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A Dangerous Mission

A Story of the Philippines.



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BY 
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"Thomas Craigwill," "The Haunted Light-house,"
etc.



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PREFACE.

Believing that honesty, and frankness in dealing with the public should be an author's first thought, I warn you, indulgent reader of this little volume, that searching for a moral between its covers will be valuable time lost. But if by any obscure chance one of you discovers something contained herein that you think is a moral, have pity on the author, cherish the thought in your memory, but I adjure you to not mention it even to your "dearest and nearest" friend.

I might as well confess (for you will certainly find it out before you have read the last chapter) that I did not at first intend to impose on you by having this story published in book form; it was written with a selfish purpose, i. e., my own amusement.

But when the time came to write "The End" and say good-bye forever to the many friends of my imagination, they objected

so strenuously to being left lying in some close fitting drawer to be covered with foul smelling dust, and eaten by moths, I shamefacedly proposed "fire" as the easiest way out of the difficulty, but their horror at the mere mention of the word touched my heart. "We are your own children," they cried. "How can you be so heartless as to consign us to such a fate? Is this your gratitude for all we have done for you!"

When I gave the subject more serious thought I remembered how when tired and worn in mind and body, they came to comfort and amuse me, and how they tried to make me forget all the cares, and worry of this busy old world; so when a friend suggested the plan of building them a "Home" in book form, I gladly consented, for I love them.

I cannot ask you to do the same, but I do ask you to deal as kindly with them as your sense of justice will permit, and now allow me to present to you these friends, (Floyd Vandercook; Leudesso, the Filipino Heafford Vandercook; Wadna Virden, and Clayton Melrose)—in "A Dangerous Mission."

A DANGEROUS MISSION

A DANGEROUS MISSION.

A STORY OF THE PHILIPPINES.

CHAPTER I.

“Floyd, you remember me speaking to you several days ago regarding what I considered would be a safe place to invest some capital: I mean the Philippines. From present indications I am led to believe that this Government will acquire them, through treaty; while I am not sure that they will be annexed, I am almost certain that whatever government is set up there, the United States will at least establish a protectorate over them. Under these circumstances, boy, the internal industries of the Islands are bound to grow, and their natural wealth will surely be utilized, and like a flower that has drooped for the want of a little timely care, they will take a new lease of life, and grow and bloom.

They are bound to do this, boy. The old and much abused saying that, 'Trade will follow the flag,' is nevertheless true, and when that flag happens to be the Stars and Stripes it is an already accomplished fact.

"Now then, boy, this being the case, it is only fair to presume that capital will at once turn in that direction for investment, for I believe that a good majority of the thinking men of business look at the matter just as I do. But as bitter experience has taught me not to take a leap in the dark, as it were, I must know for a certainty the condition of the Islands, and in what to invest, and the only way to know this, my boy, is to investigate; and I have decided to send a man there for that purpose."

The speaker was Mr. Heafford Vandercook, a wealthy capitalist of Chicago. Place, his private office on State Street. Time, Nov. 1st, 1898.

On the opposite side of the table sat his nephew, Floyd Vandercook, to whom the opening remarks of this chapter were addressed. A handsome young man of twenty-two years. Tall, slender, with large, honest blue eyes that fairly beamed with

good nature and intelligence. His well-shaped head was adorned with a great mass of light brown hair, combed back from a high and broad forehead. He was handsome more on account of his manly appearance and gentlemanly dignity and bearing than his features and dress.

As his uncle's confidential secretary and adviser he occupied a position that spoke more for his sterling worth and character, than anything that could be said in his behalf.

His uncle always consulted him on all matters, and had learned to place the utmost confidence in his advice and counsel.

Perhaps, in taking Floyd into his confidence, Heafford Vandercook had in mind the safety of his millions after his death, for it was the old man's intention to leave all his great wealth to Floyd, who beside Clayton Melrose, was his only heir.

But as Melrose was supposed to be very wealthy by an inheritance from his mother, he could not hope to profit by the death of his mother's brother, Heafford Vandercook, unless, perchance, Floyd should die.

Like all shrewd men of wealth, Mr. Van-

dercook was constantly on the alert for "openings" as he called them, where he could invest some of his capital to good advantage. And he thought he saw in the Philippine Islands, especially Luzon, one of the openings which he sought, and he decided to send Floyd there to investigate. He could have found a better man, perhaps, but a rumor had reached him that his favorite nephew was about to marry. Who, rumor did not state.

This he considered such a crime, being himself a bachelor, that he decided to make Floyd his commissioner in order to thwart it. In reaching this decision he made himself believe that he was doing his nephew a great service.

"It will prove their love for each other; whoever the girl is, I would not trust her till I had proven her to be true. They are all jilts, as fickle as the weather," said he. And his mind was made up. But here was where Heafford Vandercook made the one and fatal error of his life. An error that brought untold agony to himself, and those he loved dearly and tenderly, and to avoid which he would willingly have

parted with all his great fortune; but he did not know, and not knowing, he was powerless to avert the terrible consequences.

“Yes,” said he, looking sharply at his nephew to note the effect of the announcement, “I have about decided to send a man there.”

“Capital idea, Uncle, I quite agree with you. Men with money to invest will, as you say, be quick to embrace the advantages this new field holds.

“What you want is someone to go over the ground thoroughly, note its natural resources, its capability for improvement, its probable future government, which will of necessity play a very important part and on which more than on anything else depends its prosperity. I imagine it will be no easy matter to find a man suitable for this very important commission. He must be a man of experience, and extraordinary good judgment, and one in whom you have the utmost confidence. Cousin Melrose is capable, and I believe he would be—”

“Just the man to advise me to invest in some worthless enterprise. No, Floyd, Clayton Melrose is not the man I want.

Let him go on wasting the money his parents worked hard to lay by, he'll never spend a cent of mine. No, I have a man in mind who, although young and without much experience, I am positive will be just the man I want. At least I shall be satisfied with whatever report he brings back. I wish to consult you about him."

"I am sure, Uncle, that your selection will be all that I could desire, but I thank you for your kindneess all the same."

"Well Floyd, I am not so sure that you will not object when I tell you his name. It all depends on you, however, if you say he is to go, why go he must. If you say he must not go I will try to find someone else. So make no rash decision until you know his name."

"My Uncle Vandercook's recommendation is enough for me. I am perfectly willing that he should go, whoever he may be, if you choose to honor me by asking my opinion. Who is he?"

"The first two letters of his name are Floyd Vandercook. Ha! Ha! Floyd, this is once your old uncle has outwitted you. Well, well, I did that nicely." The old

gentleman's success at getting his nephew's promise to go before he knew it, pleased him greatly and he rubbed his hands together gleefully. Looking up he encountered his nephew's eyes fixed on him with a shade of mixed reproach and doubt.

"Well, what is it, Floyd, my boy? Don't you want to go, after all? I warned you not to be hasty."

"Uncle, you do not know how I appreciate the honor, but I am not so sure after all of the wisdom of your choice. Then, Uncle, there is something else I ought to have told you before." Floyd hesitated a little, then continued: "You may be angry with me, but I lacked the courage to tell you before;" here he hesitated again.

His uncle seemed annoyed at this and said: "Well, well, out with it; been 'dipping in' a little at the Board? How much is it, boy? I'll fix it, but don't do it again. Don't do it again, boy; we've all got to learn."

Floyd could not repress a smile at the bare thought, and said: "No! No! Uncle, not half so bad as that. Fact is, uncle, I'm in love. There, you know it and can

understand my feelings about going so far away.”

His uncle assumed to be greatly surprised at the announcement and exclaimed: “You in love! Well, this is indeed a surprise, but I could hardly expect you to remain single as I have; there’s no pleasure in it I assure you. Who is she, may I ask?”

“Her name, Uncle, is Wadna Virden.”

At the mention of the name the old man’s air of assumed surprise gave way to one of genuine consternation. He fairly leaped from his chair. “Virden! Virden! How dare you, sir, ally yourself with a family the head of which is my bitterest enemy! Oh, Floyd, Floyd, you have hurt me cruelly.” He seated himself and placed his head in his hands, now more than ever determined to send his nephew away, and thwart what he now fully believed was a deliberate plan of Theodore Virden to gain a portion of his fortune.

Floyd, who had by this time recovered from his surprise at the strange conduct of his uncle, said kindly: “I am very sorry, dear Uncle, to have displeased you unwittingly. I did not know. Besides she is

not responsible for the acts of her father; whatever his sin you cannot blame her. You do not know her, dear Uncle, or you would love her too."

"Ah, Floyd, my boy," said the old man, slowly raising his head, "I'm still a weak man, to give way like this, but I will explain to you my reason. Of course the daughter is not to blame, but of that we will speak later.

"When I was a young man struggling for a place in the world I met a very beautiful girl in a town out West. I made her acquaintance, called, and finally ended by asking her to marry me. She professed to love me, and I believe she did, but her father would not give his consent until I had made a mark as a business man, and accumulated enough to keep his daughter from want. But he promised that when I could show a certificate of deposit for ten thousand dollars he would give his consent. I will never forget the parting. Her arms were about my neck and her head upon my shoulder as she bade me hurry back to her. This meeting, of course, was secret. Well, away I went full of hope and determination to claim her.

“Two years went by. I struck a good streak of gold out West and at the end of that time instead of ten thousand I had over two hundred thousand in clear cash. Ah Floyd, how proud I was and happy. The train that bore me to the town where she lived seemed to go at a snail’s pace. I wanted to fly. At last I arrived, and hired a hack and was driven to her home.

“‘Aha!’ I thought, as I approached the house, ‘they must be expecting me, lights everywhere!’ When I got nearer I could hear music, and the noise of rippling laughter and happy voices came to my ears.

“As I climbed the steps I met my love coming out leaning on the arm of a young man—and oh, it is still fresh in my mind—she wore a bridal veil and was followed by her maids and her parents.

“I turned deathly sick and dizzy for I knew only too well what it meant. I staggered away and tried to forget. I have been trying for thirty years, but have not succeeded. The man was Theodore Virden. The woman was the same that had promised to love me forever, that sealed her promise with a warm, fervent kiss. There, Floyd, you have it. I am still single.

“Wadna Virden is the daughter of the woman who broke my heart and made this world for me a place wherein to revel in stocks and bonds, my only pleasure, making money and calculating on its increase annually. Looking forward to the time when I might die and leave it all to my nephews.

“In Clayton Melrose I am disappointed. He is a spendthrift, a gambler, I believe, and I don't think of all the fortune he inherited from my sister's husband he can show a cash balance of ten thousand dollars. Therefore, Floyd, my hopes center in you. So it is not surprising that the mention of this name in so prominent a connection with your own and mine would tend to open up the old sore.

“You no doubt love her truly, but does she return your love? Ha, that's the question. If she does will she remain true to you? Ah, Floyd, look well to that. If only to please a whim of mine I ask you to go to Manila on this business without seeing her. If she loves you truly and is a true woman she will still love you when you return. Write her if you wish, an-

nouncing your departure, but put no foolishness in your letter. Will you do this, Floyd?"

"Your kindness to me, your generosity, Uncle, is worth any sacrifice I could make. Besides, your argument is sound. Yes, I will do as you say."

"Thanks Floyd, thanks! Now to business." He reached into a drawer and pulled out a number of papers and handed them to his nephew, saying: "This is your passport, and an introduction to General Otis, Admiral Dewey, and others, secured through the War Department. My instructions are: first make Aguinaldo's acquaintance. You will find this indispensable; then go over the island thoroughly. Keep your eyes open and investigate. Your draft drawn on the Banco Espanol Filipino will be honored for any amount, for I trust to your good sense not to abuse the privilege. I do not expect you to learn the things I want to know without money, so don't be miserly either. There, I guess that's all, Floyd. Except that in order to catch the boat that leaves New York Saturday you will have to start to-morrow morning. Do you think you can start so soon?"

“Yes, I will leave at ten-thirty to-morrow.”

“Very well, my boy, I feel sure of your success.” The two men arose and putting on their overcoats and hats were just in the act of passing out of the office, when a noise as of a heavy body stumbling and falling to the floor directly outside of the office door startled them. Then there was a scrambling and the next moment the street door closed with a loud slam. Floyd stood for a second gazing at his uncle, then with a bound he opened the door and rushed out, followed by the other. They found the street door, which was always left unlocked, closed and the lock sprung, which delayed them a moment, and when Floyd reached the street there was no one in sight.

“Well boy, what do you think of that,” said the old man, very much annoyed.

“Give it up, Uncle, unless it was some street waif who ran in there out of the cold, not knowing we were inside, and finding his mistake got out.”

“No sir, boy! I’m being shadowed.”

“Shadowed!” echoed Floyd.

“Yes sir, shadowed. I have stumbled over a man several times right at my own door lately. They want to know my plans. The cause of my success, or else—well, never mind, I am glad it’s settled for you to go, and the sooner the better. Now Floyd, boy, take care of yourself, you are my only hope. Don’t run into danger over there. Keep your eyes open, and God bless you. Good-bye.” The old man’s voice trembled a little as he held out his hand to his nephew and turned away his head to hide a tear.

Floyd pressed his hand warmly, and they separated, Heafford Vandercook, capitalist, going to his handsome residence to stay awake, all night perhaps, pondering over what he had done, and mayhap reproaching himself a little for doing it; but it was now too late to turn back. Floyd going to the hotel to pack up ready for the start on the morrow.

CHAPTER II.

Clayton Melrose was on the verge of financial ruin. Nearly all of the immense fortune he received at his father's death was spent, either at the Board of Trade or at the gaming table. The fortune he had received had proved his ruin. He was about Floyd Vandercook's age, was tall and handsome. Everyone supposed he was rich, which in part accounted for his popularity.

He entertained a bitter hatred for his cousin, and this feeling was intensified by the knowledge that some day Floyd would inherit the millions of Heafford Vandercook.

He knew that Floyd loved Wadna Virden, and he thought he detected in the manner of the young lady a sure sign that she returned Floyd's love.

The thought only served to strengthen his hatred for his cousin, for he hoped to win her for a bride himself. In this he

was seconded by her father, who made no secret of his admiration for Clayton.

When Floyd entered the office of his uncle he did not dream that he was being followed. But Clayton Melrose had decided that Floyd was a stumbling block in his pathway to ruin, so he determined to brush him aside by any means that suggested itself as the safest and surest. Therefore as Floyd entered the office he was followed noiselessly by his cousin who took up his station just outside the door. He overheard the conversation as described in the previous chapter, and came very nearly being discovered by the act of falling when hurrying from the door.

Even before he hurriedly left the building his mind was made up as to what course he would pursue. He thought the time had come for him to win fortune and bride by one master stroke.

He hurried across to Clark Street, and pulling his slouch hat farther down over his eyes, and turning his collar up around his ears he hastened southward. Further and further he went down the line of filth and licensed prostitution, looking neither

to the right nor to the left until he reached a place near the Twelfth Street viaduct. Here he entered, and approaching the bartender, whispered a few words in his ear, and passed into a stall where he was joined presently by a little yellow-faced man about forty years old, who, as he entered, took off his cap and bowed low, saying: "Did not expect Senior this night. What is it, something not gone well? What?—"

"Ha, Leudesso, here you are. Does this look as if things were not going right?" pointing to the bottle of wine near his elbow.

"Oh! I see the Senior do have good success; that more me pleased, so I drink me some wine to your health, Senior."

"Drink ahead, drink yourself blind if you wish, if you can drink and listen at the same time. Do you want to be rich, you old pirate? Of course you do. The time has come to act."

"Senior says act, act, all time. But how act when I can hear no rattle, no music down here when I walk, when I can feel no pesos there when I push my hand down in my pocket. You American queer fellows."

“Well, all that is changed now, Leudesso. I’m not broke. You were saying last night that you wanted to go back to Manila. Have you changed your mind?” At this question the Filipino’s eyes sparkled.

“Oh Senior, you must not talk like this if you don’t mean truth. Over there they soon get country free. If I go back I get office, be Chief. Have many men and plenty money. What you say, Senior Melrose?”

“You are to start to-morrow morning. You know who I mean when I tell you he is going there. He must never return, you understand. You will be a captain or something, so you must see to it that he stays in the Philippines. He is going there to investigate for his uncle. If he stays there and I get proof of his death I will get a wife, and another fortune. He has letters to Otis and Dewey, and hopes to get an audience with Aguinaldo. Now suppose Aguinaldo was given to understand that he was a spy in the pay of the United States, what would become of him?”

“Senior very smart. Aguinaldo would tell officer to watch, and when the time

comes put him in prison. Have trial and American would be shot.”

“And no one ever know how it happened, eh?”

“Oh yes, Senior, Leudesso would know.”

“Of course, I expect that, but no one in this country would be any wiser, would they?”

“No, unless I should happen to talk when I sleep,” said the yellow-faced rascal slyly.

“I’ll pay you for staying awake then. Now Leudesso, I leave it all to you. Gain his confidence. Bring me back proof of his death or proof that we will never see him again, and I will give you thirty thousand dollars. I will give you enough to-night for your expenses and more, and when the job is finished, the remainder. What do you say?”

“I only wait for tomorrow, Senior, then I will start. When I come back I expect to see you with black cloth on your hat and money plenty to burn, as you Americans say it.”

Money and jealousy! These two subtle fiends carnate go hand in hand. Where

one is found you are sure to find the other lurking near to fill up some vacant place in the mind of some poor, misguided soul that the other has left vacant. If we could only see the souls of the murdered, whose death can be traced directly to both of these evils, pass before us in review, what an army there would be. What a terrible sight would meet our gaze. Old and young alike have been claimed as victims by these two unmerciful elements in the make-up of mankind. Yet it would seem that human nature is incapable of learning the lesson that is daily presented to our view by the evils of money and jealousy. We read of a case of cold-blooded murder on account of jealousy or for money. We throw up our hands in horror, close our eyes to the sight, and the next minute we find ourselves craving for riches and power, or the demon of jealousy in our hearts calling forth for vengeance.

Had Clayton Melrose remained poor, or had the money he inherited been given him as he needed it, there is no doubt but that he would have grown up a good man, and the money now spent in sin and riotous

living would have proved a blessing to himself and to those with whom he came in contact, but, fate, if you will allow the expression, willed otherwise. He came in possession of a fortune to be used as he saw fit, and now in early manhood we find him a moral wreck; fortune gone, and his friends only awaiting the knowledge, before taking their leave. What can he do to make an honest living after being used to all the luxuries that money afforded. He is totally unfit for business; he will not work at menial labor; what can he do?

He has answered the question himself. He will win the fortune of his uncle. He will win by any means the hand of Wadna Virden in marriage, thereby making fortune doubly sure.

After having arranged details with the Filipino, the two men separated. When once outside Clayton Melrose bethought himself to take a stroll around to Floyd's rooms. He could afford to be pleasant to his cousin for *one* evening, after having arranged plans that he hoped would forever remove his cousin from his sight.

Floyd was writing a letter to Miss Virden when he heard a knock. Imagine his surprise when Clayton Melrose, all smiles, stepped into the room, with outstretched hand, saying: "Floyd, old fellow, I'm tired of this; what's the use of our being at enmity? Think of it, *cousins!* and except uncle we are the only ones of either family left."

"Ah, Clayton old fellow," said Floyd, clasping the outstretched hand, "you voice my sentiments exactly. Nothing can give me more pleasure than to wipe out all of the old imaginary feeling. I have been lonesome without you, and I was just thinking when you knocked that it would be far more pleasant for me, and make my task less hard if I could go away knowing that you held no grudge toward me." Then noticing the assumed look of surprise on Melrose's face he continued: "True, you do not know. I am off in the morning on a long journey."

"Why Floyd, what's up? I hope you have had no words with uncle? I thought you and he got along nicely."

"So we do. But you know uncle. He has

sent me to the Philippines to look over the prospects for investing some of his money.”

“Surely you are not crying about that, are you? He has bestowed a great honor on you. I consider you very lucky.”

“Well, I appreciate the honor and all that, but I feel as if all is not going to be right. I cannot account for the feeling; perhaps it is on account of what uncle told me to-night. He claims he is being shadowed, and seems to feel badly about it. Then, then,—”

“Then, Floyd, there’s Wadna, eh? I suppose you fixed it with her so that you are sure of her when you return, eh?”

“Not I, Clayton. She is as free as the air, but I would be telling a falsehood if I said I had no hopes in that direction. If when I return she has not ceased to think of me, I will do all I can to win her, for cousin, I do not mind telling you, I do love her.”

“Well, you do not intend to leave without seeing her.”

“That’s about the size of it, Clayton, but I’ve written a note to her which I’m going to ask you to post for me.”

“Which I’ll be glad to do. If the old

man wasn't such an old crank and prejudiced against me I would try and help him while you are away, which, now we have concluded to live like two civilized men, I hope won't be for long."

"I don't suppose I can be back much before a year, but I will think of this evening many a time away out there among strangers."

"And I here will think of it too, Floyd, and of you, but I'll say good-bye, for you will need some rest. Give old Aguinaldo my regards."

Thus they parted, Clayton Melrose well pleased with the meeting, thinking how easy after all it would be to win a fortune by disposing of his over trustful cousin.

After he had gone Floyd sat for some time buried in deep thought. "I wonder," he mused, "what brought Cousin Clayton up to see me. How pleasant he can be when he chooses, but I don't believe he meant a word of it. If he did he would not have waited so long. There is something back of it, whether for mischief or good I don't know, but I'll just drop uncle a line about it." After this task was finished he retired for a much needed rest.

CHAPTER III.

As Floyd boarded the steamer that was to carry him thousands of miles away from country and acquaintances, on a mission for which he could not help but feel he was disqualified, a feeling of unutterable loneliness, a sort of homesickness, came over him. He could not help feeling that his uncle had sent him on the mission for some other reason than that explained to him; what it was he could not conjecture. He scanned the faces of his fellow passengers closely, as if looking for the reason there, but they only returned the stare in a questioning way, so he went to his stateroom, and lying down fell fast asleep. When he awoke all was still save for the rhythmical throbbing and beating of the of the ship's engines. He wondered for a moment where he was, but a sudden pitching motion of the ship that brought the end of his berth in contact with his head, brought him to a realization of his sur-

roundings. He crawled wearily from his berth and made his way as best he could to the deck, for he felt the unmistakable signs of seasickness creeping over him. The night was clear but for all that a heavy swell was on, and the ship rolled and pitched continuously. It would rise high on the crest of a billow, then like an angry bird, would plunge swiftly down into the next, throwing the briny spray high on either side. Floyd gazed longingly astern for sight of land but nothing met his gaze but the never ending roll of white crested waves rushing madly on in each other's wake, and where one would sink down, another seemingly larger and more angry than the first would rise up in its place.

While standing gazing out upon the waste of waters he felt a touch on his arm, and a soft velvety voice with a very foreign accent said: "The Senior is not used to the water I see."

Floyd turned and saw standing by his side the Filipino, Leudesso. He wore a suit of black and looked like some well to do foreigner returning to his native land; but Floyd was in no mood to take kindly to the stranger's remarks and replied:

“I don't believe, sir, I have the honor of your acquaintance; therefore I fail to see how the question of my being used to the water can interest you. I admit, however, that I am not enjoying this ‘man in the blanket process of tossing.’ ”

“Your pardon, Senior, I beg, but I was about to add that if you would keep well you should not gaze out at the rushing sea. I have travelled plenty and that much have I learned.”

Floyd felt somewhat abashed by the quiet, dignified answer, and half sorry for his roughness, and turning to make reply found that his companion had disappeared. Well here was something at least to occupy his mind. He had made a fool of himself by his hasty remarks and had learned to keep his eyes off the water if he would avoid seasickness, but who was the foreigner who had interested himself in his behalf. He turned to go back to his room and at the door he encountered the little foreigner again who said half apologetically: “Your pardon again, Senior, if you are sick go as far below as you may. There the motion of the ship you will find is less violent.

You see I am not angry at what you said to me for I know what the sea sick do with you. You are travelling alone?"

"Yes," said Floyd, "and as you seem to know, this is my first voyage on the ocean. My name is Floyd Vandercook, of Chicago. And yours?"

"Jose Leudesso, Bolinao, Island of Luzon, Philippines."

As can be imagined Floyd was surprised at hearing this, and was pleased as well, for here a chance presented itself for finding out from one familiar with the Islands, what he could expect to find there. The Filipino was quick to note his advantage, and his little brown eyes snapped with satisfaction when Floyd said:

"Well, Mr. Leudesso, I ask your pardon for my rudeness of a few minutes ago, and I will confess that I am well pleased to make your acquaintance, for the Philippines is my own destination, and you no doubt can give me much useful information about the Islands during our voyage."

"Ah, you Americans are very funny. One minute you not speak, the next minute you want to be good friends. Ha, Senior, is it not so?"

“We Americans, Mr. Leudesso, are men born under a free flag; our moods, our likes, our dislikes are things which we choose for ourselves, and we do not want any man’s friendship bad enough to beg for it, be he King, Crown Prince or what not; our minds are our own property. We speak as we feel and there is no one to say us nay; but come to my cabin. No doubt we can be of service to each other in passing the time.”

Leudesso followed him and as Floyd gazed at him under the full glare of the electric light he was not prepossessed by the fellow’s personal appearance. His little steely brown eyes roved about the room, rarely meeting those of his companion in a frank look, and Floyd knew by the fellow’s hands that he was not traveling for pleasure. His clothes, which were fairly good, bore the unmistakable signs of “hand-me-down,” and Floyd could not help noticing that the man seemed uncomfortable in them, and wondered what chance had thrown him in his pathway. He decided to cultivate the fellow’s acquaintance, thinking he might become useful to him after

their arrival. After inviting him to a chair Floyd said:

“You are not surprised that my destination happens to be the same as yours.”

“No, Senior, I am not surprised, but pleased. What an American would do would not surprise me. You might say you were going to the moon, I would not be surprised. But Senior, the islands not a very good place for gentlemen like you just now. Badly tore up.”

“It would make no difference to me, Leudesso, if they were on fire, I would go just the same.”

“Ah, Senior Vandercook’s business must be important, eh?”

“Yes, very; but what do you do over there, Leudesso, if I may ask?”

“Sometimes soldier, sometimes business man.”

“What kind of business do you follow?”

“Well Senior, I know the Island of Luzon every foot, and when there is plenty of travel I am guide. Ha, that good paying business. But that all gone now, so have to be soldier again,” said the cunning rascal with a resigned look and a sigh.

“Hum,” said Floyd, and sat for some seconds buried in thought. The little eyes of the Filipino watched him narrowly, and he waited impatiently for what he thought would come next, but he was disappointed, for instead of engaging him as a guide on the spot, Floyd turned the conversation on the people of the Philippines, their habits, occupation, etc., and after trying to thrust himself to the foreground again, without success, the Filipino took his leave, not at all pleased with the progress he had made.

After he had gone Floyd turned the light of his thought on the fellow's actions. He wondered why he had been singled out as an acquaintance by the yellow-skinned half-caste, when there remained such a number of other passengers. “I wonder if there is anything about my appearance that looks ‘easy’,” he mused, “or is it a piece of good fortune? I will certainly need a guide when I am ready to start out. I would not think of going alone, and if, as he says, he is acquainted with every foot of the ground, why is he not just the person I want? I'll watch him, cultivate him, learn his disposition, and if he suits, why I'll engage him.” So

with these thoughts in mind Floyd watched, and studied the Filipino carefully and at last arrived at the conclusion that he would hire him.

Leudesso became aware of Floyd's purpose long before the journey to Port Said was finished, as evidenced by his mutterings, and grunts of satisfaction after each interview.

"Ah, I think I have the fine Senior now, I will be his guide after all, and earn the riches I have always wished for, and with them will come power. Aguinaldo will want my voice in his Council and at last I will be a great man. The Senior will find a Filipino prison not very comfortable, in one of the small inland towns, but he must never return to America to lecture on our country, and when once in our prison the rest will be easy. Ha, Leudesso, you are in luck."

Thus all unconscious Floyd was being drawn into the net of his merciless cousin, and giving himself into the power of the equally merciless yellow-skinned Filipino.

Ten days after the departure of Floyd, Heafford Vandercook received a cablegram announcing his safe arrival at Port Said.

On the same day a cablegram was handed Clayton Melrose, which read as follows:

“All well. Am employed. Success is assured.” Signed “Leudesso.”

As he read the message Melrose drew a deep sigh of satisfaction and mentally concluded to begin to play his cards. That evening found him at the Virden home conversing with Mr. Virden.

His dress was faultless, a heavy diamond stud adorned his immaculate shirt front while his fingers fairly blazed with the precious stones, and as Mr. Virden talked he glanced at them longingly, and thought how wealthy this young man must be to afford such luxuries, and he longed more than ever for the day to come when he would see his daughter the wife of this man. Therefore he listened very attentively as Melrose poured into his ear his love for his daughter. How, now that Floyd had gone away to be gone a year or more, he thought he might with her father's help win her love and her hand.

“But,” objected Mr. Virden, “Wadna is my only child, without a mother. I don't feel as though I ought to dictate to her

too strongly. I feel positive she thinks a great deal of young Vandercook.”

“All the more reason, sir, why you should take a mother’s place and point out to her what you plainly think is her duty to you as well as herself. I speak knowingly when I say that Floyd will never receive a cent from Uncle Van. How can he support Wadna in that comfort to which she is accustomed? As for myself, I am happy to say, I am independent.”

“Of course, Clayton, you are right, I must look after her interests. I certainly will help you all I can, but I warn you, Wadna is very positive in her likes and dislikes. I hope you will succeed, and all I can do I will do cheerfully in your behalf. Come as often as you like. The field is open to you, and outside of Vandercook you have no rival.”

A light step was now heard hurriedly approaching the door and a moment later Wadna burst through the doorway, all out of breath. She halted at the sight of Melrose and stood gazing from one to the other as if abashed at her impetuosity.

Her dark hair was disheveled, her

black eyes fairly snapped with suppressed excitement. Her beautiful face was full of anxiety, although her cheeks were rosy as the blush of a peach, caused partly by the fresh December air from which she had just emerged. Her graceful form was partly concealed by the long ulster from which she had in her hurry forgotten to divest herself.

Melrose was fairly stunned by her beauty, as she stood there for a moment, and his gaze of admiration caused her to remember his presence.

She laughed a little nervous laugh and said: "One would think I was a spirit, to see the way you two stare at me."

"Yes, Miss Wadna, I will confess I thought you the spirit of an angel at first," said Melrose.

"Ah, no doubt, Mr. Melrose, but I hope real angels have better control of their feelings than I, for I confess I am very much out of sorts. I was bent on giving papa a lecture when I spied you, so that accounts for my surprise."

"Wadna dear, what is the lecture about?" inquired Mr. Virden.

“Well, I did intend to let it go for the present, but I have again changed my mind and now include Mr. Melrose.”

“You flatter me, Miss Virden,” he said.

“Ah, wait till I am through, before you give me credit for flattery, for I am indeed put out, and almost angry. Why is it, papa and Mr. Melrose, you did not tell me that Floyd had gone! You certainly knew he had gone, Mr. Melrose, for he is your first cousin.”

“I do not take any blame on myself, Miss Wadna, for I consider Floyd the proper person to have told you,” said Melrose, glad of a chance to give his absent cousin this thrust.

“I agree with Clayton,” said Mr. Virden. “It was clearly a case of neglect on his part.”

“He no doubt forgot all about it,” said Melrose sarcastically.

Wadna blushed crimson at these remarks and replied hotly, “Floyd did not forget, I know he did not. He left in a hurry and did not have the time to spare. In any event, papa, I think you should have told me, to save me from the embarrassment of

being told by those whom you know enjoy my discomfort.”

“Floyd could have written to you from New York had he chosen to do so, dear.”

“Yes,” said Melrose, “for Uncle received a note from him there. (He knew he lied.) Floyd means all right Miss Wadna, but how he could forget such a palpable duty is beyond me. I will not attempt to offer excuses for him as none is necessary.”

“It is not of paramount importance after all,” said Wadna with dignity. “So let us dismiss the subject.” It was easy to say but Wadna found out it was not an easy thing to do, for no matter which way the conversation would turn thoughts of Floyd would creep into her head, and his handsome face and frank eyes were before her almost constantly. Although she said it was of no consequence, the thought of being treated so indifferently by him brought an angry blush to her face. She played and sang and her rippling laughter filled Melrose with secret joy, but after all she passed a very miserable evening and longed for the privacy of her own room to think it all over. She was

glad when Melrose took his leave and she hardly knew it when she allowed him to hold her hand for a moment; her thoughts were traveling eastward to where the morning sun rushes up suddenly from his place of hiding and proclaims the birth of a new day. But she quickly drew her hand away when she felt Melrose's lips reverently touch it. She was indignant but seemed to lack the power to say so. At last he was gone and as she heard his retreating steps going down the gravel walk she heaved a sigh of relief and flew to her room. What her thoughts were that night we leave our readers to guess. It was early dawn before she courted sleep and was carried away in his enchanting embrace. She was not down to breakfast but at tea she was in her accustomed place, the life and wit of a party of young friends.

Time wore on, a month and a half had passed since Floyd went away. Melrose continued to come regularly. Floyd's name was never mentioned by Wadna, and her father and Melrose began to congratulate themselves that she had put all thought of him

away from her. Except for the cablegram to his uncle no word had come from him.

Wadna's manner toward Melrose became less constrained each day. She occasionally accompanied him to the theatre. She evinced no desire to avoid him, which pleased the two conspirators immensely.

Thus matters stood when Mr. Virden and Melrose concluded that the time had come to risk a proposal.

One evening when Wadna and her father were at tea, Mr. Virden said timidly: "Wadna, I expect Clayton this evening, and my dear, he will have something very important to say to you." Wadna looked up with a half scared look in her big, brown eyes and fixed her gaze on her father, under which he winced, and he seemed to have found something very interesting in the bottom of his cup, for his eyes remained there for several seconds.

"What can Clayton Melrose have to say to me that is so very important, father?" she asked anxiously.

"I prefer to have him make it known to you himself. I don't know that it should surprise you so very much, though, my dear.

I can tell you this much, however, he loves you dearly, and I can say I respect him very much. Not only this Wadna, but my financial affairs are not very prosperous. Ill luck here and there has brought me to a condition where something has got to be done, or ruin will follow."

"Oh, father, is this really true?" cried Wadna almost in despair.

"Yes Wadna, really true. I would that I could have kept this from you, but you would know it sooner or later and forewarned is forearmed. Now my dear, pay close attention to what I'm about to add. Clayton Melrose is rich, immensely rich, he has the means and can make any woman happy, and if her father happened to be in a tight place it would tide him over; therefore my dear, when he comes this evening try to listen to what he wants to tell you, with a thought for your father's welfare."

"Oh father, is there no other way out of this trouble?"

"I fear this is my only hope, but I do not command you, my dear."

"I will try to be as kind to him as I can, father, but—but—father, has any news

come from the Philippines lately? O father, father, I am very miserable," cried Wadna at last, resting her head in her hand and sobbing aloud.

Viriden was touched by her grief and inwardly cursed Floyd Vandercook, but getting up and going to his daughter's side he raised her hand and imprinted a kiss on her white brow, and said kindly: "Wadna, I had hoped that you had forgotten him. He is not worth a tear from your bright eyes. He does not return your love, if love you call it. No, not a word has been heard from him, not even by his uncle, but he is using up the money deposited at Manila fast enough, so I am informed. He is an ingrate, has no character, and what's worse has no prospects." With this Viriden left the room.

Wadna wandered about the house in a daze. What should she tell Melrose. She liked him very well, but the thought of marrying him chilled her to the very marrow. Then the thought of financial ruin, her father's business disgrace, their future after the shock was over, her father helpless and penniless in his old age, blotted out all else from her mind.

“What am I,” she exclaimed, “that I should stand in the pathway of my father’s success? I am forgotten by the one person on earth I love. My heart is bare and empty. If Clayton Melrose is willing to take this poor house of clay, in exchange for the happiness of my father, it is my duty to close the bargain. Ha! Ha!” she laughed harshly, “what a poor bargain he will have. A wife without love. Oh, Floyd, Floyd, could you but know my misery you would pity me at least. Then a pleading, earnest face passed before her gaze, a face she had looked upon in so many happy moments when she thought she was loved, a face filled with love, though unspoken. “Ah, Floyd,” she murmured, “I still believe you love me, and for the sake of old memories I will make my answer to-night conditional on your appearance, or a confession of love within a year, for I love you, I love you, I love you.”

CHAPTER IV.

Early one morning Floyd and Leudesso arrived at Hong Kong, China, where they waited four days for a passage to Manila. Each morning and evening Leudesso was sent out to the agencies of the steamship lines plying between these points to ascertain when they could expect to get a boat. Service was very irregular and nothing definite was learned. Floyd was becoming very anxious to get started, and Leudesso seemed none the less so, and urged on his employer the necessity of getting away from Hong Kong at the first opportunity, as the town harbored a great number of Filipinos, whose actions betrayed their suspicions of the two travelers.

Floyd did not place much credit in what Leudesso told him regarding these suspicions until the evening of the third day when, on walking along the wide street, he became aware of being followed. He quickened his pace, but the man in his rear kept

the same distance; try as he would, he could not shake his pursuer off. He crossed the street, entered a shop, made a small purchase, and when he emerged he saw the same solitary figure standing on the opposite corner waiting. Floyd became alarmed at this and started for his hotel; still the shadow followed, still keeping the same respectful distance in his rear until in sight of the hotel where he disappeared. Leudesso was there to meet him, and his olive face wore an anxious expression.

“Senior, it is better we leave Hong Kong tomorrow,” said he, not waiting for Floyd to speak.

“’Tis all very well to say it is better that we leave, but how, Leudesso? And why do you look so anxious?”

“Ah, Senior Floyd, the Filipino is suspicious. They have found out that you are going to Luzon, and they wonder, think, and mistrust.”

“How do you know this?”

“I just got back from steam-ship office; on the way I met several Filipino, they knew I was with you, they stopped me, and tried to take me into a place to drink.

Leudesso would not go, Senior. Then they asked about you, who you were, where you were going, but Leudesso knew nothing, Senior. But we must go at once, or they will make it very unpleasant for us."

"I suppose we can purchase a balloon here in Hong Kong, or possibly we might swim or fly from here to Manila. If none of these things are possible, Leudesso, I ask again, how are we to get out of this miscellaneous gathering of humanity?"

There was a baleful gleam in the little brown eyes for a moment when Leudesso said cautiously: "There is a way, Senior; I have had an offer of passage to Manila but have not considered it."

"Well, what is it? Most anything is preferable to staying here where one can't walk the streets without being followed by someone."

"Senior is no doubt aware that smugglers carry on trade with the Filipinos from this and other ports. Ha, plenty smugglers, Senior. Provisions, and sometimes guns and ammunition."

"I have heard of such things; but Leudesso, come to the point, what about it?"

“We may go to Manila on one of these craft, Senior, if we will.”

“What kind of craft is it?”

“Ha, Senior Floyd, craft is alright. Good cabin, good table, boat about eight hundred tons, steam, too, Senior.”

“When do they leave port?”

“Next sunset, Senior.”

“We will go on that, Leudesso, if no other chance presents itself. I will leave the details to you. If you can engage passage on some other steamer do so; if not do not neglect to close a bargain with the captain of the smuggler.”

If Floyd had been a little more suspicious he would have noticed the look of exultation on the yellow face of his guide, but he did not, so at once retired, for he felt the need of rest badly, for his brain was tired and his mind was torn by conflicting emotions.

After he had gone, Leudesso went to a door overlooking the street and whistled softly; a moment later he was joined by two other men as evil looking as himself. The trio repaired to an inner room and Leudesso ordering drinks, they sat down

and conversed in low tones. The word "spy" and "American" soon revealed the subject of their conversation.

"He is a spy sent to our country to find out our strength," said Leudesso in the Filipino language. "When once on board the *Pride of Samar*, we will have him for good. We will turn him over to the tender mercies of Carijello, who knows how to treat such cases." "And," said the third, "we will all be handsomely rewarded for bagging such game."

"My friends," said Leudesso quickly, "he must never see the light of our land; that would be too dangerous."

"Yes, but our captain will not consent to try the case as he has no authority."

"Then we must try the case for him, my friends."

"We are not murderers, sir," said the men together.

"Ha, ha," laughed Leudesso incredulously, "who talks of murder? This man is a spy. We are in the service of our country. To rid our country of an enemy is not murder, simply a means of justice."

"True," answered one of the men, "we

are soldiers, but we have no authority to judge, much less to execute without judgment."

"Ah, I see," said Leudesso, with a dark scowl, "you are soldiers but are willing to allow a spy to enter your country and trust to the judges to sentence him. Why, comrades, he is almost sure to escape us if he sets foot on Luzon. He has money and letters of credit and can buy all of our judges over if money will do it."

"Come," said one of the men, banteringly; "let us not deceive ourselves into being patriots. My friend is uncommonly interested in disposing of the Americano where he knows the attempt will be successful. Senior Leudesso, you care no more for our country than we do."

"Cursey our impudence," cried Leudesso, drawing the ever ready knife, "how dare you insult me?"

"Keep your temper, Senior," said the former speaker, drawing a revolver and pointing it at the angry Leudesso. "Ha, Senior, you are hasty. Do not let us quarrel, just because I have discovered your secret. No doubt you have your

price. Is it not so? How many pesetas do you get, Senior Leudesso? Ah, gold is a mighty weapon in these troubled times, Senior. All patriots worship at her shrine. We, Senior, are very religious.”

“Ah, my friend, I see you want money and you shall have it. Why did you not come to the point?”

“We were waiting for you, Senior.”

“Very well, now we have arrived, let us waste no more time. Do you agree with me that the spy must die before he reaches the Philippines?”

“We think it best for our country’s good, Senior.”

“Then you will aid me in carrying out this verdict?”

“Si Senior, we are your servants, and thereby the servants of our own downtrodden, blood sprinkled Island.”

“Tis well, Senior, to-morrow at sunset we will be on board the Pride of Samar. Where is her destination?”

“Ququegabao, up the river Grande de Cagayan.”

“Why, your captain told me he was bound for Manila.”

“Our captain is no fool, he does not wish our cargo of rifles and ammunition to fall into the hands of that fired evil of Dewey. So we are going to enter the Island on the North and sail up the river to Quguegabao, where we will be met by at least one thousand soldiers.”

“Then Aguinaldo intends to fight the Americans?”

“Ha Senior, we will whip them as we have the cursed Spaniards.”

“Success to our cause, if it will only bring us riches. Eh, comrades! good-night.”

“We will be on hand at set of sun to-morrow.” The two Filipinos passed out and Leudesso refreshed himself at the bar before retiring. As he passed Floyd’s door a fiendish thought came into his head. He gently turned the knob and pushed; the door swung open. Floyd in his troubled state had forgotten to lock it. Leudesso grasping the handle of his keen edged knife stepped silently into the room. Floyd lay sleeping peacefully. The Filipino with a devilish light in his eyes, approached the the bed and gazed at the sleeper. “Ah, how

easy it would be; it would save me several hundred pesetas, if I did it now, but there is the cursed English Consul near and I would be suspected. It is wiser to wait. Yes I will wait. What a flimsy barrier between me and thirty thousand good American dollars. But I can wait. The South China Sea tells no tales. Ah Leudesso, you are lucky."

"Lucky, Leudesso, did you say?" said Floyd sleepily. Then for the first time the Filipino realized that some of his thoughts had been spoken. He gazed at Floyd for a second and said: "Yes, Senior, I said it was lucky that I came and found your door unlocked instead of one of the curious Filipinos. You would have very soon been murdered."

"Well, well, did I do such a foolish thing as that? But I was so tired in mind and body I wonder I even closed the door or undressed. Thank you for waking me up." The yellow skinned rascal grinned, and glided with a noiseless motion from the room.

Floyd locked the door after him and drew a sigh of relief, he wondered what

had been the fellow's real motive in coming into his room so quietly, and looked to his valuables to see if they were safe. He found everything as he had left them, and again retired wondering how Leudesso had become so intoxicated in so short a time, Try as he would he could not sleep. Finding the half-drunk Filipino in his room nettled him more than he allowed Leudesso to think. At last he got up, dressed himself, and wrote a letter to his uncle and smoked a pipe. After that he felt much relieved and sat thinking of friends and home, of Wadna, and what she would think of the brief note he had mailed her. "Mailed," he exclaimed almost aloud, "why, I gave it to Clayton to post; what a fool trick; it will probably lay in his pocket for months. With these thoughts in his mind he fell asleep in his chair and was startled by pounding on his door and someone calling. He started up and was surprised to find the eastern sun shining into his room. He recognized the voice as that of Leudesso and surprised that worthy by going to the door fully dressed, and demanding what the unearthly noise was about.

“Ah, Senior Floyd, I thought you were sleeping. I have called loudly for some time, here I see you dressed. Good, I have already been to the offices. No vessel to-day, Senior.”

Floyd's jaw dropped at this, for he did not like the idea of crossing the China Sea in the smuggler, and had hoped against hope, that another boat would sail. Leudesso noticed this, and going down into one of his pockets he drew forth a small hand bill and handed it to Floyd, who took it and stared blankly at the letters printed in an unknown language.

“What is this, Leudesso?” he demanded sharply, “I do not understand any foreign language except German.”

“True, Senior, I forgot. Shall I read it?”

“Yes, for heaven's sake, read it. What are you so mysterious about? I'm no boy.”

“No, Senior, true you are a man.’ This says ‘It has become known that a spy from America is in hiding in this city, awaiting an opportunity to embark for Luzon or one of the other Islands of the Philippines. All friends of the Republic of Filipino are warned against this man,

who, if caught will be treated as a spy.' Description is as follows:" Leudesso stopped and looked into Floyd's face to note the effect. He saw nothing but a faint smile.

"Well, Leudesso, who does it describe?"

"Ah, Senior Floyd, you take it cool. It describes you sir, exactly. Your life is in danger here, sir. So I took the liberty of having your luggage placed on board the *Pride of Samar*, which will leave in one hour, instead of evening, sir. Thanks to the captain's kindness."

"It seems to me, Leudesso, that you are altogether too zealous, your actions are enough to create suspicion in the minds of these ignorant cut-throats. I have half a notion to stay in Hong Kong and see what they will do. To use Chicago slang they 'make me tired.' "

"You are your own employer, Senior, you know what you will do," he added with an air of "I wash my hands of the consequences. Leudesso has done his duty."

"I am anxious to get back to America, so the sooner I get to the Philippines the sooner I will get back. Were it not for

this, Leudesso, I would tell you and the whole Philippine race to go to the devil.”

Leudesso gazed at him in speechless surprise; this was a new side to his intended victim's character. As he turned aside he thought that after all, the American might prove more than a match for him, and he decided to hurry the matter to a climax as soon as they were well under way, but before leaving the room he managed to conceal Floyd's letter on his person.

In half an hour Floyd, accompanied by Luedesso were being driven to the wharf. As the carriage passed along Floyd readily recognized the numerous crowds gathered along the route as Filipinos. He kept back from the window as far as possible, but could see the suspicious looks cast in their direction. As they approached nearer the dock the crowd increased, and at last Floyd's heart gave a great throb. He grasped his revolver firmly, for the horses were stopped, and a howling mob now enclosed the carriage on all sides. This was more than even Leudesso had reckoned on, and before Floyd knew it Leudesso had opened the door, and was talking to the ex-

cited crowd. Floyd did not know what he said to them but whatever it was it had a good effect, for the crowd dispersed and the carriage resumed its journey and was molested no more.

As soon as they were on board, the *Pride of Samar* weighed anchor and steamed away, and from that moment Leudesso's manner toward Floyd was changed. Instead of the meekness of a servant, he assumed the air of an overseer, and after having presented Floyd to the captain, and seeing that this intended victim was safe in a cabin near the captain's, he kept out of his sight. Floyd, going on deck two hours later noticed all his luggage in a promiscuous heap near the gangway. He called Leudesso and asked him to bring his trunk and grips to his cabin. Leudesso approached with a sullen look, and said: "Senior Floyd presumes too much on good nature, my good nature is playing out; Senior wants exercise, Senior can roll his own trunks."

Floyd was at a loss to understand this sudden change in the Filipino's manner, but it angered him not a little, therefore

he hardly intended to say what he found himself saying: "Leudesso, I command you to do as I bid you."

"Ha! So Senior commands, so Senior Floyd, the American spy, commands Jose Leudesso, a former captain in the Filipino army. He commands, you hear."

By this time Floyd was furious. The insolent bearing and insulting words of the Filipino angered him beyond control, and before he thought of the serious consequences of his act, he struck the modern Judas a stunning blow that felled him to the deck, exclaiming as he did so: "Take that, you ignorant dog."

Leudesso was on his feet in an instant, his eyes blazing with hatred and resentment, and drawing a long knife from somewhere beneath his loose jacket he made a lunge at Floyd, who dodged back just in time to avoid a death thrust over the heart, and drawing his revolver he pointed it at the Filipino's head, and waited for another attack.

At this moment he was siezed from behind by two pairs of brawny arms, and his revolver was knocked from his hand and went rolling along the deck.

Leudesso with murder in his eye was about to plunge the long knife into his body when a commanding voice arrested his arm.

CHAPTER VI.

Clayton Melrose was dressed in the very latest, from the glossy tile adorning his not unshapely head, to the neat patent leathers incasing his feet, everything was the best, and fit him to perfection. He felt satisfied. Why shouldn't he? He felt sure of receiving a favorable answer from Wadna to-night, and he had partly made up with his uncle, who actually wished him success. Of course all this was at the expense of the absent Floyd, but what mattered it! Floyd would never return, he felt sure of that. Nothing was surer than that Uncle Van would eventually take him to his arms to fill the vacancy caused by Floyd's unworthiness? It would be easy to close Leudesso's mouth with money (of which he would soon have plenty) when that worthy returned, and if money would not close it, why what was easier than to silence him forever?

So Clayton Melrose felt unusually gay as

as he rang the bell at the Virden mansion, and was admitted into the well furnished parlor.

All at once he stopped, dived a hand down into an inner pocket with breathless haste, and drew a deep sigh of relief. What he wanted was there, and the cloud that appeared on his brow for a second vanished as a faint rustle of paper reached his ear.

He was becoming annoyed at being left alone so long, when the faint strains of distant music and a sweet, plaintive voice singing these words, came floating in to him from some room adjoining. The voice was full of sadness, and the words being sung told their own story of hopeless love:

“Far, far out on the billows high,
My thoughts are soaring to-day,
To far beyond the ocean's tide
Where my love was carried away.
Now down in a cavern of the ocean's bed,
Now mounting a white-crested wave,
Now groping thro' wrecks, for a face 'mong
the dead
That had found such a lonely grave.
The soul of the love that was left on my breast,
Goes wearily day after day,
It will not cease its sacred quest,
Till this life shall have passed away.”

Melrose softly opened the door to the drawing room, and stood for a moment gazing with an angry scowl at what he saw.

There, seated in a low chair, her white, slender fingers absently touching the strings of a guitar, he saw Wadna; her shapely head was bent forward in a listening attitude as if she half expected to hear a whispered answer to the melancholy lines she was singing.

Melrose knew for whom these words were intended, and chuckled as he thought that ere this Floyd's face *could* be found somewhere hid away in an ocean cavern, or looking out from under some ancient piece of wreckage.

As Wadna concluded the last lines, the guitar slid from her lap and fell to the floor with a ring. Still she did not move, her hands were clasped and lay listlessly in her lap before her.

Melrose retreated into the parlor, and coughed gently, thinking to attract her attention. Even he was not so hardened that he could find it in him to break in upon the sad, sacred thoughts of the love shorn girl. He cursed his inability to

usurp the place in her heart that Floyd even in death occupied.

He heard the door open, and turning he met Wadna's questioning gaze.

"Your voice, Wadna, is charming, and coming from another room it was peculiarly sweet."

"Ah, Mr. Melrose, you compliment me, I hoped you had not heard me. Yes, no doubt distance lends enchantment to the ear."

"The words of the song would so indicate, Wadna, for I judge you were singing of the absent."

"I did not know you were in the house," she said significantly, "the servant did not tell me."

"No, but you would hardly expect to see my face looking up at the soul of your love from a piece of wreckage in the bottom of the ocean. By the way, I don't remember of ever hearing the words before; where did you run across such a melancholy song?"

"That is a song I heard mother sing, many, many years ago. She was always sad."

“Ah Wadna, I would give all I possessed in the world if I could occupy the place in your heart that one not half so worthy holds.”

“To whom do you refer Mr. Melrose?” said she coldly.

“Please Wadna, do not look at me like that. I mean it for your good. Floyd is, I am sorry to say, unworthy such a love as yours.”

“I think, Mr. Melrose, this subject was up not so very long ago. I have not professed love for Floyd to anyone, but as you seem to think I do love him, don't you think you should regard my feelings a little?”

“Ah, Wadna, give me the right not only to regard your feelings, but also to protect you from all harm, to watch over you for all time. You shall be my queen, your slightest wish shall be gratified, for oh Wadna, I love you.” He now took her trembling hand in his own. “I love you as no woman was ever loved, life is but a dreary existence out of your presence. Tell me, dearest, you love me! Whisper a faint shadow of hope in my ear and I will be the happiest man in Christendom.”

Wadna by this time was trembling like an aspen. The final struggle was on. Her brain was in a vortex of uncertainty and conflicting thoughts. She withdrew the trembling hand he held, and steadied herself against a chair.

“Clayton Melrose, you know not what you ask. I admire and respect you, but, you ask too much.”

“For God’s sake, Wadna, do not make my life a wreck by a refusal. All I ask is that you become my wife.”

“But what of the holy love that blesses and ennobles the sacred ties that bind man and woman forever?”

“You would love me some day, I would make you love me.”

“Clayton Melrose, again I say you do not know what you ask. Listen, I love Floyd Vandercook, I shall always love him. Until I know for certain that he did not love me truly, I cannot say yes to the proposal you have so highly honored me with.”

At last the time had come for Clayton Melrose to play his trump card, and hurriedly thrusting a hand in his coat pocket he produced a small sheet of paper which he handed to Wadna, saying:

“This may tell you, Wadna. It was picked up in Floyd’s room the morning after he left so suddenly, and has lain in a drawer in my uncle’s office until to-day. He gave it to me to hand to you this evening. I do not know what it contains, but I sincerely believe it will show conclusively that your love for Floyd is unworthily bestowed.”

She took it from him with a trembling hand. She prayed inwardly for strength to conceal from Melrose’s eyes her great agitation. Her breath came in quick gasps, but she determined to read it, and see for herself. Slowly she unfolded the single sheet, and read the following:

“Dear Friend:

“This is to inform you that I leave to-morrow on a journey to the Philippines, You will excuse me, I know, for not calling in person, when you learn that my time is so short that I am unable to call on anyone. As an old friend I will tell you somewhat of a secret. On my return I am to be married at Paris, France, thus adding, I hope, another friend to your long list. Remember me to your worthy parent, and believe me,

“Your friend,

“FLOYD VANDERCOOK.”

As she read it a queer light came into

her eyes, and deep paleness came into her face, and as she finished reading she deliberately tore the letter into small bits, and cast them from her to the floor. Suddenly she turned to Melrose with a stony expression, and asked in a strange husky voice, "Do you know positively that that is his writing?"

"Having seen only the address I cannot say as to the contents, but the address was certainly in Floyd's hand."

"Well, it matters very little, I did not think him capable of it. It reads like a school boy. If he wrote it I despise him. You said a moment ago you loved me, please repeat it." She laughed nervously while making the request.

"Oh Wadna, you do not know how much."

"Very well, Clayton," said she, with a faint tinge of blood mounting her cheek, "you have honored me very much. Here is my answer. I respect you, I like you. You are a good friend of my father. Are you willing to marry me, knowing that all I can bestow on you is this respect, that my love is dead? If so, Clayton Melrose, I will be your wife."

Clayton started toward her with hands outstretched, eager to clasp her to his breast, transported with joy, but she waved him back with an imperious gesture, saying: "Wait till you hear the conditions. I will be your wife; if at the end of six months from the day he left here I hear no word from him that will lead me to believe he loves me. In the meantime we can be engaged on these conditions." She approached a step nearer to him and a moment later Clayton Melrose had accepted the sacrifice, sealing it with a kiss, which however, was not reciprocated.

Clayton Melrose thought he was now sure of the prize for which he had steeped his soul in crime. For which he had virtually committed murder, and placed the brand of Cain upon his brow. Remorse or compassion found no place in his sin-coated heart. He was perfectly happy in the prospect of ultimate success, and ascendancy over his enemies.

While these important events were transpiring at the Virden mansion, Heafford Vandercook sat in his office, among his dusty records, worrying and fretting about his favorite nephew, Floyd.

True, he had partially forgiven his other nephew, on that young man giving a solemn promise of good behavior, and humbly asking forgiveness for past transgressions, but no one could take Floyd's place in his heart. He condemned himself bitterly for sending him away to a strange country, simply to prevent his marriage to the daughter of the woman who had jilted him, and Floyd's long silence filled him with dread. Nearly two whole months had gone by, still as he had ascertained by cable, not a cent had been drawn from the bank at Manila. Floyd had not been there, where then had he gone? He might, even, be dead, and the fact not become known. As he sat thus thinking and fretting, his eyes rested on a bundle of papers that had been left during the day. As he untied the cord that held the small bundles, he noticed that the packet contained three weeks' issue of the *Denver Smelter*, and he sighed wearily, as he always did when these papers came; they brought back to his mind the old struggle with poverty in the then far West, the slow tedious climb up the ladder of prosperity, and with these

old remembrances, came the glad smile of a young and beautiful face, the face he had loved, and would continue to love until his mind would cease to remember, and his fast ageing eyes grew dim. He was about to lay the papers away, along with numerous other things he considered useless, but kept for old memory's sake, when his eye caught sight of these words in heavy headlines:

A RELIC OF YE OLDEN TIMES.

“Today, while Henry Trueman, who runs a large clothing business in a building used in ‘Auld Lang Syne’ for a post office, was removing a shelf from the rear of the building, an old, yellow, time worn envelope dropped from behind it. When Mr. Trueman picked it up, he found to his surprise that it bore date of 1870, showing it had lain in the old building for 28 years, for these dates although very dim, and faded, could be made out, as well as the address, Mr. Heafford Vandercook, in a cramped feminine hand. Some of the old residents remember Mr. Vandercook as one of the luckiest prospectors at that time. He was last heard of in Chicago. Mr. Truman

has turned the old weather-beaten epistle over to the postal authorities.”

Mr. Vandercook could hardly believe his eyes, and he read the article over and over again to convince himself that it was not a dream. He knew that there was only one person at that time who would be likely to write to him in a feminine hand, and that one was the owner of the smiling face in the old memories that had been filling his mind to-night. Although the writer had been dead some few years, the fact that she wrote him, which must have been just before her marriage to Virden, sent a glad thrill through his frame, and caused his blood to rush a little faster through his veins, and he decided immediately to procure the letter and read from its yellow, faded sheets, what living lips had been forbidden to tell. He was not a man to do things by halves and when once decided to gain possession of the letter which to him was invaluable, he would not trust to the postal authorities to deliver a letter that had failed to reach him through these channels so long before, and at ten the next morning he was spinning along toward the

field of his early battles against hard luck and poverty. He allowed his mind to drift back to twenty-eight years before, and he again felt the power of love surging in his breast. He would be young again for he was about to listen (as it were) to words of love from the lips of his bride to be. Words that, had he but received them, would have changed his whole life, and filled it with a blessing that he would have given all he possessed to obtain.

He experienced no trouble in securing the letter, and as he read the contents, which he did when alone in his room, tears, great briney tears, ran down his cheeks. In the letter she begged him to come to her without delay, as her father was about to marry her to another man whom she did not love. Even now Heafford Vandercook cursed the fate that caused the letter to go astray. But he thanked God that at last he knew that she loved him, and him only. That although she had married another, her heart was ever filled with love for him. He hurried back to Chicago, getting hardly any sleep, and eating barely enough to sustain him. His soul was filled with re-

morse and sorrow. He had separated two young hearts that loved each other with a love as pure, as deep, as his own had been, all because the one he loved had married another.

Yes, he had a duty to perform. The bringing together and making happy of his nephew and the daughter of the woman he had loved and wrongfully judged. The voice of the dead demanded it. Was it not through her agency that the long lost letter was discovered? Did she not look down in pity on the misery of her lonely daughter to answer her prayer?

And who did she choose as her agent in bringing about that happiness but her old lover. Ah yes, he would surely see that all was made well.

Wadna was indeed surprised when the servant handed her a card bearing the name "Heafford Vandercook;" and the next instant to find herself looking into two honest dark eyes, which seemed a trifle sad.

"This is Miss Virden, I would know you anywhere. Forgive me for following my card so closely, Miss, but there is no time to lose," said Mr. Vandercook. "No Miss,

you have never met me, but I am Floyd's uncle, and I—I—knew your mother, Miss Virden, and was her friend," he continued as he saw the questioning look she cast upon him.

"A friend of my dear mother, sir, is a friend of mine, for I know her friends were always good. You are welcome, sir."

"I'm a man of business, Miss Virden. Ah, how like her you are, and I simply came to tell you that I am an old villain, yes, Miss, a villain. But before I proceed I want to ask you a question. Will you answer it?"

"I will try, sir."

"Ah, but I want your promise, it is a vital one with me."

"Very well, I promise," said Wadna, wondering what it all meant, and becoming exceedingly nervous.

"Floyd Vandercook is my nephew. Do you love him?"

"Mr. Vandercook, I promised to answer your question, but I had no idea it would be this. I hope you will not insist on an answer, even if I did love him it would be very unlady-like to profess it, since he is about to be married."

“About to be married?” echoed the old gentleman loudly, “who says Floyd Vandercook is about to be married. I would like to see the person.”

“Excuse me, sir,” said Wanda assuming a calmness she was far from feeling, “he says so himself.”

“Impossible, madam. Impossible, I tell you. If Floyd Vandercook marries anyone it will be you, with God’s help and for the sake of your mother, but I must insist upon an answer as you promised. I know Floyd loves you for he told me so. I can answer for him. If he don’t he is a fool.”

“Ah, sir, if I only knew, but the letter you gave Clayton told me that—”

“The letter I gave Clayton? Who says I gave a letter to Clayton Melrose for you? I never did such a thing in my life.” Wadna’s heart almost stood still as she heard this. She felt as people sometimes do when the news of some unexpected, great good fortune is suddenly told them. She stared wildly at Mr. Vandercook, as if trying to probe his real thoughts; she arose and walking quickly over to where he was standing, and looking imploringly

into his face she cried: "Oh, sir, do not deceive me, I do truly love Floyd as I shall never love any one else in this world; but Clayton Melrose gave me a letter, which he claimed you gave him for me, stating that it was picked up in Floyd's room, and had lain in your desk until lately. In that letter, sir, Floyd said he was to be married in Paris on his way home. Oh it was cruel, cruel," she cried, sinking into a chair and burying her face in her hands.

Had Clayton Melrose been in the room at that minute he would have fared badly at the hands of his uncle, for that gentleman was mad, and in the absence of anyone else to abuse, he abused himself. "Oh what a wretch I am," he exclaimed. "Why was I born an old fool?" and similar remarks escaped him as he paced two and fro, casting pitiful glances now and then at Wadna's dark head, bent forward in an attitude of sorrow. Presently he stopped before her and exclaimed: "Wadna, Miss Virden, it's all a demned lie. The letter is a forgery, and Clayton Melrose is the most accomplished scoundrel in the United States, except myself. Come, brace up.

Please don't cry, Miss Virden, you are breaking my foolish old heart. I love you for loving Floyd, and I swear solemnly that I'll prove that letter a forgery or my name is not Heafford Vandercook."

Something in the old man's voice made her look up, and she saw two good honest eyes filled with tears, looking beseechingly at her, and she knew he told the truth.

She smiled happily and rising she imprinted an affectionate kiss on the old man's brow, exclaiming: "You have made the most miserable girl in Chicago the happiest by your kind words."

"Don't talk like that, Miss, or you'll have me blubbering. I'm a scoundrel, for I sent him away. But I'll explain. Sit down here, my dear, and listen to an old, heart-broken man's love story, and forgive me as I hope God will give me strength to right the wrong I have committed."

Then in a hushed voice, sometimes trembling with emotion, he told her of the love he bore her mother when they were young, of his struggle for her sake. His final success, and return to claim her as his bride, only to find her the wife of another.

How he had judged her and thought her false. How he had found out that Floyd, the object of his whole love, loved the daughter of the woman he believed had deceived him. How he persuaded him to go to the Philippines, ostensibly in his interest, but in reality to part him from her.

Then he told her of the partial reconciliation with Clayton Melrose. Of Floyd's silence, his terrible anxiety for his safety, his doubts, his fears. As he proceeded he felt the little hand tighten in its grasp on his own. He saw her head drop lower and lower, until it rested on his sleeve.

He told her of the mysterious letter found in Denver, after being lost for twenty-eight years. How it had explained all, and rekindled the old love into a burning flame. His desire now to right the wrong he had done his nephew, and the beautiful girl crying so softly on his arm, and when he had finished all was quiet as death, save for the tick-tock, tick-tock of the old clock on the mantel, as its pendulum swung slowly to and fro, counting off the seconds that pass so quickly down the swift flowing river of time, carrying with it the rich and

poor, old and young alike. Stopping now and then to pluck a young life out of the Spring of its existence, or perhaps catching in its mighty arms the form of one whose summers have drifted away and who feels the hand of winter upon his drooping shoulders, carrying him into the vast ocean of eternity, again to be born into the likeness of Christ himself.

At last the stillness was broken by Wadna, who said in a low sad voice, "Now I know why mother was always so sad, and why she wished me to marry Floyd."

"Did she wish that?"

"It was almost her last request."

"As I live, it shall be fulfilled," said Mr. Vandercook solemnly. "Of course you will have nothing more to do with Melrose. Unless, unless—wait a moment, let me think. Oh yes, that's what we will do, for we are partners now, co-workers."

"You are to go on as if nothing had happened. So will I. We must find out just how far his villainy extends, and what it means. I'll get Floyd back here as soon as I can find him, and when our friend Mr. Melrose thinks he has won you, and has

my fortune safe in his grasp, we'll spring a mine on him. There is something ominous in Floyd's silence, and I begin to fear;" here the old man paused, for he noticed that Wadna had turned deathly pale.

"You fear," she said; "come, tell me what you fear!"

"I would rather not, my dear, it would only annoy you."

"I promise I will not be annoyed or worried."

"You promise, why what nonsense. You are as pale as a ghost now, and actually trembling."

"Yes, but I must know. I shall worry more by being uncertain. You fear—"

"I fear something has happened to him, and that Clayton Melrose is at the bottom of it. Were Floyd Vandercook dead at this minute, and I were to drop dead in this house, Clayton Melrose would become my heir, and waste the fortune I have worked so hard to amass; but it shall never be, never. I'll find him, or trace of him before long."

"God grant you success."

"Amen," said Mr. Vandercook. "I must

yet visit the telegraph offices to-night so I will leave you for the present. You will hear from me as soon as I learn anything. In the meantime keep up your courage. Right will triumph," and as he passed down the walk Miss Virden could hear him repeating, "Right will triumph."

"God bless him," she murmured as she gazed after him, thinking that not so very long ago this good old man and her own sainted mother had vowed their love for each other, only to be separated forever.

"Oh, cruel, cruel fate," she sighed as she closed the door, but her heart was made lighter by his visit. He had pulled the bandage from before her eyes, and revealed Melrose to her in his true light, which only added to her love for Floyd, who again claims our attention.

CHAPTER VII.

“Release that man immediately, you blood-thirsty hound, or by my soul I’ll shoot you as I would the dog that you are.” The three would-be murderers turned quickly, and gazed down the shining barrels of two revolvers in the hands of the captain. Leudesso put up his knife and folded his arms across his chest, and merely shrugged his shoulders. A moment later Floyd was free, saved for the time being, at least, by the captain’s timely arrival.

“What is the meaning of this?” cried the captain. “Is murder to be committed aboard my ship, before we are barely out of the harbor? Go to your quarters, you dogs,” he commanded, addressing the two accomplices. Then turning to Leudesso he said coldly: “You sir, may consider yourself under arrest until you can explain your unwarrantable conduct. Go into my cabin. Follow me, Senior,” he said in English to Floyd, and without another

word, except in undertone to his mate, he turned on his heel, and followed by Floyd, entered his cabin, where sat Leudesso calmly smoking a cigarette.

“Now sir,” said he, turning to Leudesso and speaking in broken English, “perhaps you will explain what you meant by trying to commit murder on board this ship?”

Leudesso turned on Floyd a look of intense hatred and started talking in Spanish.

“Talk English, sir, if you please,” said the captain.

“Very well, captain, I will talk English. I will tell you that I have pride in serving my country sir, in bringing aboard this ship yonder spy, in the employ of the United States against the Filipino Republic. He struck me. I was about to do my country a service when you commanded me to halt; that is all, sir.”

The face of the captain assumed a very serious air, but Floyd smiled serenely. He felt that he could prove himself innocent of the charge.

Presently the captain turned to him with a kindly light in his eyes, although the air

of seriousness never left his face. "You can no doubt prove to my satisfaction Senior, that the charge against you is false."

"I can give you my word sir, that my business to the Philippines is purely commercial, that I am in no way in the employ of the United States Government."

"Can you not show me something that will corroborate this?" asked the captain anxiously.

"I am sorry, sir, I have nothing except—ah, yes sir, I have letters to Aguinaldo, your Commander in Chief, and here they are," said he going into an inner pocket, but they were not there. He felt the eyes of the captain upon him, and he knew he was being measured, judged, could feel the hot blood rush to his head as he hurriedly ransacked his pockets for the missing letters. They were gone. A terrible fear now took possession of him as he realized the dangerous position in which he was placed.

"I've been robbed. My letters are gone," he cried. Then he caught sight of the evil smile on the face of the Filipino and it maddened him. He rushed forward and

seized Leudesso by the throat, crying, "Give me my letters, you infernal villain, or I'll strangle the life out of your deceitful body."

For answer Leudesso again drew his ever ready knife, and was about to plunge it into Floyd's body, when the captain caught his arm in a grip of iron; at the same time he forced Floyd back into his seat saying quietly, "I asked you for proof of your innocence, sir, not an exhibition of your powers as a strangler. Perhaps your baggage contains something. I have taken the liberty to have it examined. We shall soon know, for I hear my mate approaching."

The mate now entered the cabin, and laying a paper on the captain's desk retired without a word.

The captain picked it up and read it over carefully. The lines about his mouth became harder each moment, a deep cloud settled down over his features, he was very much worried by what he read.

Floyd and Leudesso watched him narrowly meanwhile, Floyd anxiously, for he knew much of his future depended on

this quiet, dignified rebel captain, Leudesso just as anxiously, for thoughts of riches when Floyd's death was accomplished, filled his mind.

After studying the paper closely, reading it two or three times over, gazing long and earnestly on the reverse side where nothing appeared, the captain laid it on the table before him, leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. It was evident that he was considering deeply what course to pursue, or whether he should pursue any course detrimental to the young man now before him, waiting anxiously for his verdict. He admitted to himself the absurdity of the proposition that Floyd would take passage on board his boat, knowing its character as he did, and trusting himself in the hands of Leudesso, if he were really antagonistic to the Filipino Republic.

On the other hand this might be a clever game of bluff, to facilitate his travelling in the Island by being able to say that he formed one of a party of insurgents, carrying arms and ammunition to the Island, and that he depended on Leudesso to help him carry it through. At any rate the captain

(who at heart was honest) felt the grave responsibility of deciding what should be done, resting heavily on his shoulders. There was a chance, a probability, that the American was just what he assumed to be, nothing more; on the other hand,—but the captain got tired of thinking at this stage of his reasoning, opened his eyes, picked up the paper and handing it to Floyd asked: “Is this the letter for which you were looking?”

Floyd took it, and at a glance saw with horror that it was a letter from the Secretary of War to General Otis, requesting that gentleman to give the bearer all the aid in pushing his inquiries possible. It did not state what these inquiries were to be, and as Floyd read it now under the new conditions that surrounded him he felt his face burn with shame and anger, for he realized the meaning the letter would convey to the minds of those who were at all inclined to doubt his own story. “If I could only find that letter of uncle’s,” he thought, “it would explain all.” In the absence of that what could he say, except reiterate the honest intentions of his visit to the Islands.

“Well Senior?” said the captain impatiently.

“Captain, I can only repeat what I told you before. This letter, notwithstanding its dangerous character, was given to me with others that would explain my true mission; the others have been stolen, I feel safe in saying, by yonder thing in the guise of a man, for what reason I am unable to say. Think you I would hire a man I knew to be an ex-Captain or something in the Filipino army as a guide, if it was my intention to act as spy?”

“It does not look reasonable, Senior, but my duty, sir, as an officer of the navy of Aguinaldo obliges me to take some action. Personally, sir, I have no feeling in the matter except to do justice both to you and to those whom I have the honor to serve. I do not even feel able, nor am I willing to act alone in deciding, therefore kindly return me the paper, that I may submit it to the judgment of my officers. Ho Lebo! Orders, you scoundrel!” At the captain’s command a curtain concealing another part of the cabin from view, that Floyd had not before noticed parted, and a young

full-blooded African appeared, or rather bounded into the room. In his ears and nose he wore the regulation African rings, and on each ankle large nickel plated bracelets appeared; these articles, and a breech-clout set off with various trinkets, valuable and otherwise, constituted his rather meager wardrobe. As he approached the captain he prostrated himself on all fours.

“Go and notify each of my officers that I wish to speak to them here immediately,” commanded the captain.

Lebo arose and without a word disappeared behind the curtain.

Five minutes had hardly elapsed when again the curtains parted, and Lebo appeared followed by four men in fatigue uniform; on the collar of each blouse appeared a tiny star, denoting some rank in the Filipino army. Lebo held the curtains aside until they had passed, then he disappeared.

The four men with a bow to the captain and a curious look at Floyd, silently seated themselves.

Presently footsteps were heard ap-

proaching the cabin from the deck; the door opened and the first and second mates entered, saluted the captain, bowed to the four officers, and took seats near their superior.

Floyd watched these arrangements as one in a dream. It was hard for him to comprehend that his life or death might depend upon the verdict of these seven hard visaged men, not one of whom, save the captain, but looked capable of committing murder without a moment's hesitation. He had very little hope for leniency from them. He became so absorbed in contemplating them that he was surprised to hear the captain mention the word "American," and to see him standing addressing the assembly, with a very serious expression on his face. He saw him pass the incriminating paper around, and noticed with what assumed dignity and all-wise expressions the men examined it, some even holding it to the light as if expecting to find a subtle poison hidden between the two sides. Not one besides the captain and his first mate understood the characters they saw written thereon; at last the all important document

was returned to the captain, who then said in Spanish :

“Brother officers, you have all heard the charge against the American who is here present; you have also examined the only evidence of his guilt, save the word of our countryman, in whom I have no confidence. I have told you the explanation given by the American, and his loss of letters he claims would prove his real mission to the Island. I will not say what I believe, nor will I agree to abide by the decision arrived at in this council, even if I had the authority to do so. If your decision is that he is an enemy of our cause, I will turn him over to the regular military authorities at Taquegabao to be tried by regular tribunal. What is your decision?”

There was silence for a few minutes, during which the army officers conferred in an undertone together, and in which the mates of the ship spoke to the captain.

Then there was clearing of throats, and one who appeared to be the ranking officer arose, and with solemn emphasis said :

“Captain, we of the army are united in declaring the evidence sufficient cause for

arrest of the American as a spy. We are not ignorant of the importance of this proceeding, but realize what the execution of our law against such an offence will probably lead to, namely, war with the American forces, but sir, we believe it must come sooner or later. Our verdict is, guilty. Leaving to you, sir, the safe keeping or the execution of the verdict as you see fit.”

“I have heard,” replied the captain.

Then the first mate arose and said: “Captain and brother officers. We too have heard and examined the evidence. We also think the American is an enemy to our cause, but we commend that he be handed over to the proper authorities at Tuguegabao.” When he had finished speaking the captain arose and said in English: “Senior Vandercook, whether guilty of the charge of being a spy or not, six of my officers have said you are; I myself am in doubt, but in obedience to the opinion of the majority I am obliged to place you under arrest. This is in name only, the liberty of the ship is yours until we reach our destination. I hope, really hope, sir, that you may prove you are innocent. Let me warn you, do

not stray far from your cabin, which will in future be next my own. Have you anything to say, why this should not be done?"

Although the conference had been conducted in Spanish, Floyd gathered from the various expressions on their faces, and their gesticulations that the army officers, as well as the captain's subordinate, spoke in favor of his arrest, therefore he was not so very much taken aback when the captain formally carried out their wishes. Still it required some little time for him to realize the terrible position the arrest placed him in. They could murder him in cold blood on this charge, and not a hand would be lifted in his defence, nor the fact become known to the outside world. Their action only emphasized how deep rooted was the suspicion in the Filipino breast against Americans in general, and plainly indicated their fear that the Spaniards had been driven from their country only to give place to a new and stronger master (more subtle if possible), promising great things in the improvement of their conditions, only to wrest from them that for which they had

fought, toiled and hungered after. Therefore Floyd concluded that no mercy could be looked for unless, perhaps, he could inspire them with fear of the terrible consequences the carrying out of their intentions would entail. He resolved to try it, so he replied: "Captain and gentlemen, I have given you my word of honor as a gentleman and genuine well wisher of your success as a government, that my sole purpose in coming to the Philippine Islands is in the interest of my uncle, a capitalist of the United States, who wishes to invest money in this country. You have arrested me as a spy, and by so doing you virtually proclaim that a state of war exists between the United States and yourselves. I ask you when was this war declared? My people have no knowledge of any such condition of things, nor do I really think you desire any such calamity to befall you. You think you are strong, but sirs, you can form no conception of the vast resources, the power, the magnitude of the fighting strength of the United States, the one power on earth whose friendship you should court, and once gained should

guard with a jealous eye. But in arresting me, a citizen of that country, you insult the flag that brought you out of the dark shadow of Spanish tyranny; who released thousands of your comrades from reeking, filthy dungeons; the flag that now offers you the blessings of its protecting folds, that you may enjoy the freedom of thought and action, as well as speech; that places you on an equality with all men, giving you a voice in the government of your country. The United States does this. It does more; it protects its citizens wherever they are. It punishes unremittingly any wrong done to one of its citizens, whether white or black. I am proud to claim that citizenship, and call upon you to remember that any indignity offered me will be punished just as severely as though it were offered to our President. I demand my release, as a citizen of the United States, and I ask you to consider the cost of a refusal."

Floyd had not intended at the beginning to say so much, but as he proceeded he became warmed up to his subject. He wished to impress his hearers with the mightiness

of the Nation of which he was a citizen, and the grave error they were committing in interfering with his liberty and rights as such.

When he had finished the captain interpreted the main points of his impromptu speech to the men, and Floyd was disappointed when he saw how little they seemed to care. They merely shrugged their shoulders deprecatingly, and as if by common consent arose, and stalked out of the cabin.

The captain now turned to Leudesso and said: "You are released, go and bring this gentleman's baggage to his cabin. Your future aboard this ship will depend entirely on your conduct. Go."

Then turning to Floyd he said: "If I can be of any service to you after our arrival at Tuguegabao I will be happy, Senior."

"At Tuguegabao?" exclaimed Floyd.

"Yes Senior."

"How far is that place from Manila?"

"A very long way sir, Manila is at the south end of the Island while Tuguegabao is at the north."

Floyd groaned; here the last hope of es-

cape or of clearing himself was dashed to pieces. He was to be taken into the very heart of the insurgent stronghold, with no way of communicating with his countrymen except by boat or messenger. He turned pale and grew sick at the thought of being shut up in some filthy place, to be jeered at by the ignorant populace and at last perhaps to be shot, murdered in cold blood. "It shall never be," he said to himself, and from that moment he gave himself up to devising some means of escape.

The captain escorted him to his cabin, and wishing him a pleasant afternoon, went away. The day was very hot, and Floyd did not venture on deck, but occupied himself in arranging the contents of his trunks, which he found thrown carelessly into the cabin, with locks broken and every article topsy-turvy.

"Oh, but you heathens will pay for this some day," he murmured, as he contemplated his almost ruined wardrobe. "Wait till I get out of this!"

A storm had been threatening all day, and now great banks of inky clouds were seen coming up in the south, the wind

freshened each moment and sighed and moaned among the rigging, and caused the numerous slack ropes to snap and crack against the single mast. The seas moved sluggishly, and a peculiar tint was visible to a considerable depth beneath the surface, and as the ship cut through the water the spray would roll lazily back from her bow, as if unwilling to give way to the onward progress of the handiwork of such an inferior being as man.

The heavy roll of the ship increased with the wind, which by evening was blowing a gale. Thunder, such as Floyd had never heard, rent the atmosphere. Blinding flashes of lightning lighted up the surroundings with a lurid glare, still the *Pride of Samar* kept on her course, the storm increasing every moment. Even in his cabin Floyd could feel the terrible shock of the billows as they crashed against the ship's quarter, and seemed to pick her up bodily and hurl her into the face of the enraged elements, and as she would plunge down into a yawning gulf of black, green and purple tinted water, it seemed as if the floor of the cabin was leaving his feet and

that he must surely go out through the roof.

The sun had now gone down; it was so dark that objects were not visible fifteen feet distant. Rain fell in torrents. It seemed as if a whole cloud was slowly settling down on the deck of the little ship, and through all this terrible din and uproar Floyd heard an excited hail, that he knew must come from the watch. Hurriedly donning a rain coat he opened the cabin door and peered out. All was quiet except for a somewhat excited dialogue going on in Spanish between the watch and the deck officer. Presently the captain was summoned, and very soon all the officers aboard were gathered on the bridge gazing toward the south and gesticulating wildly. The captain roared out a command, and instantly all lights in the ship were extinguished, while from somewhere below the deck a low rumbling sound like the ruffle of drums being beaten upon softly could be heard. Dark shadows flitted about the deck, like silent spectres of the dead, then amid the silence and through the murky darkness of the night the steady

tread of many feet became audible. Tramp, tramp, tramp. There was no word of command being given, but the steady tramp continued, steadily approaching near the place where Floyd was standing.

CHAPTER VIII.

Floyd was about to dodge back into the cabin when a low hiss came to his ears, and the sound of tramping feet began immediately to recede. He was filled with a strange dread. What was the meaning of the sudden darkness, and the strange sounds coming from below, and what was the cause of the breathless silence of the knot of officers gathered on the bridge? He forgot for the time being the character of the ship, and its strange crew, or the answer might have suggested itself. He decided to find out for himself. Carefully he began to feel his way through the darkness toward the stairs leading to the bridge, grasping everything he came to, to keep from being thrown down by the pitching and reeling of the ship.

At last he found the ladder, and slowly ascended one step at a time. He gained the top in safety, and gazing away toward the south he saw a sight that almost brought a

cry of joy to his lips; a great white light that pierced the thick black atmosphere like a knife, and extending, it seemed to Floyd, two miles in length and growing wider from its source, resembling an immense river of flame, running through the inky blackness of the sky, could be seen slowly sweeping the boiling surface of the sea. Slowly and majestically it swept through space from a southerly to north-east, then in a northerly direction until it seemed to Floyd that its rays would surely envelop the ship, but they fell short a half mile or more. It was a powerful searchlight, and Floyd knew it was from one of Uncle Sam's mighty Men of War.

He traced the light back to its source, and there was the green and red with a white light between the two that told him the mighty engine of destruction was bearing straight down across the bows of the smuggler. The men on the bridge noticed this about the same time and again the captain's voice could be heard giving some command. Floyd heard the tinkle of a bell somewhere in the distance and immediately the *Pride of Samar* seemed to fairly

leap from the water, and the manner in which she dived into the mountainous billows threatened her destruction each moment. Gradually Floyd felt the wind shift from his face to his back, and he knew that the ship's course had been changed from South-east to North-east. "Aha! she is running away," said he to himself. "It is truly one of Admiral Dewey's ships on the lookout for just such a prize. If I could only! Ah, there again comes the river of fire." As the great search light again swept the surface of the sea in the direction of the *Pride of Samar*, this time it looked as if the fleeing ship must come within its range, but again it fell short, and died out altogether. Floyd's heart sank within him as he saw it, and he crouched more closely in a corner of the stairs, the rain drenching him to the skin. He heard a short laugh from the bridge, and he judged that the officers thought they were safe from discovery. If such was the case their hopes were short lived, for all at once a light again shot out from the darkness in the direction of the tiny lights far in the rear, and in a moment the *Pride of Samar* was

enveloped in a ray of soft, mellow light that lit up the surroundings almost as bright as day, and revealed a sight never to be forgotten. There huddled together on the bridge stood the officers of the army, and the captain's subordinates, their faces drawn and anxious; off to the side stood the captain in the act of signalling to slacken speed, but who now gave the small silver handle a nervous pull calling for more.

Floyd cast his eyes to the deck, and there crouched in double rank along the gunwales the whole length of the deck were two or three companies of rebel soldiers, all heavily armed, while at regular intervals between them several huge cannon showed their muzzles threateningly through the port holes. Instinctively Floyd began to wonder where they came from, when again the ruffle of a drum, and a low hist, like the noise of some deadly serpent, reminded him of what he had heard so shortly before. It all became plain now. The smuggler contained soldiers and ordnance as well as small arms, and what surprised Floyd more than anything else, it was evident they intended to fight before submitting to capture.

Again the great pathway of light veered around a couple of points west of the smuggler, and Floyd taking advantage of the complete darkness crept cautiously down the stairs and into his cabin. Throwing off his wet rain coat, and divesting himself of his coat, he took down a life preserver that hung against the wall, and gathering together his money and valuables, he tucked them carefully away in a hole which he cut in the strong cloth that covered the cork. In another place he stowed a box of cartridges after wrapping them with a piece of rubber cloth to protect them from water. He then placed his trusty revolver away inside his vest, after which he buckled the preserver together around under his arms over his vest, and over all he again drew on the wet rain coat. He now felt prepared for whatever might come. He felt sure that the Yankee Man of War had discovered the smuggler, and meant to give chase, but he could not understand why her search light had been withdrawn. Somehow he felt a sort of companionship in that great stream of light coming as he thought from a Man of

War, belonging to his dear native land. He knew behind that light, and all around it, were many brave Jackies in blue, straining their eyes toward the black spot on the troubled surface of the South China Sea, trying to make her out, all unconscious that one of their countrymen was a prisoner aboard her, being carried far beyond the pale of civilization, to his death, or perhaps worse. In looking around his cabin by the light of many matches, to see if there was anything else he should have, he discovered a small door leading toward the captain's cabin, which he was endeavoring to open when a noise at the door of his own cabin attracted his attention. He turned half expecting to receive a knife thrust for his carelessness in leaving the door unlocked, and there standing before him with a demoniacal grin on his hideous face, stood the African. In one hand he carried a shaded lantern and in the other he clutched a paper which he handed to Floyd with a nod, and another grin, at the same time holding the lantern so that its rays would afford light enough by which to read the contents of the crumpled note.

It was in English, and poorly spelled, but Floyd managed to make out the following: "The Captain desires the presence of the American gentleman on the bridge, come." He nodded his head vigorously to the African, who quickly withdrew. Floyd followed him outside, and noticed with feelings of joy that the mellow light had again enveloped the smuggler, but it was not so bright as before; the *Pride of Samar* was going at a terrific rate through the water, crashing into hard-looking billows, almost burying herself with water each plunge, and it was evident she was leaving her pursuer behind. Floyd reached the bridge, and was met by the captain, who said: "Yonder, Senior, is one of your Warships. This light you see around us is from her search-light."

"Do you think they have made you out?" asked Floyd anxiously.

"I do not know, Senior, but we are leaving them fast in this terrible sea. I sent for you that I might know that you were safe in the event that we are forced to fight. I do not mean safe from the shells of yonder monster, but from one of my

crew who might take advantage of the excitement to murder you.”

“Surely sir, you do not intend to fight rather than be captured?”

“I certainly do, Senior; cast your eyes on deck and you will see that we are not so weak after all.”

“Yes, Captain, but a single shot from one of those terrible guns would sink you.”

“Not at all, Senior, besides it is not so easy to hit us on a night like this.”

“You would never get close enough to use your soldiers or even your guns, sir,” suggested Floyd.

“Yes I would, Senior, and I’ll tell you how. If I see that I cannot get away I will lay to and allow them to come very close, then sir, I will ram her.”

Floyd was amused at the captain’s confidence in his ship and the men, but somehow he knew that he would be as good as his word, and he wondered if God in his mercy would save his life, if such a terrible thing should happen. He had no doubt as to the outcome of such an unequal contest. Suddenly the light was withdrawn, and the captain and Floyd gazed anxiously in

the direction of the now invisible lights. There was a moment's pause and then a great sheet of flame burst from the pursuing ship, accompanied by a dull roar, and the next instant a great screaming noise was heard passing overhead.

"Discovered," said the captain calmly.

"Discovered," said Floyd sadly, and found himself almost wishing the smuggler success in eluding her pursuer.

The captain gave an order, and immediately a sail was hoisted which seemed to lend impetus to the already furious speed of the fleeing ship.

There was another vomit of flame from the pursuing ship, again that dreadful roar came over the water. There was a deafening crash plainly heard above the noise of rushing wind and water, and the top of the main mast fell to the deck and hung over the bulwarks, dragging in the water, held there by stout ropes.

"Stand by to cut away the wreck," bawled the captain, and in a few seconds the piece of mast was left far in the rear. The captain shook his fist in the direction of the warship and swore in Spanish.

“Ah Senior, they are good shots, these Yankee devils, to do that well in the dark, but they can't get us, Senior. Never.”

Floyd could not help admitting the genuine bravery of the captain, and the confidence he had in his ship to outstrip his pursuer.

After cutting off the top of the main mast the firing from the pursuing ship ceased, and nothing could be seen where her small lights had been visible, but the captain of the *Pride of Samar* did not reduce the terrific speed at which she was going. It was easy to see that he was annoyed by the strange ship's disappearance and he kept up a careful and constant watch on all points of the compass. He evidently was afraid of some Yankee trick and the strain of being in such suspense was beginning to tell on him as well as on the other anxious watchers. They were hungry as well as tired, but eating was out of the question. They had had no supper, and had stood out in the terrible rain and storm for three hours. Floyd felt the pangs of hunger growing on him, but he dared not ask for food, fearing poison. He

began to feel sleepy too, but was afraid lest while he slept the pursuing ship would suddenly come upon them, and if she did he realized the importance of being wide awake, but he decided to make himself as comfortable as possible, so took up his old place on the stairway, which while not protecting him from the rain, shielded him from the terrible wind, and prevented him being thrown overboard. He thought it strange that the pursuing ship was unable to overhaul the smuggler, and wondered which, if either, of Uncle Sam's ships it could be. He remembered the names of most of the Men of War now supposed to be at or in the vicinity of Manila, and he was able to call to mind the speed of each. First, there was the cruiser Olympia, speed of twenty-two knots, Raleigh nineteen, Concord seventeen. The Olympia should overhaul the smuggler, but it was not likely to be her, for she was the Flag Ship. It was unlikely that either of the monitors, Monterey or the Monadock, would stray so far from Manila, yet the speed of the pursuing ship was about what would be expected of one of those double turreted death dealing

machines. Last, but most unlikely of all the Baltimore, which outside of the Olympia was the fastest ship in the squadron, having a speed of twenty-one knots. She could have overtaken the smuggler, and not half tried. Floyd concluded it was either the Raleigh or the Concord, and having relieved his mind of the question, he did what he desired most of all to avoid, fell asleep.

CHAPTER IX.

The *Pride of Samar* was now in about Latitude 19 degrees North and Longitude 117 degrees East, from Greenwich, with the mouth of the river Grande de Cagayan still four hundred miles distant, in a straight line. Her course which had been changed to Northeast early in the chase, was now changed to East by East, probably for the purpose of throwing the other ship off the track, but her speed was not slackened in the least. The captain was making full speed for one of the thousands of Islands north of Luzon, where he knew he could hide as long as he wished, and be safe.

On, on she went through the darkness. Not a light visible anywhere above or below. The soldiers were still at their post but more than half of them were fast asleep, worn out by waiting for what meant sure death to most of them.

The officers becoming weary of watching went one by one to their cabins to gain

some rest. Floyd still reclined against the steps of the stairs leading to the bridge, constantly in danger of fracturing his skull against the other side.

On the bridge stood the solitary figure of the captain alone, pacing to and fro; the anxious look had almost left his face, and it was apparent that he felt satisfied that he had left his unpleasant and quarrelsome companion far behind.

What of Leudesso all this time? During the heat of the chase and the firing, in fact from the time the light threw its first rays in the direction of the smuggler, Leudesso was really a laughable spectacle; his fear was so great that he shook as if stricken with the palsy; his eyes started from their sockets and his teeth chattered together like the knives in a meat chopper. He ran here and there vainly trying to find some safe place wherein to conceal his shivering anatomy, out of the way of the deadly shells. At last he squeezed his body into a small crevice between several bales of hemp stowed away in the hold, from which retreat he did not venture for fully an hour after the firing had ceased, when

he cautiously peered out and finding no signs of immediate encounter, he walked boldly forth and in loud whispers told one of his accomplices what "we would have done to the Yankees, if they had overtaken us."

As hour succeeded hour and no more had been seen of their late antagonist, the captain concluding he had won the victory over might with speed, summoned his first officer, turned the command over to him and inviting Floyd, who was still half dozing on the stairs, to accompany him, went to his cabin. Here he had hot coffee and cakes served, which he pressed on Floyd, who eagerly accepted. Floyd thought he had never tasted anything that was half so good as that cup of black coffee and cake, and has been trying ever since to get coffee made just like it, that will taste just as good, but it is needless to say that he is not successful.

What an extraordinary spectacle, prisoner and captor drinking and eating at the same table. The captor sharing his meals with his prisoner, treating him as he would a brother officer, in fact watching

over him lest harm should come to him while in his charge. Here was justice and even more, as unexpected as it was refreshing. Here was a true man, one whose sense of justice toward one whom he considered an enemy of his country, was not overshadowed by his love and undying loyalty to his native land. A man, who rather than surrender to the Yankees, would sink his ship far down in the unknown depths of the China Sea; yet who could be tender and kind to another Yankee who had by chance fallen into his power. Yet it is always the bravest who are the kindest and tenderest. Captain Acontello, though a half-caste and avowed supporter of "The Philippines for the Filipino," was worthy to be classed with such men as Evans, Clark and Phillips of our own navy, or Paul Jones of ye olden times. Certain it is that he lacked neither the courage nor the high sense of justice and honor that go to make men truly great. Floyd was indeed to be congratulated for having fallen into the keeping of such a man, who no doubt had he been permitted by that power that rules over all, intended by his influence among

the chief officers of Aguinaldo to restore Floyd safe and sound to his friends; he even intimated as much to his prisoner while they ate and drank together, and Floyd's heart went out to the dark-skinned captain of the smuggler, and he confided to him how he came to be sent to the Philippines; he also told him of a certain dark-eyed maiden whom he had left in America, over eighteen thousand miles away, and the captain was convinced that this quiet, unassuming and even inexperienced young man was no spy, but one bent on a mission that could not prove otherwise than eventually beneficial to the Island.

The captain laid down on a couch and ordered the African to bring rugs and spread them out on the floor. On these Floyd stretched himself and they were both soon fast asleep.

The weather had now become more favorable. The wind had decreased visibly, and the seas were not so high, while overhead it was beginning to clear off, and everything pointed to a beautiful day on the morrow. The *Pride of Samar* was making unprecedented time, and it was

reckoned by keeping up the speed by which she was cutting the water for twenty hours more, they would be well on their way up the River Grande de Cagayan; but as God is our life and death, and our eternity, it is folly to calculate without considering His will, His wishes. He rules the destiny of men, as well as of nations. He who notes the fall of a little dead leaf to the ground, the flitting of a sparrow through the air, and who numbers the sands of the seashore, oft times brings the calculations of such an insignificant being as man to naught.

Sunset and sunrise in this latitude are surprising events to one not accustomed to the queer pranks of old Sol. There is no twilight, at least not enough to be worthy the name, and the first intimation one has of dawn is the appearance of a great red globe of fire rising as it were out of the midst of the ocean. It is a magnificent sight, but after all one that grows old fast, and it cannot be compared to our twilight in effect on the landscape. We would never willingly exchange the beautiful tint of our morning twilight, that throws a mantle of exquisite beauty and grandeur over

valley and mountain, kissing the hillside and the fields with its mellow glow; the morning and evening kiss of the King of Nations to his beloved subjects, for the abrupt burst of sunlight in the Philippines.

The first officer of the *Pride of Samar* was pacing indolently to and fro on the bridge. He had ceased to think of the ship that had followed them during the night, he was patiently waiting for his turn to come to go off duty. He stopped in his walk and scanned the east closely for a sight of the coming day, and even as he looked the sun seemed to shoot upward out of the throbbing bosom of the great sea. He heaved a sigh of relief at the sight, and was about to quit the bridge, when a startled cry from the port watch arrested the movement. Then came a cry, "Sail off the port quarter, sir."

He turned quickly, and there, outlined against the water, shining and shimmering in the tropical sun, was a beautiful ship not more than a mile distant. As he gazed spell-bound, great clouds of thick, black smoke arose from her funnels, and it seemed to the officer on the bridge of the

Pride of Samar, that he noticed an immediate increase in the ship's motion. He seized a glass and gazed at the now fast gaining ship. One look was enough to convince him that it was nothing less than a Man of War. He threw down the glass and fell rather than ran down the steps of the companion-way, and burst into the captain's cabin.

Floyd was awake in an instant, and gleaned from the excited talk of the men that something was about to transpire, but he waited for the captain, whose calmness and deliberate actions were exasperating, but whose face, nevertheless, wore an anxious expression. He arose and bathed his face in cold water, and adjusting his clothes, which he had not removed during the night, and motioning Floyd to follow, hurried to the bridge. He picked up the glass and looked at the approaching vessel. It was scarcely necessary to use a glass now, however, for the vessel's outlines were plainly visible. Laying down the glass the captain turned to Floyd and said: "Senior, yonder ship is the Baltimore. You have doubtless heard of her. She has hung

on to us all night, waiting for daylight to be able to make us out; so after all, Senior, you have a chance to die in battle instead of being shot as a common spy in Luzon." Then he turned away and commanded: "Every man to his post. We will show the Yankees how free men can die in battle."

Then over the water came faint strains of music, "The Star Spangled Banner," being played by the band on board the Baltimore.

Floyd felt the blood go rushing through his viens as the air floated across the heaving swell, but he had no time to think, for slowly up the mast of the Baltimore a flag was seen to climb until it unfurled itself at the top. Floyd could not repress an "Ah!" as the Stars and Stripes snapped gaily in the light breeze, and proclaimed to those on board the smuggler the nationality of the on-coming ship.

"Stand by your colors, there. Run up the flag of the Filipino Nation, and let no man disgrace his country by hauling it down," said the captain.

Up went the flag to the top, and as it un-

furled to the breeze a puff of smoke left the side of the Baltimore, and a solid shot went whistling across the bows of the smuggler. As the shot struck the water a short distance ahead and again soared upward and onward for quite a distance, Floyd looked at the captain to note its effect. He was almost startled by the terrible look of hate and determination that he saw written on his countenance, and he felt that all was up with him; still he experienced no real fear, at least the fear that he always thought would enter his heart at being in battle; he seemed more interested in the fate of the smuggler and her captain than in his own safety, and he resolved to remonstrate with the captain on what he considered his rank madness. So approaching he said: "Surely, sir, you do not intend to resist capture in broad daylight at the hands of yonder Man of War. It is nothing less than murder and suicide, sir."

The captain turned on him a look of disdain, almost repugnance, and said: "Ah, Senior, I had almost forgotten you were aboard. I'm not quite ready, however, to

turn the command of this ship over to you. I might also suggest that this bridge is a dangerous place; as you seem to be a trifle afraid, my cabin is at your disposal.”

Floyd's pride was touched, and he replied rather hotly: “The fear, sir, if I have any, is for yourself and crew. I thought not of myself, and here I stand until the end, sir, and may God have mercy on us all.” All this happened in much less than a minute, and the shells from the Baltimore were beginning to come thicker, and each time nearer to the body of the smuggler; it was evident that the captain of the Yankees did not wish to sink her, if it were possible to halt her without. The Baltimore was now following directly in the wake of the smuggler, and a great shell from one of her forward guns now came tearing through the ship; entering at the stern, and passing under the bridge the missile went crashing through the doomed vessel's forward compartments, sending splinters of wood flying in all directions, and leaving blood and death in its wake; groans, cries and curses mingled with the awful crash of timbers, and sent a cold chill

through Floyd's body. The deck below them became obscured by dense clouds of smoke, and a sailor reported, "Part of the funnel shot away, sir." On hearing this the captain signaled to stop the engine, then gave the signal to reverse. Immediately the firing from the Baltimore ceased, and Floyd's heart rose for he thought the *Pride of Samar* was about to be surrendered. The captain signaled the man at the wheel, "Hard aport!" and she came slowly around until she faced the fast approaching war ship.

Captain Acontello stood holding the signal handles, his face drawn and white as death, a ferocious gleam in his eyes, and waited until the advancing ship was within easy hailing distance; then he gave several nervous pulls at the signal of the engine, and the *Pride of Samar* shot ahead at full speed headed straight for the Baltimore, amidst cheer upon cheer from the sailors and soldiers below.

Captain Acontello was about to ram the Baltimore. "God save us," cried Floyd as he became aware of the captain's purpose. Those on board the Baltimore knew

of the mad design of the smuggler's captain almost as soon as Floyd, and now began a terrible scene. Shot after shot was poured into the smuggler. The dead and dying were lying all about her deck in heaps, still as if by a miracle the engine and steering gear remained intact. The Baltimore turned her sharp nose to receive the attack, but being much larger than the smuggler she required more room, and it was plain she could not avoid receiving the on-coming ship full in the quarter, for Captain Acontello followed her maneuvers closely, and caused the smuggler's direction to be changed accordingly. Now she was close upon them, almost riddled to kindling with shot, but her speed increasing each moment, with a lot of demons upon her deck screaming and yelling, crazed by the sight of blood and the dead, and drunk to frenzy with excitement, on, on, she flew.

Floyd was standing by the captain when a shot struck the misguided commander and carried him off the bridge. As if by a sudden inspiration Floyd grasped the signal handle and pulled. Instantly the engine ceased to throb; but it was too late

to avoid the crash, and as he braced himself for the shock he felt two sinewy hands around his throat; the next instant Leudesso's distorted face and blood-shot eyes peered into his and hissed:

“Ha, Senior, here you die, you Yankee dog. Thirty thousand dollars is too much to pay me when I would have killed you for nothing.” Floyd felt himself falling—falling—falling—until all was blank. He did not know when the vessels met, he did not witness the awful sight aboard the smuggler, as she glanced harmlessly off the steel sides of the Baltimore, and almost immediately sank, for his senseless form was floating on the surface of the North China Sea, held up by the life preserver he had so providentially provided himself with from the smuggler.

CHAPTER X.

As the *Pride of Samar* glanced off the protected sides of the *Baltimore*, she plunged heavily to one side, pitched forward on her beam ends and sank out of sight with an awful roar, as if, having fought nobly an unequal contest and lost, she preferred to rest her bones on some coral reef far beneath the surface of the ocean rather than submit to become a prize to her hated rival.

Boats were quickly lowered from the *Baltimore* and a rescuing party was soon picking up the struggling mass of humanity from the sinking smuggler. Out of a possible total of two hundred souls who were on board the smuggler, seventy-five persons were rescued, among them Leudesso, unconscious from a slight wound. The remainder, dead and living, went down on the unfortunate *Pride of Samar*, with the single exception of Floyd who somehow had drifted to quite a distance away from the scene of the attack, and whom the

rescuing party did not see, although they were very close to his body several times.

When the last man was placed aboard the war ship the boats were hoisted to their places and the Baltimore steamed serenely away, leaving the living body of one of their countrymen alone, except for the dead, unconscious on the heaving bosom of the sea, two hundred miles from land, and that land full of unknown men and dangers. Alone, to become a prey perhaps to hunger, keen-eyed sharks, or to slowly die of a torturing thirst. But no blame could possibly be attached to the officers or the crew of the rescuing party; who among them could believe or think they were leaving behind them one of their own countrymen, released from the hands of the captors only to become a captive to a mightier foe, the fickle sea.

Occasionally a sea larger than the rest would sweep over his face, brushing back his wet hair from his brow, but they were generally long unbroken swells that lifted him to their crest, to gently lower him down again to await the next.

How long he remained unconscious can never be told, but all at once he opened his

eyes and gazed, wonderingly around; was this death? Was that cold thing he felt around his throat that monster death, gradually choking out his existence? He felt a pain in his head and all the harrowing details of the past two days came back to him like an electric shock; he remembered Leudesso's evil face peering into his, he looked for the ship. "Gone! All gone!" he cried, "and I am lost. Oh God, be merciful to me and save me." He gazed around him, and saw at some distance a piece of wreckage. He swam toward it, gained its top, and as he did so a huge shark turned on its back and showed its white teeth and savage eyes. He thanked God for showing him the piece of floating wreckage just in time to save him from the monstrous jaws.

He stood upright and gazed around. Water! water! a never ending, boundless waste of heaving billows met his gaze in all directions, but far to the west he caught sight of a dark, tiny object fast becoming dim in the distance; it was the Baltimore. He tore off his coat and waved it frantically in the hope that some eye on board the retreating ship might notice it, and

come to his rescue. Vain hope! poor weary soul, they have long since ceased to gaze in your direction; useless effort, you are now far beyond the help of man. There is only one can save you now; He who stilled the troubled waters of Galilee, He to whom was given power over death, but who died that we might live, can save you and He alone. Oh, how many of us forget there is a Christ until, like Floyd, we find ourselves out on the boundless ocean of trouble and adversity, out of the reach, or far beyond the call of man, to whom we are accustomed to look for succor. Then we suddenly think there is a greater than human assistance near us, and we pray to God, to Christ for help, but how sad it is to contemplate that this is only done, after calling on man in vain. That He to whom all our cares and adversities should be taken first of all, is thought of only after failing to receive the needed help from man, a creature of God, merely a tiny bubble in the ocean of God's creation, and one too, that is weak and changing.

Floyd watched the tiny speck grow smaller, little by little, until at last it

faded from his sight altogether. It is utterly useless to try to describe the feeling that came over him, as the last vantage of the Baltimore disappeared below the horizon.

Alone! Ah who can comprehend the full significance of that one little word. We use it every day in our talk to express a state of being when surrounded by friends and acquaintances, or we say alone in a crowded city, with a mass of humanity surging around us, to whom we may go for information, or to whom we may talk, and this knowledge lends us comfort. But allow yourself for a moment to drift in thought to a little piece of deck, not more than six feet square, far out in the middle of the North China Sea. On every side of you as far as the eye can reach is water, water, that lifts your little home high in the air, only to plunge you the next instant into a valley. On each side rise mountains of rushing, roaring water; no living being near you to whom to speak, and when you speak yourself your voice seems to die out at your lips; its strangeness startles you.

“I am out of humanity’s reach
I shall finish my journey alone,
Never hear the sweet music of speech,
I start at the sound of my own.”

This verse but poorly expresses the feeling that came over Floyd, at he sank wearily down on his small craft to wait. Wait, for what? He is out of the regular course of all vessels. He does not hope for rescue from that quarter. In fact there seems to be no ray of hope shining through the dark future, except relief in death. Already he feels the terrible pangs of hunger gnawing at his vitals. Already his tongue is beginning to swell from thirst, the torturing pangs of which are beginning to make themselves manifest.

The torrid sun beat down on his unprotected head, and helped to stimulate his terrible thirst, but as much as he feared the effect of the sun, he dreaded the advent of night and what it would bring with it, far more.

If he could only do something, work, or walk about, anything to relieve his cramped limbs of their stiffness, and occupy his time. He could do nothing but hang on to his small world and gaze out upon

the wilderness of water. As he sat thus he noticed something dark on the crest of a wave near him; he gazed at the object, wondering what it could be; nearer and nearer it drifted very slowly, until it was quite close; then he noticed a commotion near it, suddenly it turned half around; merciful Heavens! it was a human head and he recognized it as that of Captain Acontello; slowly it turned until he saw the face with open eyes, which seemed to start at him with a pitiful expression, but it disappeared almost as suddenly beneath the waves. The sight was sickening, and Floyd turned his head away and tried to think of something else, but he soon found himself trying to devise some plan to keep him on the raft, for he knew he could not long remain rational under the trying ordeal through which he must pass, before death relieved him. It is true he still had a faint hope that through Providence he would be rescued, but it was so small that he dared not think of it seriously. He thought that chance perhaps would send a steamer or other vessel near him, but he clung to it only as a condemned man upon

the gallows with the trap ready to be sprung, clings to the hope of pardon, hoping against all reason, and against his own judgment.

There was nothing at hand that could be used to tie himself on the raft, and after dismissing different schemes from his mind as impracticable, he gave up in despair.

All day long, that seemed years to him, he sat there, and suffered almost the tortures of the damned in Hades. Several times he had taken his revolver out of his breast and wondered if it would not be better to end his misery with one shot from it, than to die a slow death from thirst. He even discharged it once to see whether it would do the work effectively, and as the short, quick report greeted his ear he laughed wildly. Here was a sure remedy for his troubles that had fallen over each other in their eagerness to engulf him, and he decided that when his torture became unbearable to use it.

About three o'clock in the afternoon, as he was half reclining, with one arm under his head, and gazing at nothing in particular, he saw what looked like a spar some

little distance away. He knew there must be rope attached to it, and he longed to possess it, but how could he get it. He knew the water near by must be full of sharks, attracted hither by the dead from the wreck, but he also knew that without a piece of rope he would soon be food for them himself; besides, the distance between himself and the spar was increasing momentarily, and what he did must be done quickly. He decided to risk it, and placing his knife in his teeth, he slid quietly off the raft and swam swiftly toward the spar, which he gained. Rope there was in plenty and cutting off a long piece, he started back to his--ship, keeping a sharp lookout for the monsters of the deep; but he was undisturbed, the feat had been accomplished, and Floyd felt glad, he even began to take a more hopeful view of his position; "at least" he argued, "if I die, I'll not become a prey to those demons, like poor Captain Acontello's body." In a few minutes he had himself lashed to the raft, in a way that, while he could move almost as freely as before, would prevent him from being washed off, and unless the raft turned clear

over he was safe from drowning at least.

Slowly the sun approached the western horizon, and suddenly sank out of sight, and the little black spot on the great Eastern Sea was visible no more.

Morning came and disclosed the small raft and its occupant. It had drifted a couple of leagues southward during the night, but it mattered little to Floyd, who lay still and deathlike; his face was colorless, his lips were swollen to twice their natural size, but death had not yet claimed him. Flesh and blood had simply proved unequal to the strain, and unconsciousness had come upon him, and with a kind hand had made him insensible to the terrors of hunger, thirst and loneliness.

About eleven o'clock rain began to fall, and continued steadily all day. Almost at the first drop that touched Floyd's parched lips he started up, and wept for joy. He held his coat so that the rain fell into a hollow, from which he drank greedily, and seemed refreshed.

Night again came on, and again Floyd relaxed into unconsciousness, during which he would suddenly start up and rave,

and curse wildly, only to fall back exhausted and moan piteously.

CHAPTER XI.

Early the next morning a strange looking sloop-rigged boat could have been seen near the vicinity where Floyd's unconscious body was being tossed about on the waves. The craft really consisted of three boats built together, with the deck laid over all; from the bow of the center boat a tall mast arose, which supported an immense sail, the lower boom of which extended back nearly twenty feet, or two-thirds of the length of the craft itself.

She also carried a large jib sail, the boom of which must have been all of fifteen feet. Both sails were extraordinary in their size in comparison with the length of the boat, which was a mixture of sloop and Catamaran.

She was gradually working her way southeast, in the direction of the island of Luzon. The wind was blowing quite hard from that direction, and she kept tacking

back and forth, going several miles on each tack, before changing.

On her broad deck all was quiet. Her crew, consisting of several savage looking, half naked men, with yellow faces and black hair, were lying indolently about the deck smoking, or leaning over the rail watching the water as it glided by them. Their naked and sunburnt legs, and bare feet, were large and bony, and the fishy odor coming from somewhere below proclaimed them as belonging to one of the many tribes of semi-civilized savages of Luzon, who subsisted by their skill as fishermen.

They were now on the starboard tack; their course brought them close to the raft on which Floyd lay stretched, and it seemed they would surely pass it by without notice; when nearly abreast of it the men at the helm set up a terrible cry and chatter, which was neither Spanish, nor yet the mixed language that is frequently heard among the Filipinos. It resembled the chatter of the monkey more than any human tongue, and the sound seemed to come from his throat, through his closed teeth, accom-

panied by gesticulations that immediately brought the loungers to their feet in evident alarm.

It proved to be the raft that had caused it all, and which by this time was some distance to the rear.

There was a moment's chattering and gesticulation among them, then the wheel was put over, the large sail began flopping in the breeze, then filled gradually, and the Catamaran bore swiftly down upon the raft, sailing wing and wing, for the wind was perfectly fair.

The boat was handled with such skill that the sail was lowered and she came to a stand still right beside the raft, so near in fact, that long poles were used to keep the raft from being dashed against her sides.

A dark body was seen to drop overboard and presently appeared on the raft. Quickly cutting the rope around Floyd, he called for a rope from the boat, which he passed under the arms of the apparently dead man, he waved his hand and the men on the boat hauled away, and a moment later Floyd was the center of a very ex-

cited group of savages. Nor were they lacking in their kindness or attention toward him. Strong liquor of some kind was poured down his throat. His outer clothing was removed, together with the life preserver, that disclosed his little money and valuables as well as his revolver, but strange to relate, after looking curiously at these articles, they were replaced in the lining of the preserver which was carefully laid away to one side, with his other clothing. The practice of rolling on a barrel or a similar substitute, seemed to these savages to be an old method of forcing the water from the body of a half drowned person, for they resorted to it in resuscitating Floyd from the death like unconsciousness in which they found him, and the tenderness with which they went about their work bespoke for them a tender heart, and a fellow feeling for mankind in sore distress, that some of their more highly civilized brethren could emulate to their credit.

At the first appearance of life grunts of satisfaction could be heard issuing from their dusky throats, while kindly

but strong arms bore him to the cabin near the stern; while others placed furs on the floor, with a sack full of soft, downy substance at the top for his head, on which they laid him. His underclothing they took from his body, and wrapped him in a soft flaxy covering, resembling a quilt.

A guard or watch was placed at the door to watch over him. That they had ever before gazed on the face of a white person is doubtful, and they discussed him in whispers full of awe.

Meantime the Catamaran was getting under way and went speeding on her journey toward the coast. The weather was clear, not a cloud obscured the sky, and the sea was like a mirror in its smoothness, and the light wind filling the immense spread of canvas, carried the queer boat swiftly along.

Early the next morning Floyd, who by this time was able to sit up, was carried out of the cabin on the arms of two of the men, and placed in a hammock, where supported on either side, he could gaze on the coast which they were now fast approaching.

Directly ahead the coast was mountainous. High, rugged cliffs overhung the water, their peaks resplendent in the verdure of the tropics, far away to the north and south it was less rocky and dropped away in one long, level plain, barely visible above the level of the ocean. Even at the distance of several miles from the shore a peculiarly sweet and pleasing perfume was wafted to them on the morning air, and Floyd drew in a deep breath that was exhilarating. He wondered where he was being carried, and asked before he thought, pointing to the nearing land, if it was the Island of Luzon.

From the emphatic nods and pleased grins his eyes encountered, together with a series of gesticulations, meant to convey the beauty and pleasures of the island, Floyd interpreted an affirmative answer. "So after all," he thought, "here I am about to enter the land of Luzon, which must also be, from what I see about me here on this strange craft, a land of savages, as well as a land of struggling patriots. After passing through the very jaws of death, I at last see the goal; when

will I again see civilization, is another question. I see the hand of fate in everything." Then as if pierced by a red hot iron his conscience revolted against the thought. It seemed to whisper: "Was it fate that saved you on the bridge of the smuggler, with the shells of the war ship falling like hail around you? Was it fate that later your life was saved by a small piece of wreckage coming within your reach just in time to save your life? Was it fate that saved you from the murderous knife of the assassin, Leudesso? Was it fate that caused this strange craft, manned by savages, to steer her course so that you would be rescued from the sea? Or was it the hand of God stretched forth in answer to your prayer for help?" And from the fullness of his heart went up the answer: "Thou, Oh Christ, the God, am my preserver. I thank Thee for Thy goodness and mercy."

Each moment the Catamaran lessened the distance between itself and the shore, and although up to this time she had been obliged to go about on "short tacks," Floyd noticed now she was scudding along before

the wind, which had very suddenly changed from south-east to due west. A long time after he learned that where the high mountains rear their heads far above the sea, a wind blowing off land would suddenly change after getting beyond a certain zone on the outward journey, and blow from the sea, and vice versa; but the question at the time did not occupy his mind to any extent; but on looking ahead he failed to see where any landing could be made, and as the sails of the Catamaran were not reduced, he wondered if the crew had lost their reason, for she was going at a fast rate of speed directly against the rugged, overhanging mass of rocks, and Floyd was momentarily expecting to feel the shock, when all of a sudden the queer craft veered slightly to the right and as if by magic Floyd saw a great opening appear, into which the boat plunged under a great arch of slippery, moss covered rocks.

Everything was as dark as night. Floyd gazed above, but the clear sky was not there, but far to the rear he could see a tiny light, the entrance; and as he gazed eagerly ahead, light was beginning to break

into view like the dull gray of early morning, which grew larger and more bright each second, until the craft shot out into the light of day, and into a beautiful inland lake, bordered on every hand by the low lands of a rich, grassy plain. Off to the right a village of rude huts appeared, built to a little height off the ground. Toward this the boat was turned, and as she approached the shore it became lined with dusky skinned men and boys, old women and comely maidens, while away to the left, probably distant about five miles in the mountains, a small volcano could be seen in a semi-state of eruption.

Before reaching the landing the one who acted as captain stood up at the bow of the boat and yelled at those on shore, meanwhile pointing out Floyd, who was amazed a moment later to see those on shore prostrate themselves on the ground, at the same time singing a weird chant. They remained in this attitude while three of the boatmen jumped into the water, carrying Floyd on their stout shoulders and headed by the great towering form of the captain, waded ashore. Floyd was carried to a

hut in the center of the village, larger than the rest, and amid great rejoicings of the people, they proclaimed him their Messiah, while a number of dusky warriors circled with hands clasped around the hut, keeping up the same weird, monotonous chant that had at first greeted his ears. Here at last was to Floyd the secret of their kindness toward him, and he learned that their Messiah had died, and the crew of the boat that had picked him up had just that morning buried him, as was the custom, in the depths of the ocean. Chance had thrown Floyd in their way, to himself become their head man in spiritual things, as it was the duty of the burying party to provide before their return another Messiah for their people.

At first Floyd's recovery was very slow, and it was several days before he became well enough to walk alone; after that, however, he quickly gained strength, and at the end of two weeks he began to think of escape, for by this time he had learned enough about the savage tribe into whose midst he had been so strangely cast, to understand that they would never allow him to go if

they knew it; therefore escape was the proper word, and one that continued to occupy his mind to the exclusion of everything else. But it was to be no easy matter to get away, unseen, from the village, for one of the savages was continually in attendance at the door of his hut, ready and anxious to gratify his every wish, except allowing him to depart.

Even in his daily walks he was attended by two staid savages, ostensibly as servants, but as he rightly guessed to prevent escape. But these long walks were not without their interest, as Floyd soon found out. One day while walking on the shores of a small, swift stream he noticed something shining under the surface. He stopped then and there, and digging down into the sand with his bare hands, he was amazed on lifting them up to find that the bright and shining substance contained a good percentage of gold. He whittled stakes and planted them in the earth a little to one side to mark the spot, but it was hardly necessary, for he found the same evidence of richness, as far up the stream as he went.

Then there were the animals, different from anything he had ever before seen. The water-horse and the queer little goat-like animals. The different varieties of monkeydom, some jet black, others snow white with pink eyes. He also saw some man-eating gorillas that went in companies of five to ten. Birds of beautiful plumage were in abundance.

He noticed too that the soil was rich and very fertile, as evidenced by the great growth of rice, hemp and flax, or abaca, which the natives cultivated in their ancient way; but notwithstanding the beauty, richness and picturesqueness of all this the one absorbing thought became, how to escape from the savages.

He found himself longing for the sight of a white face; to again hear his native tongue, he would even welcome the roughness of the Clark Street boot-black, or the quaint brogue of the imported policeman, or even the monotonous sing-song of the Italian rag picker, or banana seller. Anything, so it was English. He would be more than willing to part with all the richness he saw around him for a sound of his native tongue, and a sight of civilization.

One evening as he was sitting at the door of his hut, wondering how he could contrive to escape, and afterwards reach Manila in safety, he felt a touch on his elbow, and turning he encountered the gaze of a very odd looking savage; he was darker than the average, and Floyd knew he had never seen him before. There was an expression in the large black eyes that struck him as rather peculiar; and when the savage placed one black finger on his lips, as a signal of silence, and jerked his head toward the interior of the hut, indicating his desire to see him in private, Floyd did not know whether to comply or call for the guard who was squatted near by on the ground, contentedly amusing himself by weaving together light pieces of bamboo, evidently intended for Floyd's use in the hut; but there was that in the strange savage's actions that told him it was to his interest. They were altogether out of the ordinary, and out of keeping with his surroundings. The jerk of the head, and the peculiar motion with his thumb, reminded Floyd of the sly tactics of a Chicago policeman in directing a friend to the side

door of a saloon on Sunday; so without disturbing his guard, he followed the old savage into the hut. He threw himself down on his couch, and waited for his companion to speak.

The fellow seemed to be in no hurry to make known his business, but squatting down on the hemp rugs that covered the floor he placed his face in his hands in an attitude of deep thought. Presently he looked up with an ugly smile on his black visage, and remarked in low tones and in perfect English: "You seem to have made yourself indispensable to these savages."

If the walls of the hut had been suddenly removed and the great city of Chicago been disclosed to his view Floyd would hardly have been more surprised at the transformation than he was at the sound of his native tongue coming from between the teeth of the black savage before him.

Almost at the first word he jumped from the couch, and was about to throw himself in the fellow's arms from very joy, when a sudden thought occurred to him. He was being tested. Was this not a clever ruse to discover his nationality, or to measure

his inclination to escape; so instead of doing what he intended at first he walked over to the door, looked out, as if to make sure of the whereabouts of his servant, then again threw himself full length upon the couch as unconcerned as if he had just now for the first time in his life heard the English language. But the piercing eye of the savage was upon him, and he seemed to read his thoughts like an open book, and, notwithstanding his attempt at *sang froid*, his every motion and look betrayed his excitement and curiosity. Again the low tones of the savage greeted his anxious ear.

“These people say you possess wonderful power.” Still Floyd remained silent.

A disappointed look crept into the man's eyes, and presently he began to talk in French, then he tried German, but the result was the same; Floyd remained quiet, trying his best to quiet the tempest of homesickness that each moment threatened to overcome him.

Coming back to English again the fellow said: “Well, mister, you are either a fool, or a Chicago boodler out here for your health. I'll be blamed if I know which.”

At this reference to his native city Floyd could restrain himself no longer, and laughed and cried together. All his *sang froid* deserted him and he begged his strange companion to make himself known.

“Who in the name of Heaven are you?”

“Oh, you are English then after all? Keep quiet! Do you suppose I want to have the whole village about my ears. Lie down there and talk low. Who am I? That I am not prepared to tell you just now. Are you an Englishman or an American?”

“American.”

“Ah, I thought so. Let me shake your paw, old man, and thank your stars that I happened to drop in here just as I did, presuming of course that you wish to escape. For myself, I can say the old woman will be powerful uneasy about me.”

“Escape!” exclaimed Floyd; “why I have thought of nothing else for the last week, but how can I escape? Don’t you see how I am watched? These savage fiends think I possess some supernatural power, and have chosen me their God, or something.”

“Yes, I know they think you caused that

small volcano over there to cease its eruption, and if you wish to escape you must do so before it breaks forth again."

"Tell me something about yourself, that I may trust you," said Floyd.

"What do you wish to know?"

"What is your name?"

"Samuel Johnstone, of Chicago; and yours?"

"Floyd Vandercook, of the same city. What are you doing in this part of the world, and in this village in particular?"

"I am a soldier; at present I am trying to save a fellow countryman from a lot of savages, and if said fellow countryman will quit asking so many immaterial questions I may succeed; if not we are both liable to remain here until that volcano breaks out again, and then it'll be all day for both of us."

"One more question, Johnstone, where did you get such an excellent make-up?"

"I inherited it from my parents, sir. I'm a colored gentleman, a negro if you like. Now let up on your questions, and come down to something important. If the plan I have works all right I will explain who I am to-morrow morning-"

“Agreed! now for your plan.”

“It is this; we must capture that triplet down there, and make for the open sea.”

“Triplet! What do you mean?”

“Why that queer looking craft that brought you in here. It will be easy enough, there are only two men aboard her at night, and they sleep like logs.”

“Yes easy enough, but you forget that even now there is a savage squatted outside the door to watch my every movement.”

“Never mind that part of it just now. Do you think you can steer the boat out to sea?”

“I can try; at all events it will be no worse to be captured and killed, after trying to escape, than to die after not making any effort.”

“Now you’re talking and I will tell you how to get rid of your jailer.” Johnstone now leaned over toward Floyd and they talked low and earnestly for some minutes, and when he at last slouched carelessly out of the hut unnoticed, details of their escape had been arranged.

CHAPTER XII.

Night, which was fast approaching when Johnstone left the hut, promised to be very dark. Great banks of dark clouds were beginning to make their appearance in the south, which would effectively shut off the light of the moon, that was due on the eastern horizon about ten p. m. Everything seemed to favor the escape of Floyd and his companion.

Floyd lay down early, and his heavy breathing soon announced to the half naked savage at the door, that his spiritual master was sound asleep. After looking around a bit to satisfy himself that all was well, he threw himself down across the open doorway of the hut to rest, and as a matter of course, to sleep.

About eleven o'clock Floyd heard a slight noise resembling the drawing of a nail across a rough board; at the first sound he moved slightly and listened; again the low scratching sound came to his strained

ear, and he knew he was not mistaken, and reaching his hand beneath the rug of his couch he imitated the sound. All now became quiet again, except for the beating of his heart, that seemed to Floyd could surely be heard by the savage. After several moments he raised himself to a sitting posture that enabled him to reach the life preserver that he always kept close at hand. He buckled it around his body, after assuring himself that his revolver and knife were safe in their places. During all this time the savage snored loudly and Floyd began to think that he might after all be able to escape without waking him; so drawing his knife for instant use in case it should become necessary, he began to crawl noiselessly towards the door, stopping every few feet to still the loud beating of his heart, that seemed to grow louder each second. At last he was at the door, and it only remained for him to step lightly over the outstretched form before breathing the blessed air of freedom. This he was about to do when with the agility of a monkey the savage jumped to his feet, and stood facing his prisoner. But Floyd was in no

mood to weaken now, and he grasped his knife more firmly, and started to brush by the native, who on seeing this threw his body forward as if, by its force, to fell Floyd to the floor; but Floyd was looking for just such a move. The native's eyes could be seen shining like a cat's in the darkness, and as he came forward Floyd was just in the act of plunging his knife into his breast, when something else happened.

So intent on watching each other had they been that neither heard any noise in the back part of the hut, and Floyd had almost forgotten the existence of his new found friend, in his anxiety to get away; but as he raised his arm to strike, it was caught in a vise like grip; at the same time, the savage lurched forward as if pulled by some unseen power and with a gurgling, choking noise he sank down on the floor of the hut. It was Johnstone, who becoming uneasy at the seeming delay of Floyd in the hut, began feeling around underneath the floor for a place through which he might crawl; in one place the thin boards offered no resistance to his touch, and he found

that by working it a little to one side he could crawl up through the opening, which he did, and although it was dark, it was not dark enough to prevent his seeing what was going on near the door.

Drawing a short, stout piece of cord, made into a noose, from a pocket, he rushed forward, and with unerring aim he threw it around the neck of the savage, and gave a sudden jerk, at the same instant grasping Floyd's arm as described, saying: "What! would you have that man's death cry wake up the whole village? It's lucky I arrived just as I did. Come, tie his hands while I stuff this in his mouth. In a minute the savage lay gagged and bound, and Floyd and his companion were quickly, yet with the silence of spectres, making their way toward the Catamaran. Noiselessly they pulled themselves aboard, Floyd at the bow, and Johnstone at the stern. They crawled cautiously along toward each other; they met near the center, and not having seen anything of the guards, decided to explore the cabin in the stern. As Johnstone was about to enter a curtain that served as a door was thrown quickly

to one side, and a moment later both he and Floyd were engaged in a terrible struggle with the two savages. Johnstone was a very powerful man and he soon had his man down upon the deck, helpless, with the breath almost crushed out of his body.

Floyd meanwhile was struggling manfully, but in his weakened condition he was hardly a match for the half naked savage, and was fast losing his strength, and was being forced gradually toward the water, but contesting every inch of the ground with a brave determination not to give up, he reached for his knife, but it was gone. Up to this time the battle had been carried on in silence; not a cry escaped the lips of the savages, they evidently not knowing the identity of their visitors; but as Floyd discovered the loss of his knife, that he intended using as a last resort, his disappointment was so keen that he felt further effort unaided was useless, so he called to Johnstone: "Johnstone, I'm almost done for, can you help me?"

At the sound of this voice the savage halted for a second to send forth one of the most unearthly yells Floyd thought he had

ever heard, and immediately the sound seemed to be taken up by a thousand throats, and like a terrible wail of the forever damned came floating back to the deck of the Catamaran from all points of the compass.

After giving vent to that one wild cry the savage threw himself upon his panting and weary antagonist with redoubled fury, that carried Floyd off his feet, and over the side of the boat, at the same instant the savage received a blow from Johnstone that felled him to the deck like a log. Luckily the water was not very deep and Floyd managed to gain his feet and cling to the boat; and was pulled on board by Johnstone, not much the worse for the bath he had been compelled to take. Then the savages were securely bound to prevent further resistance. All this happened in a few seconds, and our friends knew that as soon as Floyd's escape was noticed by the savages, the cry they had heard but once would be made plain to them, and would bring the whole village down upon the boat en masse. Therefore no time was to be lost. The Catamaran was cut loose

from her moorings and as her head was turned toward the narrow channel to the sea, a gentle breeze from the south filled her canvas and sent her scudding along like a thing of life. The low, gurgling sound of the water at her bow came to the ear of Floyd like rippling laughter, as if even the boat was glad to escape from the abode of such dense ignorance and savagery.

Suddenly a peculiar bluish tint became visible on the surface of the water, and looking away to the north Floyd could see the small volcano spouting forth fire and smoke, while a stream of lava could be seen near the summit, slowly making its way down its sides.

"There," said Johnstone, "there goes yonder volcano. I've never been a Christian, Vandercook, but if there is anything in Divine aid, we surely ought to be thankful for what has been given to us to-night. Look back there on the shore," cried he.

Floyd looked, and by the dim light of the volcano, and a pale moon creeping out from behind a cloud, he saw the shore literally lined with natives running up and down.

“Imagine,” continued Johnstone, “what your fate would be were you among that swarm of devils, instead of on your way to civilization.”

“Yes, I can imagine; but I would respectfully remark, Johnstone, that we are not in civilization. Just cast your eye along the shore west of the village and tell me what you see.”

“Well, I’ll be blamed! if they ain’t stringing out along the shore toward the sea! What do you reckon they’re up to?”

“I don’t know for sure, but I might as well tell you what I think. You know we must pass under a great arch, and through a rude tunnel nearly a half mile long, leading from this bay into the sea; suppose for instance they drop rocks down upon us as we pass under, and drive a hole in our boat, our chances for reaching civilization won’t be so rosy.”

“All I can say is, ‘Don’t give up the ship,’ for if you do you’re a dead man. You steer this old mud scow into the hole, if you can, and we’ll trust to luck for the rest.”

“We’ll be there in fifteen minutes, if I am not mistaken.”

“How long will it take the savages to reach the arch?”

“It’s a good twenty-five minutes’ walk from the village. I should say the way they are running, they will have reached the top about the time we are due to pass under.”

“If we could only increase the speed of this triple-expansion-double-breasted coffin of ours we might beat them after all,” said Johnstone as he moved forward toward the bow. Presently he gave a joyful cry. “Well of all the land lubbers I ever saw, Vandercook, we take the cake. Here’s a jib sail all coiled up, that will just save our lives. Watch out for it now when I run it up. There, how’s that? Run, you sons-o-sea-cooks, run!” (shaking his fist at the running figures on shore.) “We’ve got the inside track now.”

Floyd at the helm noticed the difference in the boat’s speed even quicker than Johnstone, and his spirits rose accordingly, and he found himself actually smiling for the first time in many weeks.

But even with the addition of the jib sail the race promised to be very close, and

just as our friends were congratulating themselves on their lucky escape, the form of a savage could be seen outlined against the sky on the top of the arch, then another and yet another joined him, making in all three, representing the swiftest runners in the tribe.

There were no more in sight, and those on the Catamaran did not anticipate anything serious from them, and the boat was now almost in the entrance; others could not arrive in time to render their brethren any aid at the entrance.

On she flew, and as the bow entered the yawning jaws of the dark channel, a huge boulder came rattling down upon her deck, going clear through it like a shot, but although others and even larger than the first were hurled at them from above, they were fortunate enough to escape further serious injury; but there was the same gauntlet to be run in emerging from the channel, and although the boat tore through the dark, narrow passage at a furious speed that each moment threatened total destruction, our friends were unwilling, even if they had the power, to reduce its speed,

as delay would only give their enemies above them a chance to gather in force at the exit.

The darkness was so intense and oppressive that it could almost be felt, and the strain on the men's nerves was terrible. Here they were going at a terrible rate of speed, which was increased it seemed by a strong current running out to sea, darkness thick and deep on every hand. A slight deviation from the proper direction and the craft would be smashed into a shapeless wreck, against the slimy sides of the channel. And although the speed of the boat together with the low temperature of the damp, dark hole made the air quite cool, Floyd could feel the cold sweat trickling down his face, so intense was his anxiety. But a faint light now appeared ahead of them, and a moment later they shot out into the long swells of the sea, amid a shower of rock, accompanied by several spears from above; one spear lodging in the deck so close to Johnstone that half an inch would have settled his earthly career for all time. By close calculations they figured that the trip through the tunnel

had occupied less than three minutes, yet at the time it had seemed to them an endless age.

But the strain was too much for Floyd, and Johnstone found him weak and almost unconscious from the effects of the terrible events through which he had passed. "Poor boy," murmured Johnstone, as he made him as comfortable as he could in the badly shattered cabin. "You'll want water when you wake up, and owing to our hasty and unceremonious departure, I fear that that important article, as well as food was forgotten. But we are free, at all events; while tucked safely away in my woolly hair I have something that would make our dear Aguinaldo swear backwards, if he knew it."

CHAPTER XIII.

One morning some few days later, as Captain Lamberton of the Olympia was at his desk, an officer entered, saluted, and said: "A craft coming up the bay, sir."

"Nothing singular about that, is there? Crafts come up the bay quite regularly, for all I know to the contrary."

"Not like this one, sir. She's the funniest looking thing I ever saw, and she acts very strange, sir."

"How long is it since she was first noticed?"

"Fully an hour, and she has made no headway since."

"Very well, I'll be on deck in a moment." When the captain appeared the strange craft was pointed out to him. He gazed at it for several seconds through the glass, then said: "It's a Catamaran, and in distress I should judge. Lower away one of the boats, and go to her rescue, and bring her along side."

In about an hour the Catamaran was along side Admiral Dewey's flag ship, and Floyd Vandercook and Johnstone, both too weak to stand, were being carried on board.

As quick as Captain Lamberton saw Johnstone he cried: "Why, it's Johnstone, the man sent out by General Otis! Careful there, men, give them the best cabin in the ship, and let me know when they are able to talk." Every attention possible was given the two men, and early in the afternoon Johnstone asked to see the captain.

"Well, Johnstone, we never expected to see you again, we thought you dead."

"Not dead, sir, but I have had some very close calls."

"Did you succeed in carrying out General Otis' instructions?"

"Yes sir, and to the letter. I suppose it is all right to turn these papers over to you for delivery to General Otis," and Johnstone after groping around in the long wool that covered his head, handed the captain two small sheets of paper. "They contained rude drawings of all the principal cities, as well as the strength of their garrisons, etc."

“You’ll be well paid for this, Johnstone; it’s a great achievement.”

“All the pay I want, sir, is an honorable discharge, so I can go back to the United States with Vandercook, and see the ole woman, she’s—”

“Vandercook! did you say? My man, you are in luck to be sure. There’s a reward of twenty-five thousand dollars for the finding of his body, dead or alive, and you shall have it too.”

“Ah, then he is a criminal after all; but I was sure he told me the truth about a rich uncle.”

“He told you the truth, his uncle has offered the reward; there has been foul play somewhere, and I want to give you a piece of advice; don’t let it become known here that Vandercook has been found, and I wish you would tell him as much when he awakes. I will wire his uncle at once. You will return on the Buffalo; that sails tomorrow night.”

“I can’t sail unless I am discharged, and I am afraid the old woman’ll be very uneasy about me.”

“I said you’ll sail on the Buffalo, and I

mean to see that you do. Your discharge or a furlough will be given you, and with the reward of twenty-five thousand dollars you and your wife can be happy, for the rest of your days, and I sincerely hope they will be many."

"I don't want to go without Vandercook, and I don't know whether he will be able to start or not. As for the twenty-five thousand dollars, of course if I've earned it I'll not refuse it; but I swear sir, I believe I owe as much to Vandercook as he does to me, for I was lost myself and he steered that old wash-board out of that hole better than any sailor living could have done it. Present company excepted of course."

"Come Johnstone, tell the truth now," said a weak voice from an adjoining room. "You know I fainted and let you do all the work after we got through the hole."

"If I did it was because I thought of my own precious life, and the old woman back in Chicago. Did you hear the captain say we're to start home to-morrow night?"

A faint cheer answered his question

“Do you think you will be able to start?”

“If starting home depends on my getting well I want to tell you I am a well man now. Of course I’ll be able to go.”

The next day Admiral Dewey visited the men, and General Otis wrote to Johnstone enclosing furlough.

Floyd was in high spirits, having received a cablegram from his uncle begging him not to delay his return, and when at last the Buffalo steamed out of Manila harbor it carried away two of the happiest mortals alive.

Johnstone, who, ever since reaching Manila thought of nothing but the “Ole Woman,” could talk of nothing but her joy on his return, picturing to Floyd how her eyes would light up at sight of him, while Floyd was content to listen with half closed eyes, thinking of the welcome he himself would receive; and need I say that Wadna, his queen, with her sweet smile, and glad eyes, was the thought uppermost in his mind.

CHAPTER XIV.

Although Heafford Vandercook did not expect to be able to learn much regarding Floyd from Clayton Melrose's actions, he was convinced that the fellow was responsible for Floyd's continued silence and he decided to have him shadowed. So he employed a detective (from a noted detective agency) for that purpose.

A month went by and as the detective had learned nothing (except to confirm the old man in his belief as to his nephew's depravity of character) he had almost decided to dispense with the "special's" services, when one morning that worthy called on him at his office, and requested a private audience without delay. When they were alone the detective handed him a cablegram intended for Melrose, but which he had cleverly intercepted.

It was dated Hong Kong, and read:

"Mission accomplished by ship-wreck. Am

returning alone. Wire or meet me at San Francisco on arrival of Coptic."

"LEUDESSO."

"Who is this Leudesso?" asked Mr. Vandercook, still studying the message at arms' length.

"From the name I should judge he is a Spaniard, or a native of the Philippines, perhaps."

"What do you understand from that message. Am afraid to think, or trust to my own interpretation."

"Well, sir, in the first place, your nephew was sent to the Philippines I think you said. He lacked experience, both as a traveler and in the particular line of work to which you assigned him."

"Go on," said the old man sadly, "you are telling the exact truth."

"I think you also said it had always been your intention to make him your heir."

"It is the fondest hope of my life."

"Who, may I ask, would become your legal heir in the event of Floyd's death?"

"My other nephew, Clayton Melrose, curse him."

"Precisely. Now then, Floyd being in-

experienced as a traveler, and being anxious to learn beforehand all he could of the country to which he was going, a Spaniard, or a Filipino would have no trouble in gaining his confidence and his friendship. You will notice the message reads, 'Am returning alone,' meaning he went away from the United States in company with someone. 'Mission accomplished by ship wreck.' Now what was the mission? What mission in the Orient could Clayton Melrose be interested in, in connection with a Spaniard or a Filipino?"

"The murder of Floyd Vandercook, and I his uncle, am his real murderer. Oh, God have mercy on my gray hairs!"

"Tut, tut, man, don't waste your energy in self-reproaches, all is not hopeless. Remember ship wrecks are quite common. There is always a chance for escape, and your nephew has that chance; although from this slip of paper it would appear that the conspirators are evidently satisfied that they have succeeded in putting him out of the way, there is, as I said, a chance in favor of your nephew's rescue."

"No, no! He is dead—dead—dead—and

"I am his murderer. I am his murderer," he murmured, burying his face in his hands.

The detective said nothing more, knowing that the paroxysm of grief would soon give way to a determination to punish his nephew, and he was not mistaken.

"Go!" cried the old man rising, "collect your evidence, follow this man, Leudesso, and my nephew like a deadly serpent, weave around them a web of evidence from which they cannot escape, then we will strike! And remember I will never be satisfied until I can laugh in their faces as they are about to be swung into eternity from the gallows. I have fed Clayton Melrose with a generous hand. He has cruelly bitten me in return. Now I will show him how heavy that same hand can be to punish him for this heartless murder. I am willing to spend my whole fortune for the sake of seeing my Floyd's murderers swing from the gallows.

"Go, but if you can find a trace of him that will give me a ray of hope, do not delay, but come to me immediately. Oh Floyd! Floyd! If I could only bring you back."

The detective left the office with this sad wail ringing in his ears, and he determined that if Floyd was alive he would move Heaven and earth to find him. Hence the reward of twenty-five thousand dollars Johnstone found awaiting him in Manila as related elsewhere.

The detective caused the cablegram to be delivered to Clayton Melrose, and began to wait for results.

Not a moment did he lose sight of his man, but he could take no decisive action until the arrival of Leudesso, who he intended to place under arrest immediately.

One afternoon several days before the steamer Coptic, from the Orient, was due to arrive at San Francisco, the detective heard someone coming up the stairs three steps at a time, and before he had time to turn the key in the lock, the door flew open and Heafford Vandercook bounded into the room, so badly winded he was unable to utter a word. The perspiration was running down his face in streams; he threw a paper into the detective's face and began to dance around the room like a young boy, and after reading the paper the detective

joined him. A glance at the paper revealed the cause. It was a message from Floyd to his uncle, announcing his arrival in Manila and his intention to sail for home on the transport Buffalo.

In due time Leudesso arrived in San Francisco, and was immediately "spotted" by Heafford Vandercook's "special," who actually made his acquaintance on their way across the continent; but if the detective expected to gain any information from the man by this he was mistaken, as he avoided all reference to himself, merely saying he was returning to the United States after a visit to his native land, the Philippine Islands.

The morning after Leudesso's arrival in Chicago Mr. Vandercook, who was in his private office in consultation with the detective, was very much surprised at hearing Clayton Melrose's angry voice in the corridor, in an altercation with the porter, who refused to allow him to enter the office without permission from Mr. Vandercook.

"Get out of my way, fellow, I wish to see my uncle at once; do you hear, at once."

"Orders are to allow no one to disturb him without permission, sir."

“Permission be hanged. Do you know who I am? I’m Mr. Vandercook’s nephew, and I must see him without delay.”

“Wait here and I will see if he will see you.”

At this juncture Mr. Vandercook, having concealed the detective behind a large book case, opened the office door, and said with a sweet smile “allow my nephew to enter, Andrew, I did not mean to exclude him. Come in, Clayton. Come in, Oh, you have company,” seeing the form of Leu- desso now for the first time. “Very well, bring the gentleman along.”

“Thanks, uncle. Fact is, sir, this gentleman has some very important information.”

“Ah, Clayton,” with a sigh, “there is only one kind of information that I care much for now. News of Floyd. Poor boy. But if I only knew whether dead or alive, I would take it less hard perhaps. But I’m glad to see you. You call so seldom, you know. I fear you do find me dull company, so I can’t blame you.”

“Well, well,” thought Melrose. “Here’s a go! The old gent falling right in line

with my plans. Seems to be softening toward me too. Then aloud:

“No, no, Uncle, I always enjoy your company. But since no news has been received from Floyd I have thought that perhaps it would be better not to intrude myself, and for the further reason that I have imagined my visits might be misconstrued. So I have remained away, against my own wishes.”

“You do me an injustice, Clayton. *How could I misconstrue your visits, knowing you as I do?* Nonsense, sir. You imagine I might think your visits were prompted by *mercenary* motives, eh? How very absurd; as I said you do me an injustice.”

Melrose failed to notice the faint irony in the old man's tone, and he was beguiled into thinking that he had at least been accepted as Floyd's successor in his uncle's heart, and it gave him courage and assurance in disclosing the object of his visit.

“I am very happy, Uncle, to know and feel that I have your respect, and I hope I am correct when I add, your love.”

“Quite correct, my boy.”

“And if I have not been to see you lately,

Uncle, it is because I have been working hard to bring about that which I knew would please you, namely, a solution of Floyd's mysterious silence.

"And like myself you have failed, of course," said Vandercook sadly.

"On the contrary, Uncle, I have not failed."

"What! you have news of Floyd? Come man, out with it. Don't keep me waiting. Don't you see this suspense is almost killing me?" The old man's acting was so perfect and his agitation so apparent, the detective was so pleased with it that he felt like rushing from his hiding place to congratulate him, and Clayton Melrose did not for a moment doubt its genuineness; in his eagerness to follow the advantage he supposed he had gained, he became excited himself and hurriedly told his uncle how, becoming anxious on account of his cousin's safety, whom he thought a great deal of, (a direct falsehood) and wishing to relieve his uncle's mind of the terrible worry, he had instigated inquiries at several different places in the far East, and had offered a reward of thirty thous-

and dollars for information leading to the discovery of his cousin. He had almost given up all hope of hearing anything, when he received a cablegram from a Mr. Leudesso that shocked and pained him beyond all expression. "This, Uncle," said he, introducing the Filipino, "is Mr. Leudesso, who can tell you about the sad affair, for I feel I am not equal to the task."

"Oh! He is dead! He is dead!" exclaimed Mr. Vandercook in well feigned anguish. There is no need to tell me. I can see it written on both your faces. Tell me, Mr. Leudesso, how did he meet his death?"

"In a shipwreck, senior. I saw him struggling in the water and swam to his aid, but before I reached him a piece of wreckage had struck him, and all I could save was his dead body. Ah senior, it was a very sad sight. This paper, senior, I found on his body and kept as means to let his friends know his fate."

"Oh, Clayton, this is terrible," wailed the old man. "While I thank you for your kind efforts to comfort me, I cannot conceal the great grief this news has

caused me. I am heart-broken, my boy. A heart-broken old man. Leave me, Clayton, I beg of you. I wish to be alone with my sorrow."

"Uncle, no word from me can express my sorrow for you, but my own grief, sir, is great, for I loved Floyd."

"Go, boy, go! Leave me, I say, for the present, but remember you are welcome. I thank you, Mr. Leudesso, for your kindness and I will see to it that you are *suitably rewarded*. Good day." He bowed the men out and quickly closed the door, completely disgusted, and almost sick from the effect of the interview. The hypocrisy and deceit of his nephew was nauseating. "To think," cried he, "that man is my sister's boy, my nephew. A wanton coward, an unfeeling villain, and almost a murderer."

Time passes very quickly for those who have something to do in a given period, and the transport Buffalo was due at New York before all of Mr. Vandercook's plans had matured.

Miss Virden was taken into his confidence, and when informed that Floyd was

alive and returning home, she was almost overcome with joy, and after learning the details of Melrose's plot, she readily agreed to the plan outlined by Mr. Vandercook.

Clayton Melrose's mind was not disabused one jot, and he was allowed to think that his story had been accepted as truth; his uncle's kindness to him was a proof that he had succeeded in gaining his confidence and love, to say nothing of the more important consideration, the old man's money.

One thing he did not quite understand—his uncle's ready consent to his marriage with Miss Virden. Instead of offering any objections, Mr. Vandercook urged its early consummation, and was good enough to name the day, and Melrose thought carried his goodness to extremes when he actually offered to intercede with Miss Virden to give her consent. "You will settle down, Clayton, when you are married, and in our new relation to each other I much prefer it."

Still at a loss to account for it all, Melrose agreed, and as Miss Virden's consent was forthcoming, the day was fixed,

and it was not so strange after all to relate that the date agreed upon was to be four days after the transport Buffalo was due to arrive at New York. Melrose, of course, was ignorant of this. He had ceased to bother himself about the arrival of ships, transports or otherwise. He was as happy as a very fortunate man could be, and he considered himself especially fortunate, he never thought or dreamed of the possibility that Floyd was other than dead, and his bones deep down in the unfathomable depths of the sea. So he felt perfectly safe and happy. He knew the money to pay Leudesso would be forthcoming, directly he was married; in the meantime he kept the Filipino in good spirits by an allowance out of his own pocket. He was not so happily pre-occupied, however, that he failed to notice the worried expression on his uncle's countenance that appeared there, when his wedding day was but one day off. He was unable to account for it, but a visit to his uncle's office on this particular evening finds him again in consultation with the detective. The former is very nervous, and

is walking the floor with quick strides. He is saying: "This is a devil of a pickle I find myself in by taking your advice."

The detective paused between puffs of his cigar to ask: "What pickle do you refer to, sir?"

"What pickle do I refer to? Heavens, man how many pickles do you think there are at this particular time?"

"I don't understand you." (Puff! Puff!)

"You make me feel like showing you the door," cried the old man contemptuously. "How can you sit there in evident enjoyment, when our plans, or your plans rather, have all fallen through? Here it is one day before the day set for the wedding and not one word from the Buffalo. All my messages to Secretary Long about her remain unanswered. How do you account for that?"

"I will admit that the Secretary is rather 'Long.' " (Puff! Puff!)

"Rather long? I should say as much! Floyd cannot possibly reach here now before the wedding, even if he were in New York at the present time, where he is not. Well, you're a condemned fool, that's all, if

you cannot see what a couple of ninnies we have made of ourselves.”

“What can I do?”

“By George! I’ll tell you what you can do, and I order you to do it. Arrest Clayton Melrose and this yellow-skinned Leudesso at once. Do you suppose I want him to marry the sweetest girl in the world after all the trouble I’ve gone to to prevent it, and when I know she loves Floyd, and when I know Floyd loves her, and when I know I love her, and everybody loves her that knows her? Not by a long chalk!”

“And if you’ll allow me to express an opinion in the matter, Uncle, I exclaim with you, ‘Not by a long chalk!’ said Floyd stepping out from behind the tall book case.

He was very thin and very much tanned and his face was covered with a black, silky beard, but Heafford Vandercook recognized him instantly, and with a “Thank God,” he clasped him to his breast, and great tears found their way down his wrinkled cheek, while a voice from the hall-way said, ‘Well, hurry up, Floyd. My ole woman’ll

be powerful anxious about me.” And a moment later Johnstone was ushered into the room, all smiles, and evidently happy, for he had already been to see his “Ole Woman,” and at Floyd’s pressing invitation had come up to the office to meet his uncle.

After congratulations and handshakings had been indulged in some half-dozen times (for the old man would insist on it every minute) the detective explained how, wishing to surprise Mr. Vandercook, he had kept him in ignorance of the arrival of the Buffalo, by keeping back the information furnished by Secretary Long, which also accounted for the latter’s silence to Mr. Vandercook’s urgent appeal for information, and how he had concealed Floyd in the office that night while Mr. Vandercook was at tea. At the conclusion of the explanation Mr. Vandercook insisted again embracing his nephew, and the details for the coming marriage were explained to Floyd, who thought it an excellent plan, after which the small party broke up. Floyd was carried away by his uncle. The detective went to his lonely bachelor rest, and

Johnstone went home to tell the "ole woman" what was about to happen, and that they had been invited to the happening.

CHAPTER XV.

Melrose arose early on his wedding day. In fact the thought that the morrow would see him married to a fortune, kept him awake a good part of the night.

He had not gone to bed until late the evening before, either, for Leudesso had called to say that he would insist on receiving his promised reward on the morrow, as soon as the ceremony was performed. This also had a tendency to add to his wakefulness, for he did not exactly see his way clear to ask for this amount so soon after marriage. He would prefer rather to approach the money subject by degrees. This matter worried him not a little, therefore he was very much taken aback on looking into his mirror on the morning of this eventful day, to see himself pale and unrefreshed, with black rings under his eyes. His hair would not lay where he combed it, and other annoyances sorely tried his temperament, that was not over sweet by

nature, and as the day wore on he became nervous and fidgety; an inexpressible dread came over him by degrees, lest something should transpire at the very last moment to cheat him out of his triumph, and he cursed the slowness of the time, that seemed to drag on with provoking slowness to the momentous hour that would end it all, by giving into his keeping a fortune and a bride at the same moment. Still at times he smiled complacently to himself, as he thought how successful had been his plan to remove the only man that could successfully oppose him, and how completely he had succeeded in his efforts in safely establishing himself in the good graces of his uncle.

Meanwhile those at the Virden mansion were busy making arrangements for the wedding. Wadna went about with a light heart, with a smile on her face, and with a kindly word for all. The merry twinkle had returned to her eyes. The old house fairly rang with her laughter several times, something so unusual for the last six months at least, that it caused the old cook to pause in the act of preparing the huge turkey for

the coming feast, and roll back her eyes and exclaim: "Hear dat! sumpens gwine ter happ'n in dis ole house I tole yeh! Dat young Miss aint so happy ter marry Marse Clayton, dat it meks her sing. We all kno' she don't lub him. Den what for she larf like dat, hey? Oh I tole yer sumpens gwine ter transpire hyer befo' long, mark my wuds!"

Old man Virden wondered at the change in his daughter, but was too much pleased at the prospect of her marriage with Melrose to make any inquiries, and like Melrose he was impatient for the time to go by that he might see the realization of his mercenary hopes.

He believed Melrose rich, and thought by this union with his daughter, to recuperate his wasted fortune, while Melrose thought his prospective father-in-law rich, and desired the union partly from the same cause and partly from a feeling, not of love, as brave, true, honorable men love, for Clayton Melrose was incapable of so lofty a feeling. It was rather a natural desire to possess everything lofty and beyond his reach in goodness and virtue, that

he might drag it in the dust and mire to defile it, that prompted his determination to possess Wadna Virden. Perhaps he thought he really loved her, but it is decidedly doubtful.

It was decided out of deference to a sudden whim of Mr. Vandercook that the ceremony should be celebrated at the Virden home at nine o'clock in the evening, instead of at high noon, as was the accepted style. Supper was to be served after the marriage, and arrangements were accordingly made on an elaborate scale.

By seven o'clock many of the invited guests, of which (by Mr. Vandercook's express desire) there were not a few, had arrived, and by nine o'clock all was in readiness. The bridesmaids were all there, as was also Melrose's best man. Evidences of wealth and refinement on every hand. Everything was in first class style and correctly up to date. There were natural flowers in abundance which always adds a pleasing effect to such occasions.

Music soft and beautiful from a select set of musicians, floated into the several rooms, that seemed to tell each one assem-

bled, old and young and medium, the old, old story of Love that was, that is and ever shall be, the hinge upon which the happiness of life depends.

The air is laden with a sweet perfume that is pleasing to the senses. All is happiness. Not a cloud nor a scowl is visible anywhere, for to the minds of the older it brings back a very happy period in their own lives, and their hearts swell again with the fire of their early love. To the young element it is no less pleasing, marking as it does a period in their own lives that is yet to come.

But it is nine o'clock! Where is the bride? Ah! here she comes. As beautiful as any dream, a deep flush on her brow. Her eyes sparkling like diamonds with excitement, indeed almost out rival the costly necklace of precious stones that encircle her shapely neck and blaze and sparkle in the light.

She is leaning on the arm of her father, who has advanced to the center of the room, and is about to place her hand in that of Clayton Melrose, when Mr. Vandercook's voice rang out sharply: "Hold!

I demand that these ceremonies shall cease at once.”

At the sound of his voice Virden let his daughter's hand drop as if it were a coal of fire, and his face turned a sickly color as he said weakly: “Why, sir, I—er—thought—er—you desired this union.”

Melrose, who but a moment before was all smiles, now turned toward his uncle a face distorted with rage and cried:

“What is the meaning of this, sir?”

“My reasons are many; one of which is that I do not wish to see this young lady the wife of a would-be murderer. Clayton Melrose, although you are my sister's son, I renounce you before this gathering of my friends, and I take this opportunity to tell you that all your plotting and all your plans have failed. If you doubt my word you have only to turn your head to prove the truth of what I have said.”

Long before his uncle ceased the look of rage on Melrose's face had turned to fear, and as he turned his head and encountered Floyd's smiling face, he gave a low cry and started back; the abject terror depicted on his face was pitiable. He put up his hands

to his eyes to shut out the sight of his cousin's face, and made a dive for the door, with these words of Mr. Vandercook ringing in his ears: "Thank God that you are not a murderer and never let me see your face again."

As he ran out into the night, Leudesso, who had concealed himself in the house, glided swiftly out after him.

After the excitement had subsided Mr. Vandercook explained to those assembled how Melrose had plotted to have Floyd put out of the way, and how near he had succeeded.

Floyd was the hero of the hour, and the bridegroom of the hour as well, for as Mr. Vandercook said, it would never do to disappoint his friends, and if Floyd could not prevail on Wadna to furnish a wedding he declared his intention to marry her himself then and there, consent or no consent.

Mr. and Mrs. Johnstone were there and as the former was presented to Mrs. Floyd Vandercook he said: "You must have been powerful oneasy about him."

Wadna did not answer but Floyd felt her little hand tighten in his, while her eyes

expressed a world of love far more eloquent.

As it is the general custom to dispose of all the characters of a story, I append the following taken from a morning paper of January fifteenth, in lieu of going into details.

“This morning as officer Carr was making his rounds near the Pennsylvania depot, he almost stumbled over the body of a man between a side track and the main line. On examination it was found the man had been dead some time. A great wound in the back between the shoulders leaves no doubt in the minds of the police that it is a case of cowardly murder. The only clue obtained so far to the murderer is a silver mounted knife with a bloody blade, with the one word ‘Leudesso’ engraved on the handle. The murdered man has been identified as Clayton Melrose, a well known society man of this city.”

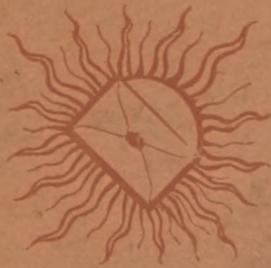
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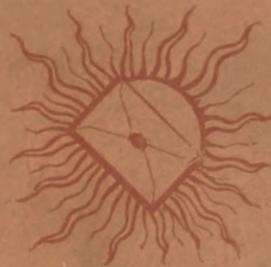
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