you in for six months for what you’ve already done, so you’d better not hit him again.”

“ Oh, as for that, sir,” said Charles civilly, “ I doubt he’ll take action. You see, it’s my brothah. We have very bad tempers and he was most infernally insulting with—ah—with regard to my acquaintance with this lady—— ”

“ This lady ? ” echoed the little gentleman,

screwing his diminutive face a little more if such a feat were possible.

“ Yes, sir. You see—ah—this lady—who—ah—is a well-known resident artist in Chelsea—that is to say I had the honour to make her acquaintance, by a fortuitous chance, a few days before I should have sailed for South America—and—ah—and—I suppose it annoyed my brothah,” he concluded lamely.

“ So you came here to fight it out—I see ! ”

“ Oh, no, sir ! Purely casual meeting. He’s got a nasty trick of insulting my friends to my face whenever possible—— ” Charles blushed a little and bowed toward the red-headed girl. “ Purely matter of habit,” he explained. “ Does it on general principles. Licked him for it before. No use.”

“ Father,” broke in the red-headed girl, seating herself firmly on an adjacent chair and crossing her feet, “ this is Mr. Charles Skettering, the gentleman who saved my life from the omnibus. I suppose the other is Sir Reginald, his brother, whom you came out to meet.”

The baronet began to flap back into conscious existence.

“ Damned scoundrel,” were his first words as he opened his eyes.

“ This,” remarked the little gentleman acidly, “ is what comes of your infernal flat, and all your other infernal whims, Eileen. I pay out several hundred a year that you may make yourself the subject of a public brawl. It’s not right. I’ll be hanged if I’ll have it.”

“ Very well,” said Eileen gloomily, “ then I’ll starve.” Her parent grunted dubiously, but it

appeared the flat would probably continue inhabited. "This is my father, Lord Throgmorton, Mr. Skettering," she added. "He came here to see your brother about you. Father imagines he is dreadfully busy most of the time, so he telephoned to know where your brother could be found early in the morning, and he said here, and so we came here. You have to manage an experimental farm——"

"I am considering the matter," interrupted Lord Throgmorton hastily.

"You're not," said his disrespectful offspring. "Mr. Skettering would be just the man to put a stopper on Binns, and you said yourself Binns was a swindler."

"He would indeed," assented his lordship, inspecting Charles as one examines a pedigree bull.

"Well then, that's settled. Take Sir Reginald home and change his clothes or he'll catch his death if you stand talking much longer. I'm going to bring Mr. Skettering in to breakfast in about ten minutes' time. Take the car. I'll get a taxi."

"Well," continued the red-headed girl, as soon as her parent and Sir Reginald had withdrawn, "I'm thoroughly ashamed of you."

Charles wilted a little.

"I think you are *most* disgraceful. And you told a fib."

"I didn't," denied Charles.

"You did. You said I was an eminent artist."

"Well, you do draw pictures—for the papers," suggested Charles.

"Of course I do. Didn't I tell you I believed in people who cultivated their talents and earned their own living. But I'm not eminent."

“The papers must publish quite a lot of the pictures,” suggested Charles.

In her turn the red-headed girl blushed. Charles forbore to question further.

“It’s jolly good of you,” he began.

“No, it’s not.” She eyed him gravely. “I think you can do a lot, Mr. Skettering, if people will give you a chance. I’m giving you one because—because I *want* to see you *have* a chance. You’ll be good, won’t you?”

“I will,” said Charles. He seemed about to add something, but evidently changed his mind.

“I only lose my temper with my brother,” he said firmly.

This was not quite true, but he meant he could never—in his wildest fancies—imagine the possibility of his losing his temper with the red-headed girl.



## THE FAILURE



## THE FAILURE

**T**HE flood-gates opened and for fifteen minutes the thunder of a tropical downpour drowned all other sounds. It was a rain which brought no freshness to the air. Sweat stood in little beads on Bertie Coulson's forehead, and his clothes stuck uncomfortably to his skin. He had been listening to the music—they were holding a smoking concert across the way—but now the rain had broken the spell of the banjo. From a leak in the roof water began to drip dankly from the soiled ceiling cloth to the flagged floor, so young Coulson tried to concentrate his mind on that.

This was to be the end of the life he had planned so largely but a few years before.

Bertie Coulson had the misfortune to be the wrong man in the wrong place. His father was the head of Coulson, Coulson and King, and intended his only son to follow him in the business; and old Coulson was one of those strong silent men whose will is as the law of the Medes and Persians. The Almighty, on the other hand, had apparently risked old Coulson's displeasure by designing his son on the lines of a man of Science. He was a chemical dreamer—if you can imagine such a thing.

Research work is notoriously unremunerative, and unless Bertie could make money for himself he was pretty sure to have rather a miserable time of

it in the long run. There were eight daughters, all unmarried, to provide for, and the profits of the business of Coulson, Coulson and King were not so stupendous as the sound of the name might imply.

There were no stormy scenes, however, when Bertie announced his desire to take the qualifying course for a B.Sc. in Pure Science. His father humoured him to that extent, because the knowledge would be of assistance in the business. He knew there was not much risk of Bertie tumbling into a job the moment he got through—he was a lazy devil except in a few subjects—so he felt he held a financial hammer lock on his wayward son.

Naturally he was vexed, nevertheless, when Bertie did manage to secure an assistant's billet the moment he passed his Finals. This afforded a slim *modus vivendi* and was far from the sort of thing his father wished to see. The time had come for Bertie to settle down to serious business if he ever wanted to marry Nellie Longshaw.

Bertie did mean to settle down to serious work, but at the same time he intended to stick to what he chose to consider his natural vocation. In this his fiancée, who had faith in him in those days, very naturally backed him up. She said that money made no difference to her so long as Bertie was doing his *real* duty in life. She meant that she considered Bertie would ultimately make more as Professor Coulson, or Sir Herbert Coulson, or Lord Brittingten, than would ever come his dreamy way in a counting-house. When he was sufficiently advanced on the path of fame to make it morally certain there would be no regression, she intended to marry him. She looked upon herself as a sort of

reward of virtue—to be handed to Bertie as first prize for his success. Afterwards he would support her in the state of physical and mental comfort to which she was accustomed—or even in more luxurious style than obtained at the Vicarage. She herself would be—she supposed—a comfort to him in his middle age and an ornament to his home.

I hope I am not blackening her character. She was quite a nice girl, and meant extremely well. And she was quite fond of Bertie.

The rain had ceased and once more the strains of the music drifted through the muggy air. Bertie Coulson was huddled on the edge of the bed. His eyes stared vacantly at the plastered wall in front of him, and he nursed a “thirty-eight” Colt revolver in the palm of one hand.

Bertie loved Nellie Longshaw so much that he got more absent-minded than ever, put the wrong chemical in the wrong pot, and nearly blinded his livery old professor for life. The professor—who kept a double shift of assistants on the go, one half discharged whilst the other waited to be—promptly fired him. His father refused to assist him—without waiting to be asked—and Bertie found himself in danger of premature decease through lack of proper nourishment. This was how he came to go abroad, travelling in the capacity of ship’s steward. It was a false move, but he took it, and thereafter worked as an assayer in far western mining camps. A chemist can be an assayer, although an assayer is not always a chemist. It was the only thing he felt competent to tackle. In course of time he drifted south to Mexico. At the point where this story begins he was weighing the advisability of a trip

farther south still, to Colombia, against an even longer journey.

Miss Longshaw had one chilly premonition that this was the end of her maiden dreams of Lady Brittingten—wife of Lord Brittingten, O.M., D.Sc. (Edin.)—and faced the situation with true British fortitude. She decided to keep Bertie well supplied with biographies of famous men as a stimulant to endeavour, and to hope for the best.

Unfortunately, Bertie rapidly became disillusioned as to the life which lay before him. He started to save his money—slowly enough it seemed to accumulate in spite of the big appearing wages—but the conditions and environment of the mining camp were repellent to him. He had no love of money for money's sake; and it is for money alone that men rape the earth. The last straw was added by two unfortunate cartoons in the official organ of the Polkville Correspondence Schools, sent to him by some unknown hand as a possible new student.

The first of the two pictures, both of which were calculated to awaken ambition in the young, showed a youth of prepossessing feature and Herculean mould grovelling on top of a pile of dollars. The other depicted a mob of similar young men fighting tooth and nail to get to the base of a ladder, up which, after planting a parting kick or two on the faces below—triumphantly scrambled the students of the Polkville Schools.

Instead of attuning Bertie's mind to the beauties of the outlook on life embodied in their pictorial parables, the publishers only succeeded in finally damping his ardour. He was a sensitive soul, and it had dawned on him that the road to financial

success was too often marked by the broken hearts of unsuccessful fellow-men.

To gain anything in this world it is essential to desire it keenly; the competition is so severe. Bertie did not want money. His impossible desire—which he carefully concealed from all men—was for love, leisure and unlimited chemicals. Had he been provided with these, this story had never been written. But custom and Miss Longshaw made all three merchantable articles. He failed to see this, blamed himself overmuch,—and hurt his self-respect.

The dismal life of the camp, the low ideals, the humourless obscene conversation and the lack of comfort soon began to get in their work. Bertie developed the miner's habit of drifting from one place to another. He also discovered whisky, a drink which had deleterious effects on the tissues, especially on that part of the brain which encysts those qualities essential to success, but which has a deadening effect on the memory—sometimes.

Then Miss Longshaw began to get peevish. His letters were beginning to tell tales—letters often do when ordinary conversation gives no idea as to the real state of the mind. He had a run of bad luck and spent a large part of his savings. He fought to obtain some more lasting sympathy than the bottle affords, but only drew forth comparisons, not always flattering, between himself and the illustrious dead. He was in the south of Mexico about this time, in a climate which is often trying. He was frequently sick, and an unaccountable nervousness was making his tedious work more and more abhorrent to his fretful nature. Worst of all a perpetual temptation—to his cranky mind worse than

that of drink—was dogging his footsteps and whispering in his unwilling ear. Up till now his very real idealism had saved him from the ordinary follies of the ordinary young man at large; but warped and thwarted instinct will assert itself in the long run.

Bertie Coulson shuddered as his strained mind leaped the intervening twelve months of unadulterated hell and threw an all too vivid picture on the screen. The *plaza* of this same town under the stars, the warm peace of the Mexican night, the slumberous throbbing of a distant mine-pump and the occasional rattle of cab wheels alone breaking the silence. From ten o'clock until midnight he had sat alone on one of the seats which encircled the bandstand, listening to the raving devils' voices within him and fighting the dull pain of desire—and for a week it had been the same story. On the one hand the bare room, which was all his home, by night, and the long monotonous day of mechanical routine. On the other——

In six months' previous residence he had acquired but three friends, Hansen, Cartwright and Mrs. Spaulding. The last-named was one of those women before whom men's hats come off in obedience to natural law rather than by mere courtesy. Her quiet unconscious control had temporarily soothed the pain and driven back the enemy from the gate—he even added three months teetotalism to his other abstentions—but her health was indifferent. So, with a heavy heart, for she knew the motherless boy's weakness and his strivings, she left for Home. That left him with malaria stricken Cartwright, the Englishman from Colombia; and



Hansen—the same Hansen who licked the big Scotchman at Charcos. Cartwright was in hospital and Hansen—more than probably—in the exact quarter of the town Bertie wished to avoid.

Hansen now slept in the desolate graveyard of a northern town. The voice of Cartwright was in his ears. He was going to sing again—Bertie could hear the applause.

Yet of the two Hansen was the nearest to him. In a few moments he would see Hansen again—in hell or otherwise, it made no difference. There could be no hell with that kindly hand on his shoulder.

Hansen's grin and Hansen's villainous bad luck had been as proverbial as Hansen's morals—which were damnable. Some unknown charmer in the States had been good enough to jilt him, at a period when he also held ideals and fought to uphold them, and he was a thorough man. Outlaw the sex had made him, therefore wolf's head would he be. He scorned respectability, otherwise he was charming.

“ Oh, my God ! ” muttered the unhappy boy as the memories crowded. This was the face most intimately associated with the shattering of his idols.

For the voices had triumphed. With wet hands and trembling knees—how wet his hands were now, and, yes, he would sit down again and collect himself—he had staggered into a passing cab. No need to instruct the evil-minded driver at that time of night. He—Ah, God ! Why had he done it ?

It was all illusion. The haggard painted faces of the women, the half-hidden sordidness behind the tawdry glitter, the false laughter, the—Oh, why ? why ? why ?

And Hansen was there, as usual, genially half-seas over and enthroned in an all-embracing popularity. As was his custom he had neither praised nor blamed the new arrival ; although for a moment he looked worried. He was often present on the ensuing nights when the triumphant devils again and again drove their shrinking victim to the pleasure which was abhorrence to him and the false anodyne which shamed his soul. He never attempted to encourage the boy, but he never attempted to restrain him. I think he was right.

The only statement he ever made on the subject was to Cartwright. He said, " Bertie tumbled off his perch. I tink dat's bad thing. Dose White Cross cranks fall pretty hard. I been dere too."

I am forgetting Nellie Longshaw. Of course she knew nothing at all about these goings-on or she would have broken off the engagement at once. And quite right too ! Such things were unheard-of at the Vicarage.

When she did cut the painter it was because of the morbid tone of Bertie's letters. She abhorred suffering and it made her most uncomfortable to read them. Perhaps it was unfortunate she missed the underlying plea for sympathy ; but on the whole it was as well—for have I not shown that Bertie was quite unworthy. She held out the hope, however, that if he could pull himself together and—not exactly in these words of course—obtain the stipulated sum within a reasonable period, well, in that case he might yet win the sought-for prize.

At the same time his father had sent him a letter to say he could yet find him a place in the office should he care to return home.

Since Bertie had already destroyed himself by the time these two missives reached him the hopes proffered did little good. The same blow which, glancing from the broad shoulders of the hardy Danish mechanic, left him apparently unscathed had now hurled the highly strung genius—for Bertie was a genius, though never to be discovered—to his destruction. The recklessness of despair rendered him careless, and that in Mexico is fatal. The doctor said he could “fix him up” but admitted he had never seen a worse case.

“I guess you’ll not be figurin’ on gettin’ married?” he said.

“No,” answered Bertie.

“That’s right. I never advise a man to take such a risk when he’s set up as bad as you are, even when he seems cured. You should have been more careful. Don’t get low about it, however. If you do what I tell you I can get the disease out of your system in a year or two. But you’ll have to be mighty careful.”

Well, that was over and done with now. He had not even followed the doctor’s last piece of advice after the first few months—the chances, if one could call them chances, were so poor and the outlook so hopeless. Remained the last—to follow Hansen. Hansen who had laughed through life until the fever struck him, worked three weeks with it on him, had been carried raving to the hospital, and died fighting imaginary foes who—so he said—were slashing him with knives. Bertie was puzzled at the time, but now he knew what that illusion meant, for he himself had experienced it without the necessity of first contracting typhoid. It seemed to him

that all the world struck at him as he battled forlornly against a nightmare of uncounted odds. And, more savage and more bitter than all other strokes, the steely indifference of Miss Longshaw slashed and hacked at his fainting soul.

Until the numbness of death was on him.

The resolve that had been stealing into his heart became a fixed one. His fingers tightened on the butt of the pistol. Across the street Cartwright still sang. What was it? It sounded familiar. The words were simple and direct, although the air suggested somehow the full and solemn pathos of a funeral march :

“ For it’s knock out your pipes and—follow me,  
And it’s finish up your swipes and—follow me.  
Oh, ’ark to the fifes a callin’—  
Follow me—follow me ’ome.”

“ Home ! My God ! ” The half-smoked cigarette fell from his shaking hand and his eyes roved wildly from the four bare walls which penned him in to the pistol which was to set him free. Yes, it was a home for the homeless man. A home of peace and understanding. A home free from the ravages of desire and sin. Home and—Hansen the brave. He understood now ! He would do it

Yet—Nellie—and his father. It was going to hurt them——

No ! They must stand it. They would survive the shock. Their natural indignation at his cowardice would help them to obliterate his memory.

Suddenly he was praying ; and, as he knelt, dry, tearless sobs of disappointment and grief shook his body. His life—the life which he had hoped to make a service any man might be proud of—and

this was the end of it. It was a cowardly thing to do and Hansen would—No! Hansen never condemned!

It flashed into his bewildered brain that he had got the cart before the horse. It was the thought of Nellie which drove him to self-destruction. Hansen, silent and all unseen, was staying his hand.

Again in a flood of prayer rose the figure of the Dane, new bearded, pale and wasted with the fever—not at all the Hansen of happier days. Hansen in the last ditch, cursing, fighting, dying. Hansen had fought it to the bitter end—and now a new Hansen——

Rising from his knees Bertie staggered half-way to the cupboard, halted, turned and reeled back again. Whisky was no solution this time.

Oh God! What could he do? What should he do? Was it possible to bear the weight of the slow-dragging days in a land he had grown to hate; and the vivid memories of the past to haunt him?

Cartwright did that same thing; but Cartwright was a man of sterner mould. Next week Cartwright returned to his Colombian gold mine. If Bertie wished he could go with him. Go into the wilderness with the sure knowledge that never more would he return. Death was better! And yet——

There was a strange gentleness about Cartwright also. Hansen was gone from him; Nellie he would never see again; but Cartwright——

“Oh, my Father, help me!”

Silence fell and a raindrop dripped solemnly in the dark.

“My Father! My Father!”

Was it a whisper in the wet trees, or only the

echo of the half-caught melody in his clouding mind? It seemed to him that Hansen was before him with his pale face set to the south. And through the ether—very fine, very attenuated, but crystal clear—came the music and the words. Hope! Hope deferred but real and strong and unquenchable. Hope that could conquer a life in exile and an exile's death. That could overcome the heart's strong yearning for the unattainable Nellie, his true life's work and the earthly fireside:

“Oh, passing the love o' women—  
Follow me—follow me 'ome.”

And like a rising tide the great overpouring flood of Brother Love was upon him and around him. The one true taintless love opening its arms to all weak things. The secret Hansen had guarded, the unspoken thing that Cartwright knew. Was it Hansen, or Cartwright or—who was it? Some one had beckoned and his way was clear.

“Cartwright,” said Bertie, brushing aside the proffered welcome—mainly liquid—of the revellers—“er—Cartwright, old man, I just dropped in to let you know I had decided to take that job, if it's still open.”

THE CAT

**THE CAT**

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THE CAT

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## THE CAT

I TOLERATE my Aunt Georgina Pringle, because she is rich and I am not ; I tolerate Mr. Philip because he has never done me any definite harm ; but I hate the cat.

It is a ring-straked cat. That is to say it is covered with stripes at intervals, and it has an evil eye. I do not mean that the eye is part of the ring-straking of the cat, but merely refer to the stripes. The eye—considered separately—is like a yellow lamp with a dark spot in the middle. There is only one of it, for the other has been obliterated, so to speak, by a catter-act. I mean we had a dog that was a catter by hobby, and that he acted in this instance.

Why did he do it ? Well, he was a heye bred dog, and breeding will tell, of course.

Why do I go on like this ? I am paid for these inscriptions by the space I fill, and naturally I wish to fill as many as possible.

To return to the cat, I may say that it was a thief, and would take anything that was not nailed to the floor. It gulped down the family robin one day. I mention this to rouse public indignation against the cat ; for I hate it. Having depredated—among other depredations—the robin, the cat then proceeded to steal a chop. There is a wall that runs to and fro between my house and the house of Mr

Philip, and the cat ran to and fro upon the wall. I hope I am not causing confusion. The wall was steady enough, as a matter of fact, but I wish to produce the mental effect of the long wall and the restless, thieving cat, ceaselessly running to and fro. It ran up and down—the cat—and then it leapt like a tiger to prey upon a chop which was in custody of the butcher's boy.

The butcher's boy had a basket, and Barabbas—that's the cat—sprang to seize the chop when the boy had put the basket upon the step. Down came the cat, and up went the chop. We had a fleeting futurist vision of the chop, the yellow eye, and the swift thief, with stolen meat in jaw, passing southward along the wall; and then all was silence, save for the dazzled cries of the young lad.

On Saturday the butcher's boy threw stones at the cat. It was on Thursday that it had chop, and on Saturday it was on the coping to see the butcher's boy go by. It had its tail wrapped round its feet and wore a detached air, but it moved nimbly when I said "Mark cat!" and the butcher's boy took action. He threw three stones, but without effect—that is to say without effect upon the cat. There was, nevertheless, a sound not unlike the dropping of innumerable tea trays which arose in the territory of Mr. Philip.

We did not look over to investigate, but the butcher's boy exclaimed that he must be going. He and the cat went away in opposite directions.

I retired upstairs and looked out from an upper window. Mr. Philip was standing in front of his house apparently making a speech, but I observed

no audience. The butcher's boy had gone away. There was another window low down on the corner of Mr. Philip's house, and instead of an ordinary pane in the centre there were three detached fragments of glass—triangular—adhering to the frame. Mr. Philip took his walking stick and poked these out, and then there was no glass at all—just a square hole.

The thought now comes to me of the inscrutable finger of destiny guiding the hand of the butcher's boy, and the walking stick of Mr. Philip. Often have I wondered into what room that window admitted light and air, although at the time whereof I write I did not consider it expedient to ask questions. I did not wish to awaken the prejudices of Mr. Philip, nor did I wish to hear him repeat the speech to which I had listened—moments before—in appalling pain and sorrow.

The room behind the window was Mr. Philip's larder !

How did I find out ? It was brought to my notice upon the following afternoon—that would be Sunday—that the joint efforts of the butcher's boy and Mr. Philip had enlarged the scope of the utility of the window. In its original state it had admitted light. Later, as improved by the butcher's boy, light and air. Now, as finally trimmed by Mr. Philip himself—light, air and cats. I inferred the final admission from certain ring-straked hind-quarters visible in the orifice—the square hole, you know, where the pane had passed away.

The room behind the window was Mr. Philip's larder—but how did I know that it was the larder ? Briefly, the cat came back with a fish. I did not

suspect Mr. Philip of concealing a trout stream on his premises, nor could I conceive him storing fish in his drawing-room, for instance, or allowing them to swim about in the bath when not in use. I dismissed all other hypotheses as intolerable, and exclaiming "Larder!" observed the cat hurrying southward along the party wall, the fish sticking out like whiskers on either side of its face. No getting away from the stark determination which is the one fine point in an otherwise bleakly unmoral mind. As it went by the cat looked at me with an envenomed expression, but made no remark. Its jaws were otherwise occupied. Forth from the front capered Mr. Philip, excited no doubt by my indignant cries.

Whether he had been counting over the tale of his fish—in the collective sense—and noted a shortage, or whether the snell<sup>1</sup> cat could not forbear a cry of triumph as it seized the tail, so to speak, of the fish—individual—I do not know. Anyhow, Mr. Philip was vexed. I judged this from his action in throwing a brick at the cat.

These incidents which I have been narrating occurred in the summer time. The sun shone golden in a canopy of opalescent turquoise, and the light humming of bees abounded. The brick came in at the open window where my Aunt Georgina Pringle was knitting woollen comforters for the blind.

She fell. The impact was more in the nature of a winning hazard than a kissing shot, and Aunt Georgina was neatly pocketed in the waste-paper-

<sup>1</sup> This is an English word—whatever the editor may say. It signifies the morality of pirates and east winds and the blinding snowstorm.

basket. Behind her as she sat—in the basket—a scene of destruction and terror was in progress.

The brick slid lightly across the face of Aunt Georgina, and thence travelled to the mantel-piece where the bright yellow jar that Aunt Georgina gave me used to stand. It stands there no more, for the brick slew it, and it descended with violence to the partial squashing of a dog. The dog was called Flora, and it had the physical aspect and spiritual grace of a beetle. It was a pug dog, nominally, for my aunt is a Conservative in all things, including, I regret to say, finance. I mean, she kept the pug because it was cheap, and she had had it fifteen years, and Pekingese do not appeal to my aunt, who is one of the Old School.

Mr. Philip, meanwhile, was out on the gravel exclaiming “ Bless the cat,” or words to that effect. He didn’t really say “ Bless,” of course, but there is too much tendency nowadays—you know what I mean. I mention no names, but I am not that sort of author myself. I should not be surprised to find I did not even know what some of those words one reads about mean.

I have been in Mexico, of course, but then they say it in Spanish there. I don’t think Mr. Philip was talking in Spanish. Anyhow, it didn’t sound like it.

Mr. Philip, then, was making his final or apocalyptic speech when I came running out from the room where my aunt and her belongings had been destroyed. When he saw my pale face and frenzied air, and heard the screams of Aunt Georgina, terror fell upon him like a blanket.

“ Sir,” he said, “ I fear I have done you an injury.”

“ Sir,” I replied, “ are you a Suffragist ? ”

“ God bless my soul ! ” exclaimed Mr. Philip.

“ Such being the case, then,” I continued, “ you are acting in a foolish manner. Within that room is a stunned supporter of the Cause, which you, sir, seek to advance by the rash folly of militancy. My aunt, sir, lies groaning in the faithful arms, so to speak, of her expiring pug. My aunt, sir—slain by the machinations of your infernal brick ! My aunt Georgina Pringle ! ”

“ God bless my soul ! ” said Mr. Philip.

“ Well may you say it,” I remarked bitterly.

“ I never—— ” began Mr. Philip afresh.

“ Sir,” I said, “ I saw you throw it.”

“ That is not what I was about to say,” said Mr. Philip.

“ I had rather not hear what you were about to say,” I retorted, “ after your previous remarks on the occasion of your cat breaking your window last Thursday. Your cat, sir, is a public nuisance, and your language I consider a national disgrace.”

“ It’s not—— ” said Mr. Philip.

“ I say it is, sir ! Your cat is a public nuisance.”

“ My cat is a public nuisance,” repeated Mr. Philip in a dazed voice. Then, as I turned to go inside, he made a last effort to justify his unseemly conduct. “ It’s not my cat,” he shouted. “ The window was broken—— ”

“ If the cat is not your cat,” I said—with a certain contempt—“ what justification can you show for throwing stones. No wonder your window was broken. People who live behind glass windows should not throw stones.”

Mr. Philip then became dumbstruck.

This is the end of my tale ; the tale, so to speak, of the cat. Out of evil good has come, for Mr. Philip has bought an air gun, and the pug is dead. The cat sits afar—out of range—and glares with its wicked yellow eye, but it dare not venture close enough to eat the new robin. Heaven forbid that Aunt Georgina should keep her promise and replace the broken vase.

I have given the butcher's boy a shilling.





**THE WEREGELD**



## THE WEREGELD

(WRITTEN IN 1912)

THE march of events had been so shatteringly swift. What had appeared, only a week or two previously, as an abstract question of policy—a providential space-filler for harassed editors—had, without warning, blazed into ghastly life ; and Smith was afraid. A shell howled quavering overhead ; somewhere in the depths of the town arose the crash and rumble of falling masonry ; in the fields and hedgerows south of the football field the busy rifles banged and spat with strange similarity to the beating of many carpets ; and Smith, an able-bodied Englishman in the prime of life, stood apathetically on his doorstep to listen.

In the first place he had no rifle.

Secondly, he could not have done much with the weapon had he possessed one.

Thirdly, he was afraid.

It was the perception of the last indictment which shocked him. He was a proud man, and to see himself in this light was all but unendurable. It was the shock did it. The shock and the realization of incompetence to meet the situation. It couldn't be ! It was a dream ! This was England in the twentieth century——

“ Ah-hoo ! Ah-hoo ! Ah-hoo ! Clang ! ” mocked

the shrapnel. Curious whistling sounds filled the air—dust flew, and a vagrant dog, yelping its bitter anguish, dragged mysteriously maimed hindquarters down the gutter. Blood welled from the beast's thick coat and dribbled down its flanks. It looked at the man and yelled pitifully, and in its brown eyes Smith read the reflection of his own feelings.

While he gazed, the tramp of hurrying feet sounded on the street. Men in drab uniforms filed past him, moving at a pace between a walk and a trot. A few cursed, one seemed to pray, but the majority hastened on towards the battle in silence. A sweating sergeant cast one passing glance on him.

“ My Gawd ! ” he commented severely. “ Another of 'em ! I should think, me lad, you'd be better employed fighting for the missus an' kids than hidin' in your doorway like a bloomin' rabbit.”

Before Smith could frame a suitable repartee the detachment had passed. He felt degraded and humiliated—but what could he do ? What could he do ?

He had considered—not once, but several times—the matter of joining the Territorials, yet his common sense always revolted at the idea of playing at soldiers. Also they were so obviously inefficient. If he had done so—“ Oh, damn those ' ifs ' ” ! he said bitterly—he felt he would have made a keener man than most of them. But what was the use of brooding over sins of omission now ?

Then there were certain hopes held out by Socialistic orators. Whilst thoroughly disapproving the basic doctrines of Socialism he quite agreed with them on the folly of warfare. Like many, he

had rather hoped that the known continental strength of the brotherhood would prevent hostilities.

More than ever he now felt convinced that war was a colossal mistake, yet somehow the knowledge failed to comfort him. Here were normally peaceful men intent on destroying all he held dear, in a campaign which need never have come to pass had not the weakness of his country's fighting force offered a standing temptation to those responsible. And then the sergeant had called him a coward.

He felt the injustice. He was willing enough in a way, only—"Whizz!"—"Gawd! That sounded close!" Oh, why hadn't some one taught him what to do?

That was what unnerved him—his helplessness.

"Wish I'd thought to get the old woman out o' here before this," he murmured. An idea struck him. With a preliminary nervous glance up and down the deserted street he started at a brisk trot for the "Red Lion."

"Sorry," said the landlord in answer to his eager inquiries, "but there's not a horse or cart in the place. Soldiers took 'em all. You should 'a come sooner."

This was a facer. Smith fumbled the useless coins in his pocket, loath to abandon his hope, yet realizing the futility of it.

"What shall I do?" he inquired blankly.

"Go home," said the other. "Go home and stay quiet. There's not much risk. They aren't shelling the town deliberate like—only stray shots."

Wearily the man turned away. The firing had drawn closer, and the rattle and roar caused vague

thrills to run through him. It was an outrage that his young wife should be placed in peril through no fault of his or hers. If somebody had shown him what to do he would teach these insolent foreigners—

“ Hark ! What was that ? ”

He had attended enough matches to know the sound of cheering by this time. Perhaps the home team had scored.

Vain hope ! With a rattle of hoofs an orderly tore past, to plunge violently into the post office. Shambling after him in the hope of news, Smith found his questioning met with more rudeness. The message delivered over the telephone intimated, however, that Colesworth Rise had been carried by the enemy. The third division was falling back on the town. Did that mean scrappin' in town ?

“ Yus,” said the orderly ; “ an' I 'ope they'll — well shoot *you* first thing ! ”

Here was a second insult from the lips of his own side, and he took it in silence. Yet he had always considered himself a fighting man. As he retreated in the direction of his own home, a window sash slipped up and a neighbour's head popped out.

“ Find out anything ? ”

“ Not much. There's goin' to be street fightin'.”

“ No ? ”

Both men looked around wonderingly. Bar the continuous roar to the south, everything seemed so peaceful. The quiet street bore the aspect of Sunday afternoon at the dinner hour.

“ Wish I'd got the missus an' kids out o' here,” said the neighbour. “ Got a gun ? ” he added.

Smith shook his head, and at the warning note of a strayed bullet the other hastily withdrew. His

selfish anxiety to get his own person out of danger vexed and displeased Smith.

“ ’Spose I’d better be getting on ’ome meself,” he ruminated. “ Plucky lot o’ fools we seem to be in this town ; but what in ’ell can a man do ? ”

He turned wearily on his way to comfort as best he could the pale-faced girl awaiting him in the front room. As he entered, her eyes met his with the same wistful questioning he had read in the wounded dog’s. Once more his value to this woman as a protector smote him in the face.

“ Sorry, ol’ lady,” he muttered vaguely. “ I never thought it’d come to this.”

She did not reproach him. Silently they sat down together to await the outcome.

It was not long delayed, though the actual time seemed an eternity. The din had been drawing closer with amazing rapidity, and now the first heavy impact of the modern bullet shook the jerry-built wall of the house. More followed, and hob-nailed boots grated on the pavement. There was a sound of men running, shots, sharp cries, and the smashing of wooden doors. A high-pitched voice bade them open instantly. Before Smith could rise to do so the stroke of a butt-end smote the lock from the door, and into the room tumbled a handful of harassed-looking men. The subaltern in command advised Mrs. Smith to clear out—finding time even then to throw a note of kindness into his voice—but whether she was too dazed to understand, or whether her instincts would not permit her to abandon her home, she would not follow his advice. Without further parley he turned to his men, who had already opened fire through the windows over-

looking the common. The house rang with the clangour of the explosions, and stank with the fumes of cordite.

Presently, in a dark mist, Smith seemed to see the anguished face of the sergeant—the sergeant who had been rude to him.

“ 'Ere ! ” he said, thrusting a hot rifle into the nerveless hands.

Hurried inquiry as to the manipulation of the arm, however, was only met by a fallen jaw and a peaceful, unseeing gaze. The sergeant had fought for Smith in war, and worked for his advantage in peace for many years. It was unseemly that his last moments should be disturbed with the wearisome task of instructing another recruit. Seeing the dark stain spread on the dirty tunic, Smith understood what had happened and turned away to the officer.

“ 'Ow—— ” he began ; then noticed that the boy was sitting on a chair and looking deadly pale.

“ Christ,” said the subaltern, sliding gently to the floor.

A man was crouching in the window, firing with a persistent and careful regularity which savoured of good craftsmanship. He was what he himself described as a “ fus' clars shot,” and knew within himself that only the chicanery of jealous superiors had denied him his marksman's badge. His own work was performed with the little mannerisms and the perfervid zeal of the artist, but from Smith's point of view he was small help. All he could vouchsafe was some abstruse remark about the “ barleycorn.” The bolt action was not hard to grasp, however, so, snatching a handful of ammuni-



tion from the dead, Smith went to work as best he could, firing mechanically at the flashes from the hedgerow, and the palings which surrounded the football ground. Had he not contrived to get his sights set at fifteen yards he might have done quite a lot of execution.

The whole house front was dim with the dust and the chips of brickwork kicked skyward by the bullets. Smith did not care. At the eleventh hour he was helping to defend his own, and all his heart was in the task. He was aroused by a hand on his shoulder. The expert on "barleycorns" was speaking to him.

"Let's get," he whispered. "Orficer's dead, an' you an' me's the only ones left. It ain't our fault. If they'd been less than six to one it'd been different."

It sounded like sound advice, and Smith's wild eye sought his mate. He could not see her at first, although a bundle in the corner roused vague apprehension. He stumbled towards it; but before his numbed brain could understand the meaning of the crimson stain on the carpet a merciful bullet chipped the jamb of the window and, snarling across the room, flicked body and soul apart.

As he fell, hoarse, alien voices came roaring down the street. The "fus' clars shot" looked pensively on the dead, and changed his plan of campaign.

"After all, it's me job," he said.

Running to the door he met the first rush at the point of his solitary bayonet. Shouting, he died on the threshold which Smith himself had been unable to guard.



**A MORAL VICTORY**



## A MORAL VICTORY

(WRITTEN IN 1917)

THE company sergeant-major had undertaken the tour of duty from midnight to 3 a.m., so I was due to be awakened by him at the latter hour. Such being the case I should have been surprised, though I was not, when he came into my dug-out and announced that it was stand-to. Stand-to should have been at six, the end of my shift.

Not only this, but the dug-out had become a tent, what should have been the bed of Mr. Whitecliffe, Temp. 2nd Lieut., was occupied by a stranger, a very bright lamp was on the table, and a man in what appeared to be white underclothing was standing in the entry.

I had a feeling that I must have skipped something, that the German 5·9 batteries must have scored a direct hit in the night, and that thenceforward I must have lain dead for several thousand years. Now, however, I was awake, and the man in white, who was obviously the new company sergeant-major—the old one I had left in my dead past should have called me at three o'clock—was waking the usurper of Whitecliff's place, in a new language which I understood as well as English. I have forgotten it again now, but I am positive that the two tongues—both the Blue and the White—

were completely foreign. It did not seem strange, however, that I should understand them any more than that I should know the man on the bed, without an introduction, as the commander of the company.

Both the sergeant-major and the commander were tall men, and their eyes were most noticeable. They were clean-shaven, and their faces were worn and strangely wistful. When the commander stood up and put on his helmet and strapped on his sword, I noticed with some surprise that they were in no wise differentiated. Both wore the same close-fitting silk clothing which bore no badge of rank and the swords and copper helmets were identical.

“ Then where do I come in ? ” I said.

I had turned in as a highly respectable platoon commander, but times seemed to have changed.

The S.M. smiled at me.

“ You are an Illusion of the Past,” he said.

It seemed natural enough and I liked the sound of his voice. He was a kind man, although very weary—not with bodily fatigue, the other kind. But he seemed everlastingly patient. So did the commander.

Now neither of these men had spoken to me yet—saving for the few words that had revealed my present position to me. It was thus rather astonishing, I reflected, that I should already know so much about them.

“ The enemy are quiet,” said the sergeant-major, “ and it looks like fine weather. Please God the attack will go forward without a hitch. They broke back at three o’clock before our patrol, and

there was some shouting in their line when they reached it."

The commander seemed pleased at this in a grave way. We left the tent now and I found that the trenches I had known so well had vanished; in their place there was only a line of small tents, and the men were sitting out in open order on the grass in front of them.

It was not light enough to see the enemy's lines, so presumably these strange people were still standing to arms, but they appeared to have started breakfast notwithstanding. A man with a kettle was even serving out hot drinks in the gloom, yet the commander made no comment. The German front line had been about a hundred yards away hereabouts. Supposing—suddenly I remembered a certain old Karl and his matutinal machine-gun and regretted the disappearance of the trench. At the same moment I became aware that the commander was speaking.

"Your name is Illusion," he said, "and that is but another name for what you dread. You were thinking——"

"Of a certain German—a machine-gun expert," I told him. "I hope," I added nervously, "that he is an illusion too."

"A gun!" exclaimed the commander. "You imply that the Germans might begin to kill us? Ah, then I should consider myself in luck. What do you think, sergeant-major? Our friend from long ago is hopeful"—this was hardly a correct interpretation of my attitude of mind—"that they will open fire."

"Well, they are weakening, sir," said the sergeant-

major, brightening. "You can feel it clear. I doubt, however, if our luck will hold to that extent. But I'll bet you this, sir," he added, "I'm open to bet they fire before the day is over."

"If they do they're done," said the other. "No, sir," he added, turning to me, "you have left guns as anything but a last resort, as a weapon of any practical value, in the world of long ago from which you come. If you are to march with us to-day you must fight with your brains. I doubt if you understand me?"

"I understand that you have just said the same thing I have been accustomed to hear," I said. "We did try always to fight with our brains."

"Yes," he agreed after a pause. "But I expect nevertheless that we are at cross purposes so far. It is necessary for me to tell you that your weapons and the continual improvement of those weapons all the time prevented you from doing that very thing—that is in the sense in which I meant it. Men can't go on the wrong track for ever though. After a time they found out and began to simplify the one thing and to work up the other. Personally I am in favour of complete disarmament, but then that's only my idea, and I am only the commander of this company. We will have breakfast now if you feel like it and I will try and bring your ideas up to date. We have to attack in about an hour's time and I want to go over and inform the enemy first."

It seemed to be futile to be surprised any further by a warrior who advocated disarmament and contemplated desertion aloud in the presence of



his men, so I followed him back to the tent in silence.

“Your trouble is this,” he went on presently—he seemed to have a rather disconcerting knack of reading my thoughts—“that you have jumped direct from an age that still believed in the fear of death as the deciding weapon, as the supreme decisive force. You were convinced that you wore away the enemy’s *moral* by keeping that fear uppermost in his mind. I want you now to grasp the idea that men no longer fear death—if they ever did, which I doubt. I believe that no man ever died without a feeling of relief at the last anyway. What really scared them was having to continue to live in the state of affairs you produced for their benefit. After a man, for instance, had lain a certain time in a dirty ditch with his nerves exposed to the wear and tear of a most damnable noise and vibration, and that suggestion of painful wounds made by the sight of other men painfully wounded, then it was that he became afraid, useless as a soldier, and probably ran for it. Moreover,” he continued, as I was still silent, “men have now for long realized that the use of material weapons is a sign of weakness.”

“I don’t quite follow you,” I said.

“Let me explain,” he replied. “Supposing you were attacked by a lion, would you shoot?”

“Most certainly,” I replied.

He laughed.

“You would not shoot at a mouse though, if that went for you,” he said. “If you consider, you will understand that to show a wish to destroy is to confess fear.”

" I see," I said slowly.

" Then you see, too, do you not, that if fear be the one thing the enemy wants to conceal he will not use his guns if he can help it ? "

This seemed a topsy-turvy kind of argument to me, but I forbore comment and turned my attention to my breakfast. As we finished the meal, he spoke again of his strange intention of going over to the enemy.

" I can go over any time I choose," he said in answer to my inquiries, " at least it has been my habit for some time. Stay there? Oh no—— "

I felt profoundly ignorant, but he was as patient as ever.

" We only walk up to their line and look them over. The S.M. usually comes with me."

I felt a little dizzy. The sergeant-major usually accompanied him in a morning inspection of the enemy's sentries.

I suggested that it might not be a bad idea to take the company too, seeing that this enemy of his was so complaisant.

' Well, as a matter of fact, I am going to," he admitted, " if they will follow. But that comes later. I am going alone in the first place."

' Why ? "

' To tell them we are about to attack."

' To tell them—— "

" That we are about to attack."

He frowned and looked thoughtfully at the floor, and with such a strange confidence had this man inspired me that I accepted his idea as sane and sound.

“ But, if they tolerate visitors, why do you not send your message by an orderly ? ” I said.

He laughed quite cheerily.

A soldier identical as to dress and equipment with his commander—but I believe he was a private—had come in with another dish. “ This man,” said the commander, “ who is an Illusion of the Past, has suggested that I should send you to the enemy with a message. Will you go ? ”

The orderly smiled sourly.

“ I will go with the company,” he said. He spoke in the same measured way as the commander. “ But to go alone is a physical impossibility for me, sir. He should know that.”

“ Tell him why,” said the commander. “ He wishes to know what it is that would prevent you——.”

“ Just that,” said the orderly with a trifle of roughness in his tone, and for the first time I became aware of the difference between these two men. “ Illusion—Fear.”

“ But what are you afraid for ? ” I persisted.

The man made no answer.

I turned helplessly to the commander.

“ You are hiding something from me,” I said. “ I know by your face and the faces of your men that there is danger in this place. But you appear to defy it successfully. What is it ? ”

“ There is no danger.”

“ You—— ” I stopped suddenly, and a wave of dismay seemed to sweep over me. Were they mad ?

The commander was eyeing me unseeingly.

“ As yet,” he remarked presently, “ you are an encumbrance to us. You are unaware of what we

are facing, and that means that my men are supporting you. You are not bearing your part."

"But I wish to," I said.

"Then you shall," he returned. "I will let you wear the helmet of a casualty"—so they had casualties, after all—"and you shall go forward with us. But you may not carry a sword."

"What do I fight with, then?"

"You are not to fight," he said. "You are to stay with me as long as you can—but I do not wish you to fight. I will tell you briefly," he added, "what you are to face and how. You are to face an Illusion that is worse than death, and for the present you in particular are to face it by fixing your mind on me and following where I lead. That is your duty."

"What is this Illusion, then?"

"The thing that wins battles——"

"The destruction of the enemy's forces," I quoted.

"Is that everything?" he said. "I know of your war—which you won—and yet you did not destroy one in six of your enemy. What was it you destroyed? What is Everything in an army?"

I think he prompted me by means I did not then understand, because the answer came in a flash. It was just one sentence heard first at some forgotten lecture.

"*Moral* is eveything," I said. "It was a general that told me that."

"Did you ask him what he meant by *moral*?"

"I did, but he could not say. He only said again that it was Everything and that I would find it so. I did. But I am no wiser than that general to this day. I can't describe it."

“ Neither can I, but I can speak simply about—about Telepathy. You understand that ? ”

“ I am not interested in Spiritualism,” I said.

If he had called me a fool it would have been less than justice. But he was patient still.

“ I know nothing of that either,” he said. “ I am only a soldier, and those things of the spirit are above me. War is very material. We only deal in material things like Telepathy.

“ I do not know,” he went on as I sat abashed, “ what was known of this in your world. Stop me if I speak of what you do not understand.

“ You understand the electric current that the primitive peoples of Central Africa employ ? You do. Then the sending of messages by electric disturbances without conveyance—wireless is the word. The wireless is the first thing we used, and the second—you understand brain-work ? ”

“ In a way—yes.”

“ Then this is enough. When your brain is at work it undergoes chemical changes. Every chemical change means structural change and disturbance. The thoughts and emotions of your mind, most particularly those which cannot be expressed in words—for they are the strongest by far as you must know—are causing waves, and the waves are striking on the cells of the brains of other men, and similar actions are set up and the same thoughts and the same emotions are there as well. Now I have answered for your general. You say you recognized ‘ *moral* ’ when you met it. How did you—what shall I say ?—make it ? ”

“ It isn’t a thing you make,” I said. “ You can only raise or lower it.”

“ How did you raise then the *moral* of your men ? ”

“ Any way. A word or a joke perhaps. A joke especially goes a long way.”

“ Always ? ”

“ Yes—no. Now that has struck me,” I cried. “ I remember in the height of a bombardment—when I was new to the work—how a sergeant made some joke and then laughed, obviously to cheer us up, and it had just the opposite effect. I had been all right until then. Yet he was only doing what he had been told to do, and he meant well.”

“ He meant well,” agreed the commander, “ and the mistake was made by the man that instructed him. The mistake was a common one, it has been described by a wiser man than me as confounding the symptom with the thing. When men are so—as you were—in bombardment, falsehood is inevitably revealed. One must then be honest and God shows the way. There is no rule, then, that the wisest man can lay down, so it is better to lay down none at all.”

“ You are wise,” I said, half awed by this man.

“ I am nothing,” he replied, “ but the commander of this company. The thing you speak of as *moral*,” he continued, “ is cumulative and is a state of being which is passed from man to man. Your sergeant’s joke had really next to nothing to do with it, though it may have acted in a primitive way ”—he tapped a copper head-piece which the orderly had laid on the table—“ in drawing attention to your state of mind. I do not know. Did you never feel other men’s fear ? ”

“ By God,” I cried, “ you are right. I have felt it behind my back.”

“ Lift up that Cross and carry it,” he answered, “ all you can. That is the enemy. Men do not fear death. It is the darkness and the solitude. It is the nameless evil they fear that lives in the souls of men themselves.”

“ It is in your own soul,” he said, “ and that is the way in war—your own fear is your opponent and until that is down you must be content to strive with it. In a bayonet fight how would it go if every man disengaged in order to help his comrade first. That would be presumption, not sacrifice.”

“ But to come back to *moral*,” he went on. “ It is, as your general told you, everything. So much so that in time men came to see that more was wanted than mere statement. They studied it then, till they came to see that perfection of arms was of less than secondary importance to it.”

“ I cannot follow you,” I said. “ The highest *moral* in the world must surely be broken in time by—by continual artillery fire, for instance.”

“ It was for a long time,” he said, “ and for a long time men saw strange experiments in which troops perished in seemingly mad attacks upon impossible positions. Then came the helmets, and an army walked over another army, disarmed their enemies and captured guns with the gunners standing idly by.”

“ Was there no resistance ? ” I asked.

I knew the commander could not lie.

“ They did not know at the time. The vanquished

men could only say they were afraid. We know now though."

"It was an act of God," I said.

But the commander shook his head.

"An act of Satan," he corrected. "Surely you know that War is a most evil thing and the weapons of war are evil. It was but a new weapon, and as such things often are it was turned against its originators. It was made more effective by the very men who had first suffered from it. Put on your helmet."

I took the copper helmet from the table and fitted it on to my head. It was not very heavy. At first I felt nothing. Then all at once I was not so sure. Then something was weighing upon me. I cannot say I was conscious of wrong-doing, but against me was a great disapproval. I felt lonely and dismayed, much as a man unjustly accused, against whom a clear case is being skilfully made out. This grew upon me and with it a lassitude of despair.

My mind passed rapidly from a state of indignant denial to a weary acceptance of the inevitable, and then——

With one swift movement the commander had snatched the helmet from my head. He was only just in time, for I was on my feet, and even with the helmet off I knew that it was only the pressure of his hand on mine that held me still to that horrible place. A dread was upon me that no tongue could describe, a fear unreasoning, bestial. I clung to the commander as unashamed as a frightened child.

I do not remember what he said, but it was



pitiful and forbearing. The terror died down and left me weak and wholly awe-stricken. I still held to him.

“ You are the Christ,” I said.

“ I am nothing,” he answered, “ but the commander of this company.” He bent his worn face—I thought I knew what made it so weary now—over the helmet and fumbled in its interior.

“ You will have to put this on again,” he said, “ because you have become one of us. The enemy has your attraction and you will not be able to break away from them. So far you were unconsciously supporting yourself upon the courage of others and your own ignorance of danger. But ”—he moved a small plug in a chain from one hole to another—“ you need not fear a repetition of what you have experienced. Just now you were facing this power of darkness alone. As I have set this now ”—he handed the helmet back to me—“ you are in touch with both enemy and friend.” I replaced the helmet and immediately found peace. The terror rolled away and I felt safe and comforted. The danger was there, I could still feel it, but it now appeared more distant. My chances seemed good, in fact.

“ And now,” said the commander, “ I must pay that visit.”

It came upon me then that I did not care to cross that No Man’s Land, but I had undertaken to do it, and the commander willed it.

The sun had risen as we started and the company had stood down. Only a string of sentries about twenty yards in advance of the tents marked the line. They paid no attention to us. There was an orchard about a couple of hundred yards from the

sentinies and a cottage beyond. I do not remember more.

The commander had passed through the line of the sentinels and was walking slowly across the grass field to the orchard hedge. I had followed him and it seemed I would continue to do so, but for how long—it was unspeakable, I had sooner have faced a firing-party.

He never faltered. I became aware that the sergeant-major was with us, but the terror of that field overbore any recollection as to how he had arrived there. His face was white and grim, and I thought—I do not know what I thought——

A man had sprung from the ground clinging to the commander's knees and screaming and blaspheming. We were more than half-way now and he had been lying hidden in the long grass. The commander bent to disengage him and as he stooped six or seven more men arose—blue was their colour, not white—and began to retire towards the hedge. The sergeant-major made a step towards the nearest one and he fell dead. Nothing had touched him. The other—the one we had first dislodged—had gone mad. He was sitting in the grass now with his helmet off screaming with laughter. I did not dare to look at him.

We reached the hedge. I felt I was done for now, but the courage of despair kept me on my legs. I could see white faces in the branches staring at us—evil inscrutable faces, mouths slightly open as if in astonishment and lips drawn back. Their bitter eyes one felt most; but it was all unreal. One could not think of them as men, only as devils in a nightmare staring in dead silence and abomin-

able in hatred. Then the commander spoke and his voice was like the crack of a whip.

“ We are going to attack,” he said.

Years of silence seemed to intervene, broken only by the screams of the maniac.

“ You are going to attack,” then muttered a voice.

There was some confusion in my mind.

“ They speak a different language,” I mumbled inanely.

It seemed they did, but I understood all that was said, even as I had understood the commander.

There was a fading away in front of us, and the next thing I knew, the faces had fallen back slowly until we had the hedge to ourselves.

They only gave a few yards, I believe, and behind them I could see other men in blue, advancing and pausing as if perplexed. They all seemed to pause but one.

“ Back ! ” cried the sergeant-major at my side, as he saw what was to come.

It had not occurred to me yet that amongst the changes brought about by this warfare would be a return to the older idea of individual championship. It did not occur to me at the time I may say. Perhaps it was as well. It was only later that I knew how we had been trapped.

The man now approaching from the cottage beyond the orchard was one whose face was known to more than his immediate friends, and it must be borne in mind that retirement was next to impossible. We ourselves had driven in a small picket with results to them which I have noted above. At this deadly game—call it hypnotism

or whatever name you please—the least sign of faltering would have been fatal; especially situated as we were, alone and facing an army of enemies. And here was this tall man in blue striding to meet us, and the commander awaiting him by the hedge.

The sergeant-major had sunk on his knees and seemed to be praying. I think it was fear if anything that kept me on my feet. The man in blue had halted now and his followers had closed up somewhat behind him. I think he wished us good morning, and that he thereby made a mistake.

“We are about to attack,” said the commander again.

“That is unfortunate for you,” was the reply.

“Neither the one thing nor the other. I do not wish it, but I am the commander of this company and those are my orders.”

“And mine are that this line shall be held. I am leader of this army.”

Was there a hint of iron in the voice or was it only my imagination?

That of our commander had not changed. He spoke as he had spoken to me in the tent, neither austere nor with passion. I began to feel as if a ray of hope yet remained in the world, albeit a feeble one.

“Then,” said the commander, “there is nothing further to say.”

I imagined there might be a chance now to disengage and return to our own lines, but he stood his ground. It became a question as to who should speak next. The silence could not last for ever. It was the enemy who broke it and it was a distinct challenge.

“ Sir,” he said, and there was an ominous rustle behind him, “ you will return to your own men.”

It was an order, and it must be obeyed or—I knew not what. I was down on my knees beside the sergeant-major now, and holding his hand. I felt that the critical moment had come and that the heavens were about to burst over our heads, to hurl us to some nameless doom. And in the centre of all things this Order— If only—But the commander was speaking again, very slowly. “ I will not,” he said.

There was perhaps a slight emphasis on the last word.

Then all at once miracles began to happen. The scene changed ; a roar of cheering was in my ears ; a sound of running feet. The Illusion had lifted. The self-styled leader of the enemy was but a man, a man consumed by mortal terror withal, and now in full flight, lost in a rabble of blue-clad figures. I was now quite unafraid, and as we crashed through the hedge and doubled across the orchard, I noticed without emotion that certain of the enemy were dead. Others crying pitifully for mercy were throwing away their swords and staggering back through our lines to the rear. Here and there, still unmoved, I encountered glimpses of faces from which the light of reason had departed. I was borne on by the rolling human wave and thinking of nothing but the work in hand and the man I was following.

We halted at the top of a hill and I became aware that I had run miles. I was half blind with sweat and tired beyond words, but still in that curious detached state of mind one seems to slip into in battle. We had taken an immense number of

prisoners, but across the bare fields ahead blue-clad figures were still legging it.

Our halt may have been to allow our line to reform, or it may have been because of a tinge of doubt in the air again. I seemed to see men urging one another behind my back and asking unspoken questions. Ahead of us I thought I saw helmets in a wood. Some of the enemy perhaps still capable of withstanding the Terror.

At the sight I thought, "Perhaps a slight retirement would be best—to the lower ground in our rear—where the enemy could not see us——"

"Stop that!" said the commander suddenly.

He was speaking to me, and it was the first time he had spoken sharply. I became ashamed of my thought.

Then in the most natural way in the world the enemy opened fire. A flash of bluish light raced across the wood and in a moment bullets were spitting and crashing around us. A shell whizzed and the brown earth spouted in front. It was the herald of a most unholy curtain fire, but our casualties were slight, for we were up and over the hill in an instant, and on that instant the rifle fire died down. The shelling continued, but mingling with the crash and thunder of it was the sound of hooves and the fields were suddenly alive with cavalry. I had half expected this. I knew somehow that it would be cavalry, not motor cyclists or aeroplanes or anything fantastic like that.

Living men on living horses were needed, and Lord! how they rode! It was only a matter of minutes, however, before the shelling also had stopped, and a great peace fell upon the land.

“ And now ? ” I asked.

“ Now,” said the commander, “ we may bury our dead. It is finished.”

And with that he burst into tears.

Some one shook my foot and it was dark. Then an electric torch flashed.

“ Three o'clock,” said the sergeant-major.

Not the sergeant-major of my vision though.

This one wore thigh boots over muddy khaki and had a red face and a black moustache.

“ Shall I light the candle, sir ? It's a fine star-light night, but a bit cold and all.”

“ All right, sergeant-major ”—yawn—“ anything to report ? ”

“ Nothing to report, sir. It's been very quiet. Leastways,” he added, “ I've had a little trouble with the men on No. 6 Post. Beggin' y'r pardon, sir, but it's that Corporal Russell. I've took him off and put Leary in 'is place.”

“ What's Russell been doing ? ” I asked.

The sergeant-major seemed perplexed.

“ There's no crime against 'im, sir,” he said hesitatingly, “ but—well, it's just this, sir, 'e's got the wind up fair, and 'e puts it up the men. It's not what 'e *does*, sir. I believe 'e tries to do 'is duty. It's just that, well—the men know it an' they get windy too. I just took 'im off and put Leary on. It'll be all right now, sir.” The sergeant-major chuckled reminiscently.

“ What's happened, sergeant-major ? ”

“ Oh, nothin' much, sir. Only just after I relieved Corporal Russell and Corporal Leary was gettin' 'is orders, two of the lads come down tellin'

the tale about a platoon or two of Fritzes lyin' just outside the wire. The sentries in the post had all but pulled the pins of a couple of bombs before we got to them. Leary climbs the parapet and walks out to the wire.

“ ‘——!’ says 'e.”

I cannot repeat the word Corporal Leary had used.

THE END









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