

DECEMBER-1913

TWICE-A-MONTH

10 CTS.

Top-Notch Magazine

UNTEMPERED STEEL
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this issue

DECEMBER 1
1913

TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE

FIRST DECEMBER
Vol. XIV—No. 5

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NUMBER 5

TOP-NOTCH TWICE-A-MONTH MAGAZINE

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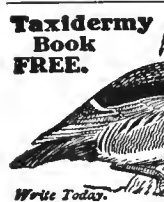
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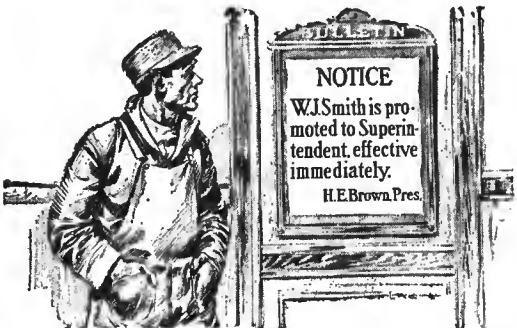
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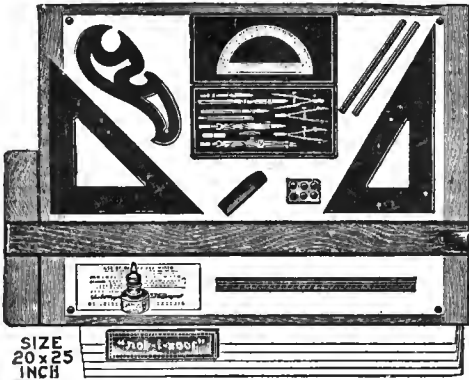
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TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE

VOL. XIV

DECEMBER 1, 1913

No. 5

The Sights They Missed.

By
Alfred Payson Terhune.



(A COMPLETE NOVEL)

CHAPTER I.

ON THE FRONT SEAT.

TIVERTON stepped back just in time to score a clean miss for a whizzing automobile. And in so doing he backed so close to a trolley car that was rounding the Twenty-third Street curve into Broadway that he began an involuntary forward jump—one that landed him a few feet from the sidewalk, close to a large object that was long and low and wide and pale green. In appearance it was something between an auto truck and a royal barge; a sort of circus float on pneumatic wheels.

Tiverton would not have given the thing a second glance—a sight-seeing bus being no novelty to him, after three hustling years in New York—but for

two faces whose gaze he chanced to catch fixed on himself as he looked upward. The observing faces belonged to two people sitting each on the end of one of the bus' five seats—on the end nearest Tiverton.

One of the two watching passengers was a man; the other, in the seat directly in front of him, a woman. The man's face was of a deathly white hue; a long black mustache split it transversely. The woman's cheeks were flushed, radiantly bright by contrast to the man's, and her eyes were still big and startled at what she seemed to consider Tiverton's narrow escape from injury, or worse. The man, on the contrary, was laughing at the auto dodger's mishap; and the laugh gave Tiverton an acute sense of having made himself ridiculous by his self-preserva-

tive jump backward and forward. He was aware of a growing desire to punch the laugher's white face.

But a second look at the girl turned the current of his thoughts from anger to frank admiration. She was still looking at him, neither boldly nor coyly, but with a dawning quiet interest that seemed to appraise and to approve his deep chest and thick shoulders as well as his square-jawed, erect head. It evidently occurred to her that her gaze might be open to misconstruction; for she shifted her glance and, turning half around, said something to the grinning man behind her. The latter answered with a total lack of surprise that argued acquaintance.

Arthur Tiverton was aware once more of a little gust of anger somewhere in the recesses of his brain. It was preposterous that there could be anything in common between so altogether lovely a girl and that laughing death's-head of a fellow! And yet—

The seat next to the girl, as Tiverton could see, was vacant. An impulse possessed him. Hurrying around to the ticket seller he laid down a dollar bill and bought a seat for the bus' forthcoming trip. Then he turned back to the vehicle and prepared to take the vacant seat alongside the girl. It was all a matter of impulse. Tiverton had no intention whatever of scraping acquaintanceship. It was not his way to pursue unknown women with attentions. But, having an hour or more to kill in as painless a fashion as possible, he had suddenly decided that the time could not be slain in any other way half so pleasantly as in sitting where, unobtrusively, he could look now and then at the prettiest girl he had ever seen.

His ruse, if unworthy, met with the failure it merited. For, just as he was about to mount the footboard, two men and two women, who had bought tickets a half minute ahead of him, filed solemnly into the four vacant places in the seat which the girl had hitherto occupied alone.

Tiverton thought of taking a place in the seat just behind—the one whose

far end was occupied by the white-faced man. But alongside the latter sat three other men, all fairly well dressed and with an indescribably "out-of-town" air. And as Tiverton moved toward the fifth place it was preempted by a stout woman in black carrying a bulky umbrella.

He was half minded to give up his silly scheme of riding on the same bus with the girl, now that he could not sit where he could see her; besides he had learned from the sign that the bus was bound for a tour of the downtown business section—a part of the city where he himself worked every day from nine to five. But he had bought his ticket. He would at least be on the same bus with the girl. And perhaps he might yet maneuver to catch a glimpse or two of her during the journey.

As he stood, uncertain, the bus was fast filling. Nearly every seat was taken. Half ashamed of his folly, Tiverton moved toward what seemed to him the most desirable of the few places still unoccupied—that next to the chauffeur. It was in the seat just in front of where the girl sat. He made his way thither, and as he sat down he glanced back as though merely seeking to size up his fellow passengers on the five rows of seats.

Again his simple ruse failed. The girl was still sitting sideways, her shoulders to him, talking with the white-faced man. Tiverton could not see her face at all, except for one pink ear and a quarter segment of cheek. But he saw something else that mildly puzzled him. Her position brought into Tiverton's line of vision part of the figure of the man with whom she was chatting; and the man's fingers were absently toying with a bit of paper. At a twist that he gave to it Tiverton could see that the paper appeared to be a ten-dollar bill. No, a slight flourish of the yellow-backed slip showed him that his guess was not quite correct. It was not a whole bank note that the man was manipulating. It was only *half* of a ten-dollar bill. From the man's handling of it Tiverton could al-

most fancy he was making signals or trying to attract some unseen person's attention.

CHAPTER II.

A QUEER MISTAKE.

EVEN as Arthur looked the girl pointed toward the bill and said something. Again the man laughed, made a reply, and stuffed the bisected piece of currency into his vest pocket.

A slight jar and the bus was in motion. The chauffeur piloted it deftly into its proper position in the sluggish stream of downtown traffic. The announcer—a large, bored-looking functionary—rose from his lounging position against the dashboard and, lifting his short megaphone, faced the passengers.

It was a scene Tiverton had witnessed a hundred times—usually with the smile of amusement that New Yorkers are apt to bestow on the out-of-town visitors who choose this way of getting a comprehensive idea of the city. But it was his first experience as part of the spectacle.

"Great old burg, hey?" remarked the chauffeur gruffly, under cover of the announcer's megaphoned speech.

"Yes," returned Tiverton, amused at the other's apparent belief that this passenger, too, was an out-of-towner who must be entertained.

"Beats Paris or London or Chicago or Denver, folks tell me," pursued the chauffeur. "There's even one or two folks that's so enthoosiotic they declare, right out in meetin', that it beats North Wilbr'm, Mass."

"What's that?" asked Tiverton, all attention. It startled him somewhat that a stranger could have hit upon the name of his home village seemingly by sheer accident. He looked for the first time at the chauffeur. The latter was leaning in an absorbed manner over his wheel. Under the low-drawn cap Tiverton caught an impression of fiery red hair, freckled skin, and a combative profile.

"What in blazes do you know about North Wilbraham?" he asked.

"Well," drawled the chauffeur, "I remember readin' a lot of stories in the New York papers about three years ago that began something like 'Extry! Latest War News from North Wilbr'm! Arthur Tiverton Starts Today for New York to Make John D. Look Like a Piker!'"

The chauffeur turned a grinning face of welcome toward his passenger as he spoke, and ended his mock-quotation by sticking out a gauntleted hand.

"Hello, Art!" he exclaimed.

"Denny! Good old Denny Cross!" responded Tiverton, meeting the outstretched hand with a hearty pressure. "What on earth are you doing here?"

"Savin' twenty-five lives," answered Cross. "If you don't believe me I'll be glad to prove it by letting this Noah's Ark run into a trolley car or climb up the side of a skyscraper."

"But——"

"That's the answer to Foolish Question Seven Hundred and Eleven. What did I look as if I was doing? Pickin' roses along the subway tracks? I'm a rubberneck buggy's pilot. I've been on this job, man and boy, for pretty near two months. And, till you swarmed up onto the quarter-deck a few minutes ago, I hadn't seen an old-home face in five years. Gee, but it's good to see you, Art! The folks wrote to me, three years back, that you'd come to New York. And I've been looking for you. But in this village there's apt to be quite a lot of faces sauntering along Main Street or at the post office or around the grocery store. So somehow I missed you."

"To think of our running across each other here!" cried Tiverton. "I mustn't lose sight of you again. Drop in at my place some evening. Here's my address." He handed the chauffeur a card. "Don't forget. We'll have dinner and go to a show and talk over North Wilbraham."

"H'm!" muttered Denny, trying, New Englandlike, to mask gratification under ungraciousness. "You're all tagged up like ready money. I guess you'd be ashamed to be seen with a yap like me tagging along after you."

"Drop it!" said Tiverton. "I guess you've forgotten how I used to duck you in the Scantic when you got too fresh back in the days when we were kids. Well, you're none too big to be ducked now if you talk that way."

"Why, you big bluff!" bristled Denny. "You never saw the day you could duck me. But we'll let it go at that. I was only thinkin' you'd be ashamed to be seen with me. I might 'a' known better."

"You certainly might. How has New York used you?"

"It's let me live. For two years as a subway guard, for three more as a taxi shover. Then came the strike, and—well, I got this job."

"Like it?"

"Sure. I like anything; only some things more'n others. And Sam Tubbs—that's the leather lung-man chap megaphoning—least of all. He's sure a gloom, even at his best. And I've been brought up too careful to tell you what he is at his worst."

"These sight-seeing busses do a pretty good business, don't they?"

Without a pause for breath, or cracking a smile, Denny delivered himself as follows:

"With our specially constructed automobiles of large carrying capacity all interesting parts of New York may actually be seen between sunset and sundown and at a lower rate than would be possible by private vehicle. Passengers are taken whirling through the streets, wonder after wonder piled upon their bewildered gaze, while expert guides and lecturers elocidate in detail each point under observation. Previously, strangers in New York, lacking knowledge of how to reach points of interest, have had fatiguing and arduous experience. But now, by using our——"

"Help!" cried Tiverton. "For Heaven's sake, Denny, what has happened to your brain?"

"I learned that by heart from one of our booklets," explained the driver. "I know more of it—plenty. Want to hear——"

"No! Leave it to the announcer. What——"

"See that little chap crossing the street over there?" cut in Denny. "Pal of mine. Born and bred in Doyers Street. In the heart of Chinatown. Lived there till he was forty. Then moved up to Greenwich Village. Next day he planks down a dollar to ride on a 'seeing Chinatown' tour of ours."

"But these seeing New York busses——"

"Don't call 'em that any more! 'Tisn't the monaker. 'Touring New York automobiles' is the name now. Folks got guyed for riding on 'em under the old name. So it was switched. These little five-seated-cars are too slow for me. I want a job in the pilot house of one of our eight-seaters. Then—— What's the matter?"

Tiverton had started in surprise. Denny saw his friend was no longer looking at him, but staring in wonder at Samuel Tubbs, the announcer. That worthy had just pointed out a particularly large and hideous skyscraper, and was intoning loudly:

"The Whitelawn Building! Erected in nineteen hundred and six. Celebrated as containing the palatial suite of offices of Cyrus Q. Buchanan, the mining king."

"That's wrong!" declared Tiverton to the driver.

"No," said Cross, "I'm flattering Tubbs when I say I hate him. But he's the best announcer we've got. He never makes mistakes. And he knows this route with his eyes shut. What gave you the idea he was mixed up?"

"Because," answered Tiverton, "I happen to be Mr. Buchanan's private secretary. And his office isn't in the Whitelawn Building, or anywhere near it. This looks queer to me."

CHAPTER III.

HALF OF A TEN-DOLLAR BILL.

TO Tiverton's bewilderment, Denny showed no surprise. "I knew there was something phony," said the chauffeur. "I piped 'em for a second, before we started."

As he did not specify who "'em" might be, Tiverton glanced back over the serried rows of passengers. He was just in time to witness a true case of "rubbernecking." The white-faced man had half risen in his seat and was looking back at the Whitelawn Building, talking and gesticulating. The three rural-looking men at his side were following his words and the direction of his gaze with keen interest; so, Arthur noted, was the girl.

"What's the idea, I wonder?" said Tiverton, as he turned again to Denny.

"The idea," returned Cross, "is that Sam Tubbs is so crooked he could hide behind a corkscrew. That's the main idea. The other end of it is that a man back yonder made Tubbs a mighty funny present a while ago, just before he took his seat. Tubbs and he were around at the far end of the car, and I suppose they thought no one could see. The starter didn't; but I did. It's a way I've got."

"A present? Cash?"

"No, cash divided by two—one-half of a ten-dollar bill. Can't buy much with that. But Tubbs seemed real tickled. I don't see the point; yet I'm wondering if that near-tip had anything to do with Sam's phony announcement just now."

"Why should it? What's the connection?"

"I've been for weeks on the same bus with Sam, and I never heard him make a slip. I never saw him get a tip, either; touring-bus patrons don't often give 'em. So when I hear the slip and see the tip on the same ride, I put them together. What?"

Tiverton recalled the white-faced man's behavior when the bus was passing the Whitelawn Building; and Denny's mention of the torn bill recalled at once the similar section that had fluttered in the man's fingers.

"The fellow who gave your friend Tubbs the half bill was very pale, wasn't he—with a wild-West black mustache?" queried Tiverton.

"That's the chap! Mind readin', are you?"

"No; but I'm going to. This whole

thing looks funny to me. I mean to find out if I can—wait a second. There's the Cogghall Building just in front. Cyrus Q. Buchanan's offices are there. I want to see if Tubbs will mention him among the Cogghall's tenants."

"He's got to," declared Denny. "He does, every time. Buchanan's the biggest face card in the Cogghall deck. And it's a deck with mighty few two-spots in it, at that. Listen!"

The announcer pointed to the building. Through his horn he droned a list of renowned financiers who had offices there. The list, as Tiverton recognized, was accurate save for one omission—it did not contain Cyrus Q. Buchanan's name. Arthur leaned nearer to Cross and spoke in a voice even lower than the low pitch in which their talk had been conducted.

"I'm going to find out the point of this joke," said he, "if it takes me a week to do it. A week is all the time. I have, for Mr. Buchanan comes back from his Western trip a week from to-day. And when he's in town there's no loafing for his secretary."

"If he keeps you so busy how do you happen to be eating up the busiest hour in the day on a low-power joy ride like this?"

"When he goes away he either takes me along or leaves me with only half work while he is gone, so that I may rest up and be ready to put in twenty-four hours on a stretch, if necessary, when he gets back. That's why I find myself with time on my hands, this week. I'm going to use up a lot of that time in digging out a fact or two in this queer puzzle. It's probably a trivial matter—a joke or something; but it brings in my employer's name. And his name has too big a face value to serve in a joke."

"Likewise," dreamily observed Denny Cross, looking anywhere rather than at his companion, "there was a girl—a mighty pretty girl, at that—who got on the bus with this white-faced chap's party. Not that you'd be at all interested in anything so trivial as that; for all you stared so admiring at her before

you climbed aboard here. That wouldn't have anything to do with your follerin' up the joke."

"If it's just the same to you, Denny," said Tiverton pleasantly, though he reddened as he spoke, "we won't discuss girls we neither of us know. It isn't——"

"That's right!" solemnly admitted Denny. "It isn't. It says so in a book I read once—a book all about folks who wore di'monds to breakfast and looked on a one-million-power ploo-ocrat as a piker. But I'm not jumping over the bars in speaking, respectful-like, of that lady back there; for she isn't some one 'we neither of us know.' It's a lady I had the pleasure of workin' for more'n once last year. She remembers it. An' she was kind enough to nod to me, real pleasant, when she got aboard. Blest if I don't believe she'd have come over an' said 'Howdy' to me if she'd had a chance. There's nothing stuck up about her; there never is about the real first-class ones. It's only the second-raters that treat their work-folks like dogs."

"You—you say you worked for her?" exclaimed Tiverton.

"Sure—in a way. She stopped for a month at the Idler—a little quiet apartment hotel up on the West Side—last year. My taxi was in the rank there. She liked my careful driving, she said. So she hired me pretty near every day. Once I got back a pocket-book one of the chauffeurs had swiped from her, and when she went away she slipped me a brace of iron men and thanked me for taking such nice care of her."

"Who——"

"I don't know. I take it she lives somewhere up State or out West, or maybe in Jersey, and just comes to the big town once a year or so. Seems to have enough cash to keep the wolf in the offing. Her name is Wesley—Miss Florida Wesley."

The car was on its return trip from the Wall Street district; and as Denny spoke he steered it deftly into its harborage. The passengers descended awkwardly to earth. Among the first

was Arthur Tiverton. Standing idly to one side, he watched the party of five headed by the white-faced man. As the man stepped down, he brushed past Tubbs, the announcer. The momentary contact was elaborately accidental. But Tiverton, watching from between half-closed eyes, saw a quick, furtive interchange of gestures—a double move that transferred from the passenger's hand to Tubbs' the neatly torn half of a ten-dollar bill.

Denny had come down from his seat at the steering wheel, and was glancing about him as though to find some one. Tiverton stepped up to him.

"Tubbs has the whole bill now," said he.

"Yes," said Denny, "I saw. It's an old trick. Paste the two halves together and the bill's as good as new. It's torn to make sure the job's done and to make sure of fair play on both sides. I saw it fail once, though. A taxi chauffeur that I knew got half of a five-dollar bill beforehand as a tip for driving a farmer all over the city. It was a half-day trip, and the chauffeur sure did his best to earn the rest of that five. At the end of the ride the farmer says to him: 'That 'ere half a bill ain't no use to you as it stands. I'll give ye ten cents and a seegar fer it.' But say, Art, did you catch what our snow-faced friend says to Tubbs as he handed out the second half?"

"No, I was too far away."

"I wasn't. He whispers: 'To-morrow. Same time.' An'——"

"I'm glad to see you again, Cross," said some one at Denny's elbow, in a pleasant voice.

Both men turned. It was Miss Wesley who had made her way to the chauffeur's side.

"You are doing well here?" she went on.

"Yes'm. Thanks. Same to you!" sputtered the embarrassed but delighted Denny. "An'—please, would you think me fresh if I took the liberty to make you acquainted with an old schoolmate of mine? Mr. Arthur Tiverton, Miss Wesley."

CHAPTER IV.

THE GIRL.

DENNY CROSS confessed later to Tiverton: "I know it was a bone-head play to introduce a side-kicker of mine to a dame of her class; but I was so fazed at her coming up to us, unexpectedlike, that I said the first thing that seemed to fit in."

Though Miss Wesley looked somewhat taken aback at the unexpected introduction, she inclined her pretty head in civil acknowledgment of Tiverton's bow. Then she nodded a good-by to Denny and turned away, just as the white-faced man with his three rural-looking companions bore down upon her.

The man said something to her that Tiverton could not catch. But he heard her reply in a clear voice:

"Thank you, Mr. Devereux; but I think I'll take a street car up to Thirty-fourth Street. I have some shopping to do."

They melted away in the Broadway and crosstown crowd.

"Devereux," repeated Tiverton, half aloud.

"Fancy monaker," said Cross. "Puts it all over a name like Tubbs, no? Well, I've got to hustle. I s'pose you meant what you said 'bout my dropping in on you at your rooms?"

"Of course I did. It'll be good to have an old-time chat with you. By the bye, are you sure it was 'to-morrow' that Devereux whispered to your friend Tubbs?"

"Dead sure. Why?"

"Because," said Tiverton, "I'm going to be here at the same time to-morrow on the chance that some other 'mistake' will be made by the announcer—a mistake possibly like that of to-day. It may be none of my business, but unraveling even a silly little mystery like this is mildly amusing. Save me a seat beside you if you can; in case the 'to-morrow' should mean an appointment like this afternoon's. Good-by."

The following morning, Tiverton was early at his employer's office in the

Cogghall Building, and in a short time he wound up his routine business for the day. He was annoyed at himself for being unable to shake from his mind a hundred buzzing conjectures as to the meaning of the seemingly trifling Devereux-Tubbs mystery. He looked at it from a dozen different angles, but from none could he gain a viewpoint that satisfied him.

That any sane man should pay a touring automobile announcer ten dollars to say that a certain financier had an office in a building half a mile north of that financier's actual office, seemed an absurdity. But, remembering the giving of the halved bank note and Devereux's odd behavior when Tubbs made the announcement, he could come to no other conclusion than that the incident had some interesting significance.

Between moments of fruitless puzzling, Tiverton found himself indulging in the pleasanter, but equally futile, recreation of bringing back to his mental vision the face and the voice of Florida Wesley. He recalled also what Denny had said of her having stopped a year earlier at the Idler apartment hotel. He wondered whether she was staying there now. He supposed so, since out-of-town people have a way of making some one hotel their invariable headquarters when they are in New York.

Then Tiverton laughed at himself for a sentimental fool, for wasting so much thought on a girl whom he had seen but once, and who, in all human probability, he would never see again. Whereat, he went right on thinking about her, intermitting his roseate thoughts with further conjectures as to Devereux and Tubbs.

At half past twelve his office work was done; the rest of the day was his. He had planned to run down to Coney Island for an early-season swim and for dinner. But, with a grunt of self-contempt at his own folly, he found himself walking northward, in the direction of the Whitelawn Building.

Arrived at the garish front of that particularly aggressive skyscraper, he hesitated again; then turned in at the doorway. In the big entrance hall he

glanced about till his eye fell on a square black slab in the wall with raised white letters. "Office Directory" was printed at the top of the slab, and beneath, in much smaller type, were the names and room numbers of the Whitelawn's several hundred tenants.

Tiverton glanced along the list headed "B." He knew perfectly well that Cyrus Q. Buchanan had no office in this building. But it occurred to him that some other man named Buchanan might have one, and that this might account for Tubbs' announcement; either that or some fly-by-night crook might have assumed the name of Cyrus Q. Buchanan for the purpose of fleecing the unwary. This, he realized, would be a dangerous trick and one almost certain of quick detection. No swindler was likely to risk it. Yet it was worth a look; if only to safeguard his employer's interests. But, as he had foreseen, no "Buchanan" appeared on the board. After a second look, Tiverton walked down the hall to where the uniformed elevator starter was standing.

"I'm looking," explained Arthur, "for Mr. Buchanan's office—Cyrus Q. Buchanan's. I can't find it on the directory list, and——"

"And you can't find it in the building," snapped the starter, with scant courtesy. "Cyrus Q. Buchanan's got no office in the Whitelawn Building. I tell 'em all that. And some of 'em want to argue it out and prove to me I don't know who our own tenants are."

"So I'm not the only one to bother you with such a fool question?" queried Arthur, the joy of the hunt quickening his pulses.

"No; two others in the last three days. But they looked like dressed-up rubes, and you don't. When I told one of 'em there was no Buchanan here he asked for Mr. Devereux's office."

"Devereux?"

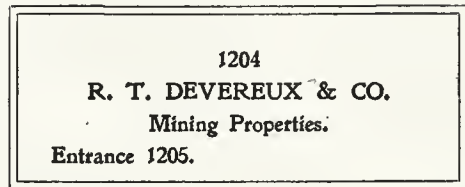
"Yes. Twelfth floor—twelve hundred and four to twelve hundred and seven. The rube went up there, and when he came back he gave me a wink and said he 'guessed I knew how to

keep a secret,' whatever he may have meant by that."

Tiverton drifted away from the loquacious starter and back to the directory. There, under the heading of "D" he read:

"Devereux, R. T. 1204-7."

Arthur went across to an elevator labeled "Express to 11th Floor" and was shot upward. At the twelfth floor he alighted and made his way along the corridor until he faced a ground-glass door on which was lettered in gilt:



To Room 1205 Tiverton went, and, opening the door, walked into a small and rather overfurnished waiting room. The only occupant there was an office boy who nodded drowsily over a corner desk.

"It must have been a great night," remarked Tiverton cheerily. "Will you wake up long enough to tell me if the boss is in?"

The boy rose, blinking. "Friend of his?" he queried, visibly impressed by the intentional familiarity of Tiverton's manner.

"No," Tiverton answered, laughing, "an enemy. Is he in?"

"He's out to lunch," was the reply; "and he's got a date uptown in the afternoon, but——"

"I know," said Tiverton, "but he isn't due uptown till two. So——"

"Oh, maybe he'll be back then before he goes up there." The boy yawned. "If you're one of his crowd you can wait in the reception room in there, if you want to."

"Thanks, I will," said Arthur. "Pleasant dreams."

He passed on into a large inner room, and the spring door swung shut behind him. He found himself in a showy apartment—half office, half lounging room—with doors opening out on either

side. It was not Tiverton's first glimpse of such places, and he wasted no time in idle staring, but walked straight over to the flat-topped desk that stood between two windows.

The desk top's only contents were a dozen loose sheets of paper, a rack of envelopes, a silver inkstand, and some pens. It was the paper that interested Tiverton. He picked up the nearest sheet of it, and at the top read the strong black letter heading:

DEVEREUX & CO.,

Mining Properties.

R. T. Devereux. Cyrus Q. Buchanan.

Tiverton was not surprised. He understood the game now. It was not new in the financial district, and several of its former players were even then enjoying the State's hospitality at Sing Sing, Auburn, and Clinton.

He had often heard of the old scheme, on the part of some crook promoter, to pretend that a financier of note was the "company" or the silent partner in his concern; and by the conjuring power of such a name to reap a goodly shearing of wool from the lambs.

The necessary stationery involved merely the aid of a dishonest or ignorant engraver. The use of paper thus engraved, in the United States mails, had often set the government on the track of such crooks. But Tiverton knew that the mere presence of such stationery on a promoter's desk was no violation of law, so that it was safe for the rascals to leave it there for the purpose of impressing their intended victims. Nor was he astonished to see several stamped and postmarked envelopes flung with elaborate carelessness at one end of the desk, and all addressed "Cyrus Q. Buchanan, care of Devereux & Co., Whitelawn Building."

It was a very pretty little booby trap as it stood—the whole place. Yet Tiverton marveled at the daring use of a name so high in the financial world as Buchanan's.

"A case of quick touch-and-go

work," Arthur decided; "a scheme with a sudden punch in it, and then a get-away. But what, in the name of all that's wonderful, has the rubberneck coach to do with it?"

He had seen all he needed to show him the misuse to which his employer's name had been put. It remained only to apprise Buchanan by telegraph, and to await the latter's action. Action, with Cyrus Q. Buchanan, was seldom long delayed, nor was it apt to be overgentle.

Tiverton turned from the desk between the two windows, and took a step toward the door. Then he halted, for the door opened and some one entered. The newcomer was Florida Wesley, the girl of the touring automobile. She came into the room a little way, caught sight of Tiverton silhouetted against the sunshine of the window, and paused. It was clear that with the strong light at his back she did not recognize him.

"Pardon me," she said, "but Mr. Devereux is out, and probably won't be back before four o'clock at the earliest. If you are a client——"

She checked herself, for, as she spoke, Tiverton moved forward. She saw his face, and recognition dawned in her own—recognition, and something that seemed to him akin to panic.

Nor was Tiverton as calm and nerve steady as was his wont. He was saying to himself in a sort of daze:

"She came in here as if she *belonged*; and she spoke to me as though she were one of the firm. A crook company for fleecing silly sheep. And —— Oh, a girl with eyes like those!"

CHAPTER V.

THE SECOND RIDE.

MR. TIVERTON?" said the girl, hesitating, as if undecided whether to say more.

"It's good of you to remember me," he said. "Are you waiting for Mr. Devereux, too?"

"Yes," she answered uneasily. "The boy in the anteroom was asleep, so I came in. I thought he might be——"

She stopped, perhaps remembering, as did Arthur, that she had just said Devereux was not likely to return until late afternoon. They looked uncomfortably at each other. Then Arthur, offering her a chair, said: "Do you mind if I wait with you?"

"Not at all," she assured him, still apparently ill at ease. And she took the proffered chair.

"You are a friend of Mr. Devereux?" she asked suddenly.

"A friend of one of your far humbler admirers," he answered evasively; "of Denny Cross."

"He is a character, isn't he?" She laughed. "He was the best chauffeur at the hotel where I stopped last year, and he restored a stolen pocketbook to me."

"He was the son of our farmer up at North Wilbraham," said Tiverton, "and he and I played together as boys. I had lost track of him till yesterday."

They drifted into pleasant talk on indifferent topics, and for half an hour or more they chatted, while the office boy snored softly at the anteroom desk outside. Tiverton found Miss Wesley altogether delightful. For the moment he quite forgot his suspicions of her. The two found each other wonderfully congenial. At the end of a half hour they felt almost like old acquaintances. It was with real regret that Arthur noted the passing of time, by the wall clock, and recalled his plan to be at the corner of Broadway and Twenty-third Street for the seeing New York bus' two-o'clock trip.

He rose, with something like a sigh on his lips, and held out his hand.

"It has been good to meet you," he said simply. "I wonder if you will think I am impertinent if I ask leave to call. You see," he blundered on, "I know so few people in New York, and you——"

He stopped. She was looking at him—not in wonder or displeasure, but with an expression he could not quite fathom. It seemed to him almost one of sorrow.

"Yes," she said at last. "Please come. I shall be very glad to see you."

"Oh, thank you!" he exclaimed impulsively. "And when am I likely to find you home? May I call to-morrow evening—early? Is that too soon? Or have you an engagement?"

"No, I have no engagements for to-morrow evening. I shall be at home. I am stopping at——"

"The Idler?" he asked.

His repetition of what Denny Cross had told him of her former New York headquarters produced a remarkable effect on the girl. The soft lights in her big eyes grew hard. And her full lips compressed, then parted as if for hasty speech. But she closed them again, and, after a long look of scrutiny, said coldly:

"Yes. I am at the Idler. Good afternoon."

"To-morrow evening, then?" he rejoined, as he started for the door, marveling at the odd change in her manner.

"Yes," said Miss Wesley, in a tired voice; "to-morrow evening."

"Now," mused Tiverton, as he rattled uptown on the subway, "what the deuce could I have said or done to make her look at me like that? It was almost as if I'd sworn at her. And—and why did she wait at Devereux's office after I left? She had said he probably wouldn't be back. Does she belong there? Did Providence bestow such eyes upon a girl who is the accomplice of a crook?"

At Twenty-third Street he left the subway, and went to the nearest telegraph office, where he wrote out a long message in cipher, which he dispatched to Buchanan. It explained the whole Devereux affair as far as he himself understood it, and asked for instructions. Then Tiverton made his way westward to the starting point of the sight-seeing automobiles. The telegrams had taken somewhat longer to write than he had expected, and on his arrival he found the "downtown-trip" bus almost full.

A single glance showed him R. T. Devereux at the extreme end of the third seat, as before—on the side that would be nearest to the Whitelawn

Building on the southward journey. Next to Devereux and in conversation with him were three men. They were not the three he had talked with on the preceding day, but they bore the same general air of prosperity and of a rural tailor's handiwork.

Devereux, as he talked, was glancing furtively to left and right, as though in search of something or some one. As he caught sight of Tiverton it was plain from his expression that he had discovered the object of his covert search. His ashy face went a trifle ashier, his eyes narrowed to slits, and he followed every motion of the new arrival.

Tiverton affected to notice nothing of this, but went forward to the front seat, where Denny hailed him with a grin of welcome, and made room for him in the place next to the wheel.

"I was afraid you wouldn't make it," said Cross. "Listen quick, now, before Sam Tubbs gets aboard; there won't be any time afterward for a private chin. We talked pretty soft yesterday, you and me. But Tubbs' ears are so sharp he could use 'em to shave with. He caught a word or two between megaphone spiels, and some time between yesterday and now he must 'a' got to thinking. For the minute Devereux shows up to-day Tubbs runs up to him with a line of whispered talk, and then they both rubbers at me. Keep the soft pedal on to-day. Cheese it! Here's Tubbs."

The announcer climbed on, off went the bus, and Tubbs, megaphone to lips, began his "lecture." Neither Tiverton nor Cross spoke, but they could note the announcer's occasional glance at them.

As the bus neared the Whitelawn Building Tiverton riveted his gaze on the announcer. The latter looked at him, then at Devereux, and, in a voice that shook, he repeated his speech of the previous day, naming among the well-known tenants of the building Cyrus Q. Buchanan.

Tiverton looked back over his shoulder at Devereux. The white-faced man was pointing out the building as be-

fore, and his three companions were evincing great interest in it. Devereux's eyes shifted from the skyscraper and met Arthur's. In them Tiverton could read both fear and hatred.

"He looks at me as if I were a melodrama hero, and he the heavy villain," remarked Arthur to Denny, under cover of the badly rattled Tubbs' next announcement. "Why, I wonder?"

"Same reason Sam Tubbs is leery of you," decided Cross. "They're up to something, and they're wise that you're tabbing their game. Tubbs is afraid you'll report him and get him fired, and maybe prosecuted, too! The other chap's game may be so crooked that it spells jail. So both of 'em have cause to shy at you."

"I know what one of Devereux's games is," said Arthur. "But he doesn't know I know that. This much is plain: He bribes Tubbs every day to tell a lie about the tenancy list of the Whitelawn Building. It remains to be seen exactly what use he makes of a sight-seeing bus man's misstatement. Whatever the scheme is, it's serious enough to scare them both to know I'm watching it."

"And it's plainer still that you'd better look out for yourself," said Cross. "It's dangerous enough to have such men sore on you; but when they're scared of you besides—well, they're apt to do things."

CHAPTER VI.

A PUZZLING EXPERIENCE.

AT an unpardonably early hour next evening Tiverton called at the little Idler Hotel on the upper West Side. He had not realized how early it was until, after sending up his name to Miss Wesley, and going into a little reception room off the foyer, he saw that the mantel clock registered ten minutes to eight.

Tiverton was still framing an apology for his unseasonable call, and comforting himself with the possibility that a girl from the country might be used to receiving visits so soon after dinner, when some one came into the room.

Tiverton turned, and beheld not Florida Wesley, but a tall man in evening dress. And the man was R. T. Devereux. If that white-faced person of mystery had looked like a melodrama villain in the prosaic surroundings of a seeing New York bus, he looked now like a stage Russian prince in his severely faultless evening attire. Tiverton was forced into reluctant admiration of the man's aspect and bearing.

Becoming aware of Tiverton's presence in the room, Devereux drew himself up stiffly. Into his white face came again that look of fear, mingled with sharp malice. But, with rare self-control, he recovered his composure; so quickly, indeed, that a casual observer could not have noted on his face any expression save of bored indifference.

He glanced carelessly at Tiverton, then moved toward a chair at the far end of the reception room. But Arthur was not content to let the chance slip by.

"Mr. Devereux?" he said civilly.

Devereux rose from the chair in which he was just seating himself, and faced about. His features were unmoved. But Tiverton, thanks to long training in the school of Cyrus Q. Buchanan, was too shrewd to judge any trained man's emotions from the expression—or lack of expression—of the face. His glance went at once to the white-gloved hands that hung inert at Devereux's sides. He saw that the fists were clenched in nervous tension.

"Mr. Devereux," he repeated. "May I introduce myself? I am——"

"Mr. Arthur Tiverton," interrupted Devereux, with cool and purposed insolence, "of nine-ninety-nine West Eighty-fifth Street. I know. So you can spare yourself the trouble of inventing an alias for my benefit."

"I don't indulge in the luxury of an alias," retorted Arthur, in perfect good humor, marveling none the less at the other's knowledge of his name and address; "any more than I can afford to claim as my partner a man who does not even know me by sight. Both those little extravagances cost too much for a poor chap like myself. Criminal

trials are so expensive—as perhaps experience has taught you?"

The tone of the daring query was quite civil, and Devereux met it without flinching.

"There is probably a point in what you say," said he, "if only I could understand. I am not good at jokes."

"Oh!" Arthur laughed. "All jokes have points. Even ten-dollar witticisms at the expense of sight-seeing auto passengers who are told that Cyrus Q. Buchanan occupies an office he has never even heard of."

Devereux raised his eyebrows non-committally.

"Does it cost more, Mr. Devereux," went on Arthur, in the same tone of pleasant impersonality, "to have a fake letterhead engraved than a genuine one? I mean, does one have to tear a bill in two before the stationer will consent to——"

A swish of skirts at the door interrupted him. Florida Wesley came in. Arthur advanced, hand outstretched, toward her. It had occurred to him from the moment of Devereux's appearance on the scene that the man, like himself, was at the Idler to call on Miss Wesley. And, with a glow of battle in his veins, Tiverton resolved to "cut him out." If it were to be a contest of assurance, of wit, of power to entertain, he was determined to monopolize the girl's attention.

She replied graciously, even cordially, to Tiverton's greeting. Then she turned to Devereux, who was bowing before her.

"I tried to get you on the phone," said Devereux, "but you hadn't come in yet. I have a box for 'Robin Hood' at the Casino to-night—the revival you said yesterday you wanted to hear before you leave town. I wonder if you would care to go there with me?"

She hesitated. Before she could make answer, Tiverton said, with ready ease:

"It's too bad, Mr. Devereux. Miss Wesley was kind enough to say I might call this evening, and to stay at home for me. I was hoping, Miss Wesley, on the way here, that you might like to

go with me to the Olympic Roof Garden. It opens to-night. And they say the show is better than most of its sort. So I came early to ask——”

“I’m so sorry,” said Devereux. “I planned such a jolly evening for you, Miss Wesley. Perhaps another time I may be luckier.”

The man’s graceful withdrawal from the competition made Tiverton half ashamed of his own aggressiveness. He felt instinctively that he was not shining by comparison with this well-mannered enemy of his. And he sought to make amends.

“If you’d care to see the show at the Casino, Miss Wesley,” said he, “I don’t want for a minute to stand in the way of your having a good time. I can call another evening, and——”

“If you really don’t mind,” she said timidly.

It was the first time she had spoken, or had a chance to speak, since she had entered the room. Tiverton could not believe his ears. He had made the renunciatory offer out of the merest courtesy, and with not the faintest idea that she would accept it.

“If you are quite sure you don’t mind, Mr. Tiverton,” she went on, in sweet apology, “I think I’ll take you at your word. I do so much want to hear ‘Robin Hood.’ And this may be my last chance. I hear it is to be taken off in a day or two.”

“Why, of course. I——”

“And since Mr. Devereux has gone to the trouble of getting a box for it,” she hurried on, still apologetically, “it would be a shame not to——”

“Naturally,” agreed Tiverton, with the best grace he could summon up.

“And you will call again?”

“Thank you!” he answered noncommittally. “It is good of you to ask me. I hope you’ll enjoy the opera very much. Good night, Miss Wesley—Mr. Devereux.”

“Good night, Mr. Tiverton,” the latter called after the departing Arthur.

As he passed out Tiverton fancied that he heard a man’s laugh—pleasant and well modulated, full of genuine amusement; and he made his way to

the street in a white rage. He could not understand Florida Wesley’s uncivil action in dismissing him for the sake of a much later invitation. She had not seemed to him the sort of girl to do so rude a thing, and her behavior puzzled him almost as keenly as it hurt him.

His brain hot with angry mortification, and his heart heavy with disillusion, Tiverton walked aimlessly from street to street for hours, rehearsing the scene at the Idler, and nursing his wrath and heartache. At last he steadied down to his normal state, and realized that the hour was late, and he was a mile or two from home. Quickening his pace, he trudged down West End Avenue to Eighty-fifth Street. Then he turned into the latter street—his footsteps echoing through its deserted width—and made for the house where he had his bachelor quarters.

A few doors away from his destination a man rose from behind an area railing, and, with some dimly seen weapon, struck heavily at Tiverton’s head.

CHAPTER VII.

“IN THE DAY OF BATTLE.”

THE man had risen noiselessly from his hiding place; nor, in springing forward, had he made any sound. Like a dim-seen specter of the night he sprang and struck. So swift and silent were his advent and attack that they had taken Tiverton wholly by surprise; he had been walking rapidly, and had almost passed the areaway when his assailant appeared. Yet instinctively he ducked to one side just as the blow fell. This half-unconscious shift, coupled with the uncertain light and the speed at which his victim had been walking, served to mar the thug’s aim.

The blackjack struck glancingly. It caught and smashed Tiverton’s stiff hat crown in its passage, but barely grazed his head. Arthur whirled, before the other could raise his arm for a second blow, and grappled him. But even as he did so two men who, unobserved by him, had walked close behind ever since

he turned in from West End Avenue, threw themselves on him. None of the trio spoke. Nor did Tiverton cry for help. Thus, the voiceless struggle of the four, there on that half-lit pavement of the deserted side street, failed to attract, at first, any attention from the slumbering inmates of the adjoining houses or from such few people as chanced still to be abroad on either of the block's intersecting avenues.

If the first man had bungled through nervousness or miscalculation of distance, his two allies showed more precision. As Tiverton closed with the blackjack wielder, one of the other two caught him deftly by either arm, jerking him sharply backward. The first man, freed, swung his weapon once more in air, poising it for a second and more accurate blow.

Tiverton, the primal fight lust springing to life in every fiber, did not think of shouting for assistance; nor did he so much as realize that before such a cry could bring help, the trio might finish him and make good their escape. Instead, he flung himself with all his force forward and downward in one swift move of his whole muscular body. The maneuver was so quick, diametrically opposite in direction from that against which his two captors had braced themselves, that he broke momentarily free from their double grip, leaving part of a coat sleeve in the hands of one of them. And the blackjack blow whizzed harmless above him. At the same moment Tiverton caught the striker about the knees, drawing inward and putting all his force into a jerking upward heave. It was a simple "rough-house" trick he had learned as a boy at school. And it served.

Up went the tough's feet, and down came the rest of his body. He struck the pavement square on his shoulders and the back of his head. The impact knocked the breath out of him, and half-stunned him. The blackjack flew from his hand. But before Tiverton could regain his feet the two others were upon him, bearing him down by sheer weight, cramping his movements—kicking, striking, gouging, employing

every trick of the underworld street fighter. Their victim's activity and the uncertainty of the light prevented them from working with the wonted swift, deadly effect of their class. Moreover, in the scrimmage, Tiverton had become so "mixed up" with the fallen thug, who was trying to scramble to his feet, that they were hampered.

Tiverton dodged one blow, countered another, and hurled himself to one side just in time to avoid a heavy boot's swinging kick—which found sonorous lodgment in the ribs of his half-prostrate first assailant. He struck out, in intervals between blocking the showering blows, with fierce precision and with all the speed he could muster. Sometimes his fists encountered empty air. Oftener they thudded against clothing or flesh, with a numbing smash that gave him vague delight.

For less than thirty seconds this rough-and-tumble endured. Then, bruised and battered, Tiverton managed to stagger to his feet. He grappled with the nearer of his two upright antagonists, driving his left forearm under the latter's chin and at the same time hammering short-arm blows to his face. Both men now set upon him, showering blows with greater force than science at every part of his anatomy within reach. Hard pressed to counter and to duck, he yet was able to return with interest more than one of these blows. But at this juncture the tough whom Tiverton had first thrown feet upward, and whom his accomplice's ill-directed kick had further incapacitated, recovered his wits and his strength sufficiently at the same instant to reach forward from his semirecumbent posture and catch Tiverton's ankles.

Down came the man who was making such a brave fight against hopeless odds. Then one of his assailants stooped down, seized the blackjack, and, taking lightning aim, struck. As he did so, two things happened—a white-clad woman in an upper window of a house across the way began to scream "Murder!" to the accompaniment of upflinging windows and

sleepy questions. And the blackjack wielder found himself caught around the neck from behind and jerked backward off his feet.

Tiverton, at the same time freeing his ankles from their imprisonment, jumped up. He was just in time to see his two fallen assailants getting shakily to their feet; while the third, in the tight grip of a new hand in the fray, was being carelessly and hastily deposited in a heap in the gutter.

From West End Avenue came running footsteps, punctuated by the recurrent beat of a police club on the pavement. And that sound was the elixir of life to the three toughs. The two who had regained their feet made off at a shambling run in the opposite direction from the oncoming patrolman. The man in the gutter scuttled along for a yard or so on all fours like a lame jack rabbit, then lurched up to a crouching position, and ran for his life in the wake of his fellows.

Tiverton made after the last fugitive, and the newcomer in turn made after him. As they reached the door of the house where Tiverton lived, the other man adroitly caught him by the arm and brought the pursuit to a sudden halt.

"In here!" said he. "Quick's the word!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A RAY OF LIGHT.

AT the restraining touch on his arm, Tiverton had pulled free, still too inflamed with battle to tell friend from foe, and eagerly ready to try conclusions with this possible fresh antagonist. But at sound of the other's voice his clenched fists relaxed.

"Denny!" he panted. "Denny Cross!"

"In here!" repeated Denny, dragging him forcibly up the short flight of brownstone steps into the vestibule. "Quick!"

"But——"

"Cut out the buts. Do as I say, unless you want more trouble."

He fairly hauled the tired man inside the vestibule, and closed the outer door

after them, just as the patrolman trotted past in pursuit of his already vanishing triple quarry.

"Where's your keys?" asked Cross. "We're goin' up to your rooms before that cop stops running and comes back to listen to what the nightgown chorus from the windows has to say."

With fingers that shook from reaction and overstrain, Tiverton drew out his bunch of keys. Denny took them from him, tried two or three in the inner door's keyhole, found the right one, and let them into the hall. Two minutes later they were in Tiverton's sitting room, and Denny had turned the electric key, flooding the place with light.

"Sit down there!" he said to his panting host. "I'm going to look you over for a list of the damages. So! Now, work all your joints one after the other. Never mind if some of them hurt. That won't mean much. I want to see if anything's broke. All in working order? Good! Now, draw a long, slow breath, if you can sidetrack the panting long enough. Hurt? Sure it doesn't? Good! That means no ribs smashed. I guess you've got what the hospital reports call 'abrasions and contusions, but no fractures or internal injuries.' That's French for 'paint scratched, but cylinders all right.' Now, get off what's left of your coat and vest and collar, and I'll wash some of that dust from your face. Gee, man! You sure played in luck! Not a black eye! But you've got a few dandy bruises on your arms and throat."

As he talked, Denny was ministering to his friend with the quick skill of a prize-ring second—manipulating, fanning, sponging. Tiverton was content for a few minutes to submit to the kind ministrations of his friend. Then, with renewed vitality, curiosity came to the fore.

"How did you happen to get in on this holdup, Denny?" he asked.

"Holdup? Say, if you don't know a holdup from a smash-up, it's a pity I didn't give you a minute longer before I butted in. You'd have found out all about it by now."

"What do you mean?"

"Lots of folks get held up, in the course of the year, in these quiet side streets, late at night," explained Denny. "And the guys that do the work generally make a get-away a good many jumps ahead of the cops. But they don't work it the way these lads did to-night. It's a come-up from behind, an arm around the neck, or a coat over the head, or a leveled gun; then a quick frisk and a fade; while the mark is still wondering what ran over him."

"But——"

"This was a smash-up party. When holdups find a man will fight—and *can* fight—they don't keep on slugging. They move out—if the street's as civilized as this one. No, son. These fellows werè out to get *you*, not your cash or your ten-dollar watch and chain that you won at the raffle."

"To kill me?" gasped Arthur, unbelieving.

"No; I guess not as bad as that. They'd 'a' used a knife or even taken a chance with a gun and an automobile skip if they'd wanted to kill you. But they most likely planned to give you a few days' or weeks' rest at a nice hospital, with a few broken bones or maybe a concussed brain or a cracked skull. Murder's too risky; the other way's a lot safer."

"What object could any one have in——"

"In getting you out of the way for a week or two, so that some game could be run off without your butting in?"

"Do you mean——" cried Tiverton.

"I sure do; and then some."

"Nonsense! We're not living in the Middle Ages."

"Of course we ain't. Rubberneck coaches weren't hatched yet in the Middle Ages."

"What have——"

"What have touring New York autos got to do with your being beaten up? They've got this much to do with it."

Denny pulled from his deep inner coat pocket an object from which the remnants of a wad of grimy cotton waste were still trailing.

"I picked this up," said he. "I back-

heeled the man who was just going to bounce it off your bean. He dropped it when he fell. I picked it up when we all began our little Marathon with the cop as scratch man."

"It's a monkey wrench."

"It was used as a blackjack. But as we came in I unwound most of the cotton from around it. If they'd wanted to croak you outright, they'd never have bundled it up at all. I took a good look at it as we came up the stairs. This wrench is an old acquaintance of mine. See?"

He pointed to a sort of trade-mark branded into the wood of the handle—a circle with several letters around it.

"That mark's on all the tools in our emergency kit on the benzine buggies that take folks on seeing New York trips," went on Denny. "It's the company's brand. Some one who has the right to go to one of our kits picked this toy for to-night's merry-making."

"Tubbs!"

"Well, it's more likely Tubbs than the Czar of Ireland or the Mayor of Turkey. That is, unless you've been riding 'round on other cars than mine, giving 'lecturers' reason to be so scared of you that they want to put you out of commission for a while. Have you? If not, we're safe in placing a small bet that it's good old Mister Sam'l Tubbs, esquire. I warned you——"

"Denny," broke in Tiverton, "I haven't thanked you. But I do, from the bottom of my heart. If you hadn't happened to come along just when you did—and I still don't see how you did happen to—I'd have been——"

"Happened, hey? Son, them things don't happen outside of stories and plays. I told you yesterday to look out. I told you it was more dangerous to have folks scared of you than sore on you. You wouldn't listen."

"You were right."

"It's a way I've got. I come around here to see you to-night, after supper—just as you asked me to—to have a North Wilbr'm chat. And——"

"I'm sorry I wasn't home. I——"

"You weren't far from it. As I came up to this house you were just

leaving it. And it struck me how dead easy it would be for anybody to knock you in the head from behind. So I trailed along. You went to a hotel. Pretty soon out you came, looking like you'd lost nineteen dollars, and had a toothache to boot. You were so rattled you almost got run over by a dozen taxis. I saw you weren't fit to be left at large. So, just for the fun of it, I kept on trailing."

"But why didn't you come up and speak to me?"

"Why should I? You looked about as friendly as a convention of hornets. I kept on. And a nice fool walk you led me. I was for giving it up once or twice. But I got curious, so I didn't quit. At last you hit up the pace, and somehow I lost you. But you seemed to be heading for home here. So I took a chance, and came to Eighty-fifth Street. I got to the corner just in time to see you in the middle of that mix-up. The whole thing couldn't have lasted two minutes. But I kind of wish I'd been two minutes earlier."

"Denny Cross! You spent a whole evening, after a hard day's work, acting as bodyguard to me, to save me from being hurt?"

"Well, if you like to put it that way — You see, we're both from North Wilbr'm, and —"

"Denny, you're white clear down to the ground. I won't try to thank you any more, because I don't know the right words; but I think you know how grateful I am."

"Aw, can it!" muttered Denny. "And after this keep out of mischief. Quit butting in on crooked folks' games."

"I can't. I'm going to see this thing to a finish. I've got to. The fight is only just beginning. Tubbs and the others are nothing more than Devereux's tools. He's the man I've got to fight. It's plain enough now. He must have set some one to follow me, the last time I left the sight-seeing car, for he knows my name and where I live. I found that out this evening. And he set these men to get me to-night. They were waiting for me to come home.

It's all clear. And to-morrow—I'll have it out with him."

"Artie," drawled Denny Cross, "you're more kinds of a fool than I thought you were; but you're as many kinds of a man, too!"

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE HOUSE OF THE ENEMY.

WORK claimed Tiverton until nearly three o'clock the next afternoon; then, as he rose from his desk, a telegram was handed to him. It was from Cyrus Buchanan, and said, with characteristic terseness:

Meet me at office, four p. m.

Tiverton had not expected his employer to return from the West for another three days, and on the strength of that belief he had invited Denny Cross to dine with him that evening. Before he and Denny had parted on the preceding night he had told Denny what he had learned concerning Devereux, omitting only all reference to Miss Wesley, and the chauffeur had been keenly interested.

Now Tiverton would probably have to spend his first evening of Buchanan's return in going over a quantity of piled-up correspondence. His first move was to call up Danny at the touring New York company's stand in Fifth Avenue. He was lucky enough to catch Denny just returning from the two-o'clock downtown trip.

"Too bad," was Cross' comment on his news. "Better luck another evening. But it'll keep you out of mischief, maybe, to have your boss back. Now maybe you'll have to steer clear of Devereux for a while."

"Not exactly," said Tiverton, with a laugh. "I've nearly an hour on my hands before I'm due back here at four o'clock. And I'm going to run over to the Whitelawn Building."

"What for?"

"To have a little friendly talk with R. T. Devereux. I've had it on my mind all day, but I've been too busy until now."

"What the blazes are you going there

for?" asked Cross in disgust. "Aren't you content with one beating up?"

"No; I'm still hungry. I'm going to have a settlement with R. T. Devereux, and find out what he means by hiring gorillas to attack me."

"If you've got to be a plumb idiot," grunted Cross, his voice rough and blurred across the telephone, "wait for me. I'm off for the day, and I'll come down and——"

"Thank you, old man. But I haven't time. I'm due back here to meet Mr. Buchanan at four sharp, and he's not the sort to be kept waiting. I've barely time now to get up there in a hurry, and have my settlement with Brother Devereux. Thank you just as much; and good-by."

He forestalled a rising storm of protests from Denny by hanging up the receiver. Ten minutes later he was at the Whitelawn Building. As he walked down the gilt-and-onyx hall of the skyscraper toward the line of elevators, he saw ahead of him a graceful figure in a tailored suit. He recognized Florida Wesley at a glance, even though her back was turned to him. Instinctively he quickened his pace. But before he had lessened by half the distance between them, Miss Wesley had entered an express elevator, and was shot upward in it.

There was no other express ready to start, and Tiverton was forced to take a drearily slow local that stopped at almost every floor between the first and the twelfth; he had ample time to consider the impulse that had prompted him to try to overtake the girl. He remembered her rudeness of the evening before, and his resolve to see no more of her. And at the thought, he was glad he had not caught up with her. He even berated himself for courting the first humiliation at her hands.

Then came reaction and a more worthy thought. He had been wrong in suspecting Florida of any connection with Devereux's swindling schemes. Ever since last night he had realized that a man does not treat his business partner or his confederate with the formal courtesy shown by Devereux to-

ward Miss Wesley in that brief three-cornered interview at the Idler. Her behavior toward him then, and his toward her, had been that of two people whose acquaintanceship is still in the earlier stage. Therefore, Tiverton concluded, her visits to this office were unquestionably on business. What business? She lived up State somewhere. Presumably, as she stopped at the high-priced Idler during her stays in New York, and made daily use of taxicabs, she was a woman of means. Tiverton knew that on the gullibility of well-to-do single women the swindler often thrives.

In a flash the whole matter was clear to Tiverton—Miss Wesley's calls at the office, Devereux's attentions to her, and all. He was "roping" her into one of his swindling schemes; a scheme to rob her of such funds as the crook might cajole her into putting into some wildcat venture or raw fake. At once, on this reflection, Tiverton's mortification and his grievance against Florida Wesley vanished. He forgot the slight she had put upon him. He forgot everything except that an innocent girl whom he cared for was about to become the victim of a cheat; was about to be defrauded perhaps of her livelihood, to fatten the bank account of a thief.

Before his slow-moving car reached the twelfth floor his purpose in going to Devereux's office had shifted. He would leave the settlement of his personal account with Devereux till another time. To-day he would merely demand an interview with Florida, and would tell her of the trap into which she had been lured. To Devereux's face, if need be, he would tell how she was being victimized and defrauded, and what sort of concern "R. T. Devereux & Co." really was. Full of his resolution, he left the elevator, and hastened down the hall, to Suite 1204-1207. Entering the waiting room, he accosted the office boy, who this time chanced to be quite wide awake.

"I want to see Miss Wesley—the lady who just came in here," said he.

The boy eyed him, perplexed; then slouched into a room to the left of the

inner reception room—a room marked “Mr. Devereux, Private.”

Tiverton judged that the boy had gone to notify his employer; and as he preferred to see Florida in person before Devereux could interfere, he took a step toward the reception room. As he did so, the boy issued from the private office.

“Miss Wesley’s in there,” he said, jerking his thumb over his shoulder in the office’s direction. He resumed his seat at the desk.

Tiverton crossed to the private office, and, as the boy had left its door ajar, entered without knocking. The room had but one occupant. Devereux was standing in the middle of it, visibly flustered.

“What do you want?” he demanded nervously.

“I want to speak with Miss Wesley,” replied Tiverton; “at another time with you, but just now with her. The boy said she was in here.”

“I told him to say so,” said Devereux, glancing guiltily over his shoulder to the closed door of what was evidently an inner room, and lowering his voice a little. “What do you want of her?”

“That is my affair. Please tell her that—”

“Not so loud!” muttered Devereux, with another scared glance at the door of the inner room. “She—she isn’t here.”

“She is!” contradicted Tiverton, advancing. “She is in that room behind you. Let me go in there, or—”

“This is my office,” weakly blustered Devereux, hurriedly backing against the door of the room toward which his guilty, furtive glances had been straying. “Get out of here! Miss Wesley is not—”

Tiverton did not let him finish the sentence. His own time was short. He was not minded to waste any of it in arguing with a man who, he was convinced, was lying to him.

“She is in that room behind you!” he declared. “Move aside and let me get in there.”

“No!” expostulated Devereux, still

guarding the door with his body. “I tell you there’s no one in that room. You’ll enter it at your peril. I—”

He got no further. Arthur’s out-flung hand caught him by the chest, gripping both lapels of his coat at their juncture, and, with one swift wrench, threw him aside, clearing the door of the living obstacle that had stood trembling before it. Without waiting to see if Devereux would retaliate or even defend himself, Tiverton, in almost the same move, snatched open the heavy wooden door and sprang into the room. Before he could turn the door was slammed shut behind him. He heard the rattle of a lock, then the click of a bolt. At the same instant he realized that there was no one in the room but himself. He was locked in; as neatly caught as was ever hare in a poacher’s trap.

CHAPTER X.

A CALL FOR NERVE.

TIVERTON stood stock-still a moment, staring about him, taking stock of his position and his surroundings. He was in one of those “inside rooms” common to many office suites—rooms usually devoted to storage or to files. There was but one window—about two feet square, and at a height of five feet from the concrete floor.

The only door was that through which he had passed. It had no ground-glass upper half; it was massive, thick-paneled, of a type that probably would withstand the assault of two or three men.

Tiverton understood on the instant the simple trick that had been played on him; and he was philosopher enough to smile grimly at thought of the ease wherewith he had succumbed to Devereux’s ruse. Had his mind not been full of Florida Wesley and of his plans to save her from being swindled, he knew he must have detected at once the false note in the man’s manner, and have known that so cool and practiced a sharper would not cringe and betray weak nervousness as Devereux had pretended to. He was trapped, and he felt

that nothing was to be gained by fuming or fretting or by useless repining.

The next move was to get out. Wrapping his handkerchief round his right hand's knuckles for protection, he drew back his arm, and, putting his shoulder and every atom of his strength and weight behind the blow, he smote one of the long upper panels of the door. The net result of this move was to numb his right arm to the elbow. Next, taking as careful aim as if on the football field, he swung back his right leg, braced himself, and kicked with all his might at the short bottom panel. The impact of the kick resounded through the little room, but the door held as firm as the eternal hills. He had heard a bolt, as well as a key, when the door was fastened behind him by Devereux. Hence he knew nothing was to be gained through trying to snap the lock by the old device of driving his heel at the keyhole.

He stood moveless, trying to work out the next step. He was puzzled not only as to how he should get out, but why he had been locked in. He remembered Denny Cross and the attack upon town, and knew that this latest action of Devereux was only another move in that rascal's game.

His eye was attracted to a slip of paper that lay under the door just across the threshold. He had not noticed it thrust there. And he was very certain it had not been there when he came into the room.

"Must have been shoved under while I was too busy hammering the door to notice it," he decided.

It was a folded scrap of note paper with a "Devereux & Co." head. On it this was hastily scrawled in pencil:

Don't be fool enough to try knocking the door down. You can't. If you'll behave yourself I'll send in a couple of hours or so to let you out.

There was no signature; the note needed none. But its contents served to increase tenfold Tiverton's bewilderment. But with a shrug of the shoulders, he gave up the riddle, and prepared to wait with what patience he might, since waiting was apparently the

one thing left for him to do. Nothing was to be gained by losing his head or going into paroxysms of rage.

It occurred to him to shout, but he dismissed the thought. His voice probably would penetrate to the outer office of the suite, but scarcely to the main corridor beyond; and the man who had locked him in was not likely to permit any subordinate in the suite to let him out.

There was not a stick of furniture of any description in the little cubby-hole of a room. But the window sill was rather deep. The prisoner drew himself up to it, and looked out on the chance of attracting by his gestures somebody in one of the windows of the opposite building. But he found there was no "opposite building"; at least that the building just across the street from the Whitelawn was several stories lower, and that none of its windows commanded a view of his.

He opened the sliding window and looked out. The report of a cannon, much less a human voice, at that height, could not have penetrated the roar of lower Broadway. He dropped back to the floor and stood there.

"It's checkmate," he admitted to himself. "I lose."

He walked back and forth to relieve the tedium of standing. Then he read over the letters in his pockets. After which he went to the door and called: "Devereux!"

There was no answer. No sound came from the adjoining "private office." He remembered Buchanan's injunction to him to be at the financier's office promptly at four, and looked at his watch. The time now was four-five. He recalled Buchanan's intolerance of a tardy employee. There would be a scene. But at the moment this bothered him little. For, if ever man had a legitimate excuse for lateness, he assuredly was the man. He found two more letters in an inner pocket, and destroyed a little more time in their dry perusal.

Then a new reflection came to him. And with it fled his philosophic calm. While he was standing there inert, Flor-

ida Wesley was perhaps being cheated of her money. He had come thither, posthaste, to warn her. And he was doing nothing.

He went again to the window, drew himself up into its open casement, and looked out once more. The coping outside was perhaps eighteen inches in width. It was of corrugated stucco, and sloped slightly downward, to shed rain. The sight gave Tiverton a thrill of inspiration. Wriggling his shoulders obliquely through the narrow window until half his body was outside, he looked to right and to left.

The coping apparently ran the whole length of the building. The nearest window to his own was perhaps fifteen feet to the left of him. And that window, he calculated, spelled escape. He crawled wholly out, so that he sat in the open window of his cell, his feet resting on the coping. He looked down. Two hundred feet below Broadway hummed and throbbed. Its scurrying pedestrians were little black beetles; its automobiles were rushing blurs; its trolley cars small rhomboids of motion. The sense of great height and its accompanying dizziness came over Tiverton. He shook off the feeling.

"I could walk for miles on an eighteen-inch plank laid on the ground," he told himself, "even if the plank sloped a little, as this coping does. I could walk it forever, and not once lose my balance. Any one could. Well, there's not an atom of difference between walking a plank on the ground and a coping two hundred feet in the air. It's all in the imagination. It's a question of nerve and of simple pluck."

He slowly brought himself to a standing posture on the ledge. Then, shutting out from his mind all thought of the sheer and awful drop to one side, and the two hundred feet of empty air that lay between him and the street below, he began to work toward the window that was his destination.

A stiff breeze was blowing at that height, and it tugged at him as with sentient fingers, seeking to destroy his doggedly maintained balance. With

tight lips he choked back the unreasoning dread which so often attacks even the coolest man at such a dizzy elevation. He leaned inward against the wall, and in six steps he was at the window. He fumbled with the lower sash's thin top line.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE SOUND-PROOF BOOTH.

AS usual, in upper stories of office buildings, the window was unlocked. It yielded to his upward pressure. He raised it an inch; then, stooping, put his fingers under the bottom of the sash and lifted it far enough to admit himself. He worked swiftly, lest any one within should seek to bar him from entering. In ten seconds from the time he reached the window he had stepped down into the room it lighted. It was empty. Also it was totally unfurnished, as had been his temporary prison. This struck Tiverton as strange. That two rooms in a single suite should be allowed to go to waste, where room rents were proverbially high, was incomprehensible. A smaller suite would have saved Devereux much money, and apparently would have served his purpose quite as well.

The only break in the four walls' blank space—except for a door—was made by a sound-proof telephone booth. This Tiverton supposed was a relic of some broker or bucket shop's occupancy of the suite. But a second glance showed him a telephone directory hanging on a nail outside the booth. The book's date was that of the current month.

"Why does Devereux do his telephoning in an unfurnished room instead of using the phone at his office desk?" wondered Tiverton.

Then a second oddity came to his notice. On the rather dusty floor were several darker squares and oblongs. He had seen newly vacated offices before, and knew the marks left on parts of floors whence desks, tables, and rugs have just been removed, and when

the room has not yet been swept since such removal.

"He's planning a get-away!" Tiverton told himself. "He's moving out his furniture room by room. The suite most likely is an empty shell by now, with just an office or two left furnished to fool customers."

He started for the door, tried it, and found it locked. This door, like the one of his cell, was of solid wood instead of having a glass upper half. Tiverton knew by recent experience the folly of trying to force such a structure.

He turned hastily to the telephone booth, whose door stood wide. As he crossed the room he was aware for the first time of the murmur of talking voices. He located the sound as coming through a thin partition wall to the right of the room in which he was now locked. Entering the booth, he closed the door behind him, and reached for the receiver. As he touched it, and before he could lift it from the hook, the telephone bell rang. He hesitated, then lifted the receiver, and said:

"Hello!"

"That you, Rolf?" came a somewhat excited voice from the other end of the line.

Tiverton puzzled for a fraction of a second. Then he recalled that among the decoy envelopes he had seen on the reception-room desk the day of his former visit to the office was one addressed to "Cyrus Q. Buchanan, or Rolf T. Devereux."

"No," he answered, anxious to use the telephone himself. "He's busy. Hang up, please."

"I've got to speak to him," came the excited voice. "Tell him to drop everything and jump to the phone."

"If you want him in such a hurry," said Arthur, resolved not to lose his chance of using the wire, and noting that the number on the instrument did not bear a party letter, "why don't you call him up on his other phone?"

"He told me not to trust the switchboard for private business; you know that, if you're with him," was the re-

tort. "He keeps this number for such calls."

"I'll tell him you want to speak to him," drawled Tiverton lazily. "Who shall I say?"

"Belden. Henry Belden. Quick!"

Tiverton set down the receiver. It occurred to him that a little delay in arranging his own escape might be used to good purpose. He counted twenty, then lifted the receiver again. With as near an imitation as he could give of the marked rasp in Devereux's voice, and speaking low and hurriedly, as if in perturbation, he called:

"Hello, Harry! What's wrong?"

"You sound as though things weren't oversmooth at your own end," was the answer. "Listen, Rolf! Don't fail on the clean-up this afternoon. And rush it. We're smashed if you don't. Buchanan got back to town half an hour ago—two days ahead of time. Rush things! If he ever gets wind of——"

Tiverton drew in his breath sharply between his teeth, as if in dire consternation—a conservative noise, and one that saved the need of verbal reply.

"I didn't get the tip till a minute ago," went on the speaker, "and I've let you know as soon as I could. I won't keep you. Chase back to the meeting. I suppose it's in full blast now, isn't it? I judge from your voice you're het up over it. Keep cool. It's a sure thing. And *rush!*"

With a grunt that might have expressed to his hearer almost anything except its utterer's identity, Tiverton hung up the receiver. Then, a few seconds later, giving the wire time to be cleared, he took it down again and called up Cyrus Q. Buchanan's private office. His employer answered him. In a dozen quick sentences Tiverton outlined the situation, and his own plight. To his wonder, the mining king showed no surprise, but said calmly:

"Stay where you are till I come."

Tiverton left the phone booth, closing its door lest some new summons of the bell reach the next room. Then he went to the partition and stood there. For fifteen minutes he stood thus, two-

thirds of the speech on its far side plainly audible to him.

Then a faint rattling noise caused him to turn. He looked around in time to see the door swing slowly open. On the threshold stood the burly, rugged figure of Mr. Buchanan. Tiverton was about to speak to his employer, but the latter, with a warning gesture, checked him and beckoned. Marveling, Arthur followed the mining king into the waiting room that opened into the main corridor, and out of the room in which Tiverton had been standing.

At the corner desk sat the office boy, vastly cowed and wide-eyed. Over him, a menacing sentry, stood Denny Cross. Buchanan held a bunch of office keys, with one of which he had evidently just unlocked the door of Tiverton's room. The turned-out pocket of the scared boy hinted how the keys had been obtained.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BOOBY TRAP.

DENNY!" exclaimed Tiverton, scarcely above a whisper, in deference to Buchanan's wordless warning. "Glad to see you. But what the dickens are you doing here?"

"Butting in," cheerily replied the chauffeur. "I got worried about you, Art, so I took a run down to your office. You didn't show up at four, so I got a message in to Mr. Buchanan. Just then you phoned him, and he let me come along. There's others coming, too," he went on, with a delightful air of mystery. "He phoned 'em, too, but he wouldn't wait for 'em. So——"

"Come on, Tiverton," interrupted Buchanan. "From the voices I suppose they're in there?"

He nodded toward the door of the reception room, and added: "Cross, stay here and keep that boy from giving the alarm. Let in the others when they come, and get rid of any chance callers."

"Sure," said Denny, with a grin. "I'm one of your dandiest little door-keepers; but I never thought I'd get a chance to hold down the job even for

five minutes under the direct orders of Cyrus Q. Buchanan."

"Come to my office to-morrow," said Mr. Buchanan, with a grim smile at the pleasantry, "and I'll give you a better job. I like your type of man. Come along, Tiverton."

"One moment, sir," said Arthur. "While I was waiting for you I heard enough through the partition to give me the hang of the game, I think. It is the same old trick—using a big man's name to lure a group of rural investors into getting in on the ground floor of a company that doesn't exist, taking up shares, and paying outright for them. Devereux is holding the subscription meeting in there now. He'll cash a dozen big checks to-morrow when the banks open; and an hour later he'll be hard to find."

"I think you're wrong," said Mr. Buchanan. "He'll be one of the easiest men in New York to find. The Tombs' ledger will be the only directory any one will need to consult for his address. Come!"

He walked to the reception-room door, opened it quietly, and walked in, Tiverton at his heels. The spring on the door closed it behind them.

Twelve or fifteen persons were seated in the room facing the desk at which sat Devereux. Among them were Florida Wesley—the only woman present—and the men whom Tiverton had seen as Devereux's fellow passengers on the two trips aboard the sight-seeing automobile. The others were of a like type—men whose looks bespoke prosperity, and whose bearing and mode of dress spoke rather of the village than of the city.

Devereux was speaking as the two newcomers entered. For the moment he did not see them, as he was facing obliquely away from the door.

"That, I think, is all," he was saying. "As I said, I am sorry Mr. Buchanan is detained in the West longer than he expected to be, and cannot keep his appointment to attend our meeting. But as his letter, that I've just read, tells us, it is on *our* business that he is there, and to clinch the consolidation that will

nearly treble the value of our stock. And now," producing a packet, a type-written list, and a fountain pen, "though it is a trifle informal, perhaps, I will receive your checks and issue the shares. Make them out to R. T. Devereux & Co., please. Not to me or to Mr. Buchanan. We——"

"Why not to Mr. Buchanan?" cut in the mine king. "I like to get all the easy money I can."

Every one turned. The up Staters frowned heavily at the intrusion. Florida Wesley started to her feet. Devereux sat moveless, tense, his eyes riveted on the newcomers. His face did not change a muscle. His self-control was superb.

"My old friend, Rolf Devereux," purred Buchanan. "How are you? Still under your own name, I see? Well, that's one point in your favor, and, I'm afraid, the only one. We haven't met, I think, since I had to discharge you six years ago for taking a more than neighborly interest in our customers' accounts."

Devereux made no reply. The herd of sheep, ripe for the shearing, looked from him to Buchanan, and back again in bewilderment.

"And now, it seems," went on Buchanan genially, "we're re-partners, you and I, in a mining deal, eh? And I'm just in time to get my share of the profits in a mine commodiously situated on a fake map? Fine! But best of all is that touch of yours in having a sight-seeing auto lecturer announce to your clients that my office is here instead of in the Cogghall Building. That was a real stroke of genius, my friend. Genius! For no out-of-towner would doubt the announcement of a public servant like a seeing New York lecturer. *He* couldn't possibly be in on the plot. You couldn't safely put my name on your door or on the directory board; but a rubberneck-coach announcer served quite as well. And it clinched these people's belief in you. So you gave them free rides, and the lecturer gave them false information—and in return they were going to give you good money. Well played!"

"Who is this man?" angrily demanded a fat country banker with a short, gray chin beard. "What is he driving at?"

"He's trying to explain," said Buchanan, laughing, "that Mr. Devereux is going to start in a few minutes for jail."

"You are mistaken," said Devereux coolly. "I must be caught before I can be jailed; and I've a fair start. Clear a way there, please." He drew from a desk drawer a blue-barreled revolver, and, swinging to his feet, raised it. "Clear the way to the door!" he commanded.

Two investors dived under chairs. A third yelled "Police!"

"Drop that just where you are, Mr. Devereux," said Florida Wesley, who stood a little to one side of the swindler. "Drop it, and don't shift your aim this way. If you do I'll get you first."

Her voice was sweet and low-pitched. Yet as Devereux involuntarily shifted his gaze in her direction he let the weapon fall from his hand. Miss Wesley had taken unobtrusively from a hand bag at her wrist a small but very businesslike automatic pistol; and its muzzle was in an uncomfortably direct line with Devereux's head.

In her big eyes there was a quiet intensity of meaning that no one could mistake. Wherefore Devereux, whose own revolver muzzle was not leveled in her direction, but on those who had stood between him and the door; thought it wise to obey her modest request. He stood disarmed, helpless, staring at her.

"Miss Wesley!" he gasped, his monumental calm for once utterly deserting him.

"Yes," she said, lowering her weapon, but still keeping him covered. "Miss Wesley—the girl from Cazenovia, Madison County, who came into her property last month, when she was twenty-one, and wrote a letter of inquiry about one of your circulars she chanced to see. Stand still, please, Mr. Devereux. Mr. Tiverton, may I trouble you to telephone for me to——"

"Miss Wesley!" again gasped Devereux incredulously.

"Of the United States secret service—and incidentally at your own," acknowledged the girl. "We have been at work over your doubtful use of the mails for some months, Mr. Devereux. And I think at last I have made the case complete. You would have been arrested by my associates anyway, as you left the building. But as they weren't to arrive for half an hour yet, I'll ask Mr. Tiverton to telephone to——"

"It isn't necessary," put in Mr. Buchanan, indicating two men that Denny Cross was ushering into the room. "Here are a couple of men I've had on this case. I phoned for them to come here just before I started. It is odd we both planned to make the arrest to-day, Miss Wesley, for to-morrow would have been too late. I judge so from the fact that Devereux locked up this secretary of mine, whom he seems to

have taken for a secret-service man, and whom he wanted to keep from bringing down the law on him until he could get clear with the checks. There's your man, officers."

"Yes," said Miss Wesley to Tiverton, on their way uptown, "I did think you were one of his confederates, when I found you knew where I lived; and I tested the belief by seeing what you'd do when I broke an appointment with you and went to the theater with him. But your face when I accepted his invitation told me how wretchedly mistaken I'd been. And, oh, I was so sorry!"

"But this evening I may call?" said Tiverton.

"This evening," she assented.

"And other evenings?"

"It is quite likely," said Miss Wesley, and they both laughed.

Fish in Railway Disaster

TO associate the killing of hundreds of trout with a railway accident seems strange, but such was the case at Okehampton, in England, a few months ago.

Two tanks of vitriol were standing at the extreme end of a siding against the stop blocks, overlooking the public roadway, when, by some oversight on the part of the shunter, an engine and trucks smashed into them, knocking down the block and sending the tanks crashing into the roadway.

The cover of one of the tanks flew off, and scores of gallons of the vitriol rushed down the hill, running into the river.

Then the execution began; large trout, little fellows, eels, stickles—in fact, every living fish for miles met a violent death. It was noticed that some of the eels in their death throes had wriggled far up the river bank, and in some large ponds the dead fish could be counted in hundreds.

Hard on the Barber

THE celebrated French poet, Saint-Foix, who, in spite of his large income, was always in debt, sat one day in a barber's shop waiting to be shaved. He was lathered, when the door opened and a tradesman entered who happened to be one of the poet's largest creditors. No sooner did this man see Saint-Foix than he angrily demanded his money. The poet composedly begged him not to make a scene.

"Won't you wait for the money until I am shaved?"

"Certainly," said the other, pleased at the prospect.

Saint-Foix then made the barber a witness of the agreement, and immediately took a towel, wiped the lather from his face, and left the shop. He wore a beard to the end of his days.



The Missing- What?

By
Roland Ashford Phillips.

THE assistant baggageman and general porter of the railroad station at Rock Siding was running up the street, scattering the chickens and mercilessly waking the dogs.

"Hey, constable!" he cried.

Nap Kent, his chair tilted against the sun-warmed wall of the barber shop, his hat pulled low on his forehead, and his pipe dangling from his mouth, opened one eye; then he started wide awake, for the breathless man was waving a telegram.

"For me?" he exclaimed, as the yellow envelope was thrust into his hand. "What is it, Joe?"

"From the sheriff at Branchville," replied Joe Rickers. "It just come, and Cooper said I was to bring it over." And he stood aside in respectful silence.

The constable adjusted his glasses, and scrutinized the address. Then he cleared his throat impressively. The receipt of a telegram was an event. Only once before had he been so honored; that was on the occasion when a distracted old lady had wired him with regard to a missing pet cat.

After he had satisfied himself that the message was actually intended for

him, Kent tore open the envelope and carefully read the three typewritten lines. This is what he read:

CONSTABLE KENT, Rock Siding: Lok up
Walter Sidwell, McCALLY.

Kent read and reread that one line. Then he turned to Rickers. "How do you spell lock, Joe?"

"L-o-c-k," replied Rickers, spelling it aloud for the constable's benefit.

"Do you suppose Cooper knows that?"

"I reckon he does. Why?"

"Guess he's slipped a cog on that typewritin' machine," observed Kent, his forehead wrinkling. "He's got it spelled l-o-k."

"Let's see," said Rickers.

The telegram was passed over and given a careful examination by the assistant baggageman. "Darn funny, ain't it?" he observed, scratching his head meditatively. "Cooper don't usually go wrong on that machine of his."

"I'll just go down to the station and find out for certain," declared Kent. "We can't afford to go guessin' when it comes to carryin' out the majesty of the law."

The constable pocketed the telegram, picked up his hat from the ground, and

went hurriedly down the road, followed closely by the perplexed Rickers.

"I say, Kent," Rickers inquired suddenly, "who in tarnation is this Walter Sidwell, anyhow? He don't belong in Rock Siding."

"He's a stranger to me," answered the other. "Most likely some crook from Branchville. But I'll find him if he's in the county," said Kent grimly. "'Tain't goin' to be said that Rock Sidin' is harborin' crooks—not so long as I'm constable here."

"That's right, Kent," observed Rickers. "They can't pull the wool over your eyes!"

The two men arrived at the station, out of breath. Rickers unlocked the door. "Darn me if I ain't been forgettin'," he said, stopping short in the doorway. "Cooper's gone down to see his sister in Middletown, and he won't be back till train time to-night."

"Can't you get into the office?" asked Kent.

"No. Cooper's got that key. He don't allow me to fool around near the telegraph contraption."

Kent tugged at his whiskers. "That's too bad. But still, I can't be wrong." He took out the telegram for the third time, and squinted over the contents. "Cooper must have meant lock, all right. And when old Sheriff McCally says lock a man up he means it. I'll just hunt up this Sidwell."

"By cracky!" exclaimed Rickers, snapping his fingers. "I just come to think on it! Don't that name suggest somethin' to you?"

"Can't say as it does," observed the constable. "Why?"

"There was a show troupe stopped off here this mornin'," the baggageman replied. "They was six men and three ladies and a hull pile of trunks."

II.

KENT'S eyes snapped. "That's it, Joe! This fellow is one of them troupers. I might have known it. They're all a bad lot, the play actors, chasin' around the country. And they're

up to all kinds of tricks. Where did they put up? American House?"

"Yep. I took up the stuff myself—six trunks."

Kent reflectively fingered the big star that was pinned on his suspender. "I'll just go up that way and look at things."

With this he turned and marched up the road in the direction of the hotel. In the lobby he walked to the register, and, after adjusting his glasses, peered at the list of the day's arrivals.

"Hello, constable," said Prout, the proprietor. "What's ailin' you? Got a murder mystery?"

Kent ignored the question. "I see you got a man here by the name of Sidwell," he declared, planting his finger on a heavy signature. "Walter Sidwell."

"Yep," responded the other. "He belongs to the show. They're goin' to give us a mighty darn good show to-night. I been talkin' with the manager, and he gave me a couple of passes."

"Where they at now?" demanded the impatient Kent.

"In the bar." Prout's face lengthened as the constable started toward the swinging door. "Looky here, Kent, you ain't aimin' to make trouble for the——"

"I got to carry out the law," interrupted Kent, "no matter how painful it is."

He pushed his way into the other room, where half a dozen men were lined up against the bar. The constable looked them over with sharp, inquisitive eyes. "Is one of you named Sidwell?" he demanded.

"That's my name," said a quiet, well-dressed young man, who at once stepped forward. "Want to see me?"

"I do," declared Kent, flipping back his coat and disclosing his badge of office. "You're under arrest!"

"What's that?" cried Sidwell. "Under arrest?"

"That's what I said, young fellow," replied Kent. "I'm the constable of Rock Siding, and I'm the voice of the law. Will you come peaceful, or will I have to use force?"

The other men instantly crowded around the two speakers. "See here," exclaimed one of them; "there's a mistake somewhere! Sidwell is a member of our company! We're playing at the opera house to-night, and——"

"I can't help that," interrupted Kent, "and I don't want to hear any arguments. I said this fellow was under arrest, and I meant it."

"Is this a joke?" demanded another man. "What sort of a game are you working? Sidwell can't be the man you're looking for."

"Don't you go triflin' with the law," Kent warned him, "or I'll run the whole outfit in!" He gripped Sidwell's wrist. "Come along, young fellow!"

But the prisoner twisted himself free. "This is absurd," he protested angrily. "I don't intend to submit to arrest by any tin-star constable. These men are friends of mine, and they'll stand back of me. What'll you——"

But Constable Kent wasted no time replying. His right arm shot out and caught the speaker under the chin. Sidwell whirled about like a top and went crashing to the floor, upsetting a table as he did so. Two of the other men jumped in; but Kent was prepared. His awkward-looking arms flashed this way and that, and in a few seconds both of them were sprawling amid the débris of broken china.

"Resist the law, will you?" cried Kent, his eyes flashing and his chin whiskers working frantically. "I'll show you what resistin' the law in this town means. I may be a tin-star constable, and all that, but I ain't forgot how to use my fists. Come on, the whole lot of yer!"

But the "whole lot" were reluctant to accept the offer. Sidwell was scrambling to his feet, both hands clasped to his bruised chin; the two who had attempted to defend him were sitting on the floor several yards away. They made no move to repeat their former experience. The rest of the group had backed away out of respect to Kent's flying fists.

With a toss of his head, Kent walked over to his prisoner and took a firm

hold of his coat collar. "Now, young fellow, march! You'll learn after this that you can't treat the law with impunity!" At the door he turned to face the others. "I'm Napoleon Kent, constable of Rock Siding! Just remember that while you're in town!"

And while the crowd looked dumbly on, he half dragged, half pushed the unfortunate Walter Sidwell out of the bar, through the lobby, and down the street to the jail. Here, after he had turned the key in the lock, he removed his hat and mopped his forehead.

"I guess that question is settled," he observed to no one in particular. "When Sheriff McCally tells me to lock a man up, he can depend upon me doin' so if it takes a leg."

III.

AN hour later, while Constable Kent was reading a copy of the *Branchville Bugle*, he was interrupted by the entrance of a red-faced, silk-hatted individual, who, without knocking, stamped into the little office.

"Are you the man who locked up a member of my company?" demanded the irate intruder.

"I'm Constable Kent," replied that gentleman. "What can I do for you?"

"Well, you can release Mr. Sidwell at once! At once, understand? This arrest is an outrage!"

Kent tugged at his whiskers. "Who may you be?"

"I'm John Hamilton, manager of the Peerless Dramatic Company! And I want you to understand that I object to your——"

"Hold on!" interrupted Kent. "You got too much to say for your own good. I locked up Walter Sidwell—and he stays locked up till I get word from Sheriff McCally."

"But my performance to-night!" cried the manager. "I can't ring up until Sidwell is released!"

"I can't help that," replied the unperturbed Kent. "The execution of the law is sometimes inconvenient, but it——"

"I tell you it's an outrage," inter-

rupted the other. "Sidwell isn't a criminal. Why should he be arrested like this and dragged to jail? What has he done?"

"I don't know what he's done," replied Kent. "I only followed the instructions I received from Sheriff McCally. He telegraphed me to lock up Walter Sidwell—and I done so!"

"But it's a mistake, I tell you."

"Didn't your troupe play in Branchville yesterday?" inquired Kent.

"Yes, we did. What has that to do with the case?"

"Sheriff McCally is in Branchville—that's where the telegram come from. He knows what it's about—I don't. You'll have to wait till I hear from him."

John Hamilton, of the Peerless Dramatic Company, groaned. "Let's see that telegram you got? I'm sure you've arrested the wrong man."

Kent brought out the slip of yellow paper and extended it to the other. Hamilton read it over; then he broke into a contemptuous laugh, as he saw the puzzling "lok." "Why, just look here!" he said. "This explains matters. The telegraph operator has made the error. The message reads: 'Look up Walter Sidwell.'"

"What's that?" Kent jumped to his feet and snatched away the telegram. He stared at the mysterious word that began the sentence. A new light began to filter into his brain; he had never thought of such a possibility existing before. Had McCally meant "look" instead of "lock"?

"It's as plain as the beard on your face," continued the manager. "If you had an ounce of brains you would have noticed it yourself. The operator skipped a letter in the first word; he meant to write 'look,' but he must have been in a hurry, or he didn't know how to use his machine, and wrote 'lok.' Great heavens!" he exclaimed. "You haven't really arrested an innocent man on the strength of this, have you?"

Kent felt himself losing ground. The manager's argument did not sound so improbable, after all. "I figured it meant 'lock,'" said Kent, his voice not

so certain. "Still, it might have been the other way. We'll just go down to the office and find out for sure."

The two men went rapidly down the street to the railway station. The night train was already in. When the men were within a block of the depot the engine whistled sharply, and the train moved out of the yard. Kent saw a familiar figure board it. He dashed forward, waving his arms and yelling. But the effort proved a futile one. The train disappeared in the dusk, and the telegraph operator, Cooper, was standing on the platform of the rear coach.

"We're too late," announced Kent, mopping his forehead. "The operator took that train, and he won't be back until mornin'. We'll have to let matters rest till——"

"You can't hold my man in jail all night," protested the manager; "at least, not on the strength of this fool message. If you do, there'll be trouble. You mark what I'm saying, too."

Kent began to look at the matter from another viewpoint. False imprisonment was not a thing to be lightly treated. He studied over the situation while they walked back to the jail. Finally a happy thought crossed his mind.

"Maybe we can arrange bail," he suggested.

"Nonsense!" expostulated the manager. "You let Sidwell out and I'll be responsible."

"It's agin' the law," protested Kent, with a shake of his head. "The magistrate ain't in town to-day, but I can attend to the thing."

Hamilton became more enraged. "Of all the wooden-headed boobs, you're the worst!" he cried. "I'd like to pull that paint brush you got fastened on your chin. I never heard——"

Kent's firm hand descended upon the speaker's arm. "If you say much more I'll lock you up for contempt! I may be a boob, and maybe my beard looks like a paint brush, but, by cracky! I'm the constable of Rock Siding, and my word's law!"

There was something in Kent's tone that calmed the manager of the Peer-

less Dramatic Company. Perhaps he had heard of the mêlée at the American House bar; or perhaps the constable's fingers had dug a trifle deep into his arm.

"Well," he began in a milder tone, "I don't see what right you got to demand bail. You're running a big chance in arresting this man. You better let him out—and we'll call the thing settled."

"We'll see what the prisoner has to say," said Kent. He walked down the hall, unlocked a cell, and came back leading Sidwell by the arm. With his collar gone, his shirt ripped, his clothes soiled, and one eye swollen, the prisoner presented anything but an attractive appearance.

"I'm goin' to let you out to-night," Kent said to him, "providin' you can raise bail."

"How much?" sullenly asked the prisoner.

"Oh, about a thousand dollars!"

"What!" The astounded manager raised his clenched hands ceilingward. "It's outrageous, that's what it is! There isn't that much money in the whole blamed town!"

"I ain't so particular as to its bein' money," said the grinning constable. "Maybe you got a couple of watches or some rings, or a——"

"You must think I'm a walking jewelry store," retorted Sidwell, interrupting Kent. "I haven't a thousand dollars, or a decent watch," he added, "but I have got a ring—if you'll accept it."

"Let's see it," said Kent.

Sidwell fumbled through his pockets, and finally produced a heavy ring, elaborately carved, containing three sparkling stones set about an elaborately cut sapphire disk. This he passed over to the waiting constable.

"It's an heirloom," he asserted; "and it's worth ten times a thousand dollars to me. Will you accept it as bail?"

Kent examined it with deep and critical concern. "Yep," he said at last. "I'll take the chance. But, remember, you got to be here to-morrow mornin' at ten o'clock!"

Sidwell smiled. "You should worry,"

he replied, as, accompanied by his manager, he moved toward the door. "I'd rather serve a ten-year sentence than lose that ring. It belonged to my father."

Kent said nothing, but kept turning the bit of jewelry over and over in his fingers. Once outside the door, the manager clutched Sidwell's arm.

"For the love of Patrick!" he exclaimed. "Where did you get hold of that sparkler?"

Sidwell laughed. "It's a phony!" he said. "I got it off a dealer in crackajack imitations in New York last summer. Forgot I had it until the rube suggested rings."

"Well, the boob swallowed it, all right, didn't he?" remarked Hamilton. "These rural constables are jokes. I'll bet he won't sleep to-night for fear of being robbed."

IV.

AT nine o'clock the following morning Hamilton knocked on Sidwell's door. He entered to find the actor up and dressed, and engaged in packing a suit case.

"What are you going to do about this fool arrest?" the manager inquired anxiously. "That dunce of a constable might make all kinds of trouble for us. How do you suppose that sheriff in Branchville ever got you mixed up in this affair?"

"I pass it up!" replied Sidwell. "And the trouble is, we can't hang around this burg for the thing to be cleared up. I'm going to take matters in my own hands, and trust to luck. There's a train passing through here at ten o'clock. It'll land me at Dover. From there I can circle around and meet you and the company in Spring Valley in time for the evening performance."

"That isn't a bad idea," observed Hamilton thoughtfully. "I'll tell the constable that you disappeared. And before night the whole affair will have blown over."

"Sure it will. We'll let the constable keep the phony ring. He'll probably

hush up matters and congratulate himself at winning the jewelry."

At about half past nine Sidwell slipped out of the hotel, took a round-about way, and reached the railroad station as the train was entering the yards. He hurriedly bought a ticket, and was stepping upon the platform of the nearest coach when a heavy hand descended to his shoulder, and a familiar voice sounded in his ears.

"So you thought you'd jump bail, did you?"

Sidwell whirled to face the constable of Rock Siding. "I'm not jumping bail," he protested. "I intended coming back after lunch. I've an appointment in Dover, and——"

"You'd better keep the one in this town first," interrupted Kent. "Get down. The train's startin'."

"Look here," cried Sidwell, as Kent jerked him from the platform, "how long is this nonsense going to continue? You know I'm not the man you want."

"Well," said Kent, "maybe I don't want you—but McCally does. And when he tells me to lock you up, I got to do it."

"But you know that telegram was a mistake," remonstrated the actor. "My manager pointed it out to you last night."

The train was moving out of the station, and Sidwell saw that his ruse had been nipped in the bud. He was beside himself with rage, but with the previous day's experience fresh in his mind, he did not attempt any physical demonstration.

"You'll pay for this!" he exclaimed. "You've no authority to detain me on such——"

"Hello!" broke in Cooper, the telegraph operator, who had left his office to see what was happening. "What's the excitement, constable?"

"You're just the fellow I been tryin' to get hold of," said Kent. "Do you remember the telegram you had Joe Rickers give me yesterday?"

"Sure I do. You mean the one from Sheriff McCally?"

"Yes. You didn't have the first word spelled right."

"Is that so?" Cooper frowned. "Well, I know what it was. It said: 'Look up Walter Sidwell.'"

"There, I told you so!" exclaimed the prisoner. "I told you it was that way. And now you've made all this trouble I hope——"

"Are you sure the first word was 'look'?" interrupted Kent, paying no attention to the enraged Sidwell.

"Sure as I'm standing here!" responded the operator. "I'll prove it to you. Come along inside a minute!"

The three men went into the office. Cooper thumbed over a batch of duplicate messages.

"There you are!" He thrust a yellow slip of paper under the constable's nose. "It says: 'Look up Walter Sidwell,' doesn't it?"

Constable Kent squinted at the handwritten line, then nodded. "I guess you're right, Cooper," he admitted, with apparent reluctance. "But you copied it on the typewriter 'l-o-k,' and I thought you meant 'lock.'"

"Great snakes!" exclaimed Cooper. "And you went and locked this man up?"

"That's just what he did," broke in Sidwell. "I told him he was wrong, but he wouldn't listen. It's an insult the way I've been treated. And you can just bet I'm going to bring it to the attention of the authorities. This man will lose his job!"

Cooper shook his head. "It looks like a bad mess," he said. "You shouldn't have done it, Kent."

The constable scratched his head in perplexity. "Well, the thing's been done. There ain't no use cryin' over spilled milk. I guess you'd better come along with me, anyhow, Sidwell. Maybe we can clear up the matter when we——"

"What's that?" cried Sidwell. "Are you still going to keep me in charge? Can't you see you've made enough mess without adding to it?"

"I know," said the constable; "but I can't let you go now. Maybe by tomorrow, when I hear from McCally."

"Better let the man go right now,"

suggested Cooper. "You'll only make matters worse. You've no legal right to hold him."

But Kent was stubborn. The protests of the operator and the prisoner fell upon deaf ears. So fifteen minutes later Sidwell was locked in the cell he had occupied the previous day, and the constable was sitting in the office with his feet cocked up on the desk.

Ignorant of the actor's fate, the Peerless Dramatic Company, bag, baggage, and manager, left Rock Siding on the noon train. Twenty minutes later an automobile whirled down Main Street in a cloud of dust, and drew up in front of the jail. A man leaped from the rear seat and broke in upon the constable.

"Hello, Kent," he cried. "Did you get that telegram I sent yesterday?"

"I did, sheriff," replied Kent, removing his feet from the desk and shaking hands with his visitor.

"I tried to get you a dozen times last night," McCally went on to say, "but your blamed telegraph office was shut up. My man at Branchville made a devil of a mistake. I just found it out late last night. I wired you to lock up a certain Walter Sidwell, and the fool in my office sent the telegram as 'Look up Walter Sidwell.' I suppose the fellow's cleared out by this time."

Constable Kent betrayed none of the excitement he must have felt. "Oh, I looked up the fellow," he explained, "but I didn't find out much. What did you want to know about him?"

"Why, this Sidwell is a crook—one of the smartest in the business, too. He's traveling with a cheap theatrical company, and pulls off different jobs along his route. In Branchville he

broke into a jewelry store, and got away with a trayful of stuff. I thought he was headed here, so I wired you to lock him up. I imagined you had, until my man showed me the duplicate telegram, and I saw he'd sent it reading 'Look up Sidwell.' Then I knew if Sidwell got wise to the fact that he was being spotted by an officer, he'd dig out for good. Did you ever hear of such infernal luck?"

Kent smiled, and tugged at his whiskers. "Guess 'tain't as bad as you think, sheriff. I locked up Sidwell on general principles. He's right here now."

Sheriff McCally jumped to his feet. "You *did* lock him up?" he cried. "Bully for you, Kent! How did you happen to do it? You didn't have authority."

"I didn't have authority," admitted the constable, "but I had an all-fired lot of suspicion. I got hold of a Branchville paper yesterday, and read that the jewelry store had been robbed of a batch of stuff."

"Funny thing about it," remarked McCally; "Sidwell took some imitations along with the real stuff. Never knew the difference, I guess, until later."

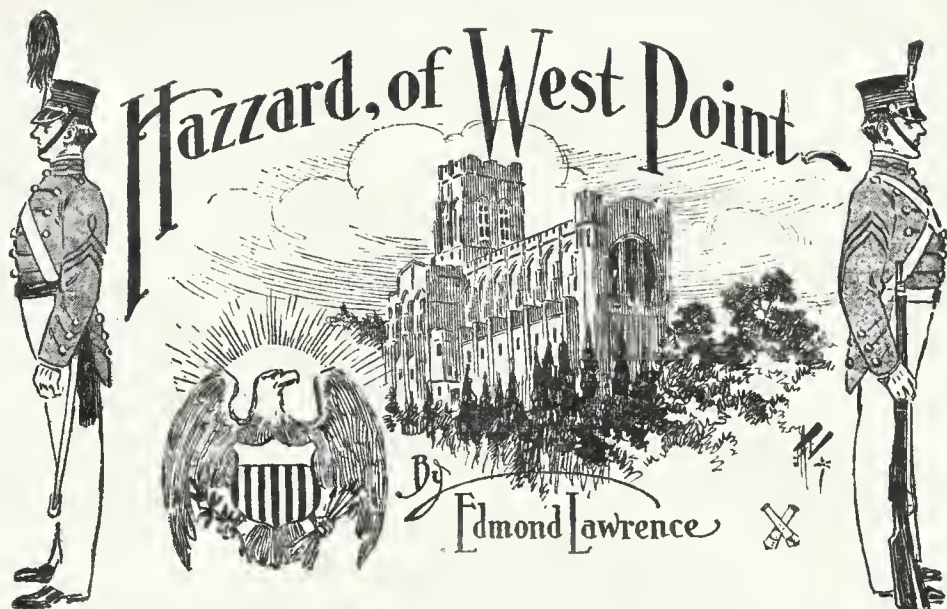
Kent nodded. "That's just what the paper said. And last night Sidwell gave me one of the phony rings for bail. I let him go; but I soon found out that the diamond was a fake, and this mornin' I nabbed him when he was tryin' to get out of town on the ten-o'clock train."

"Kent," said McCally, "you're a wonder!"

"I was bound to get even with Sidwell," said the officer of the law. "He called me a tin-star constable."

Even Better

THERE was a young waitress named Myrtle,
 Who carried a plate of mock turtle,
 When, strange to relate,
 She tripped, and the plate
 That once was mock turtle turned turtle.



FORMER CHAPTERS.

If you missed the earlier installments of this story, here they are in abridged form.

RODERICK HAZZARD, a cadet captain at West Point, while acting as officer of the day, interferes when a masked cadet tries to run the guard by intimidating a "plebe" sentinel. The masked man knocks Hazzard down and escapes, vowing to get even with him for interfering. Hazzard is lured outside the lines at night by a ruse, and before he can get back to quarters the reveille gun is fired—a favorite trick of mischief-makers. He is captured and accused of firing the gun, and reduced to the ranks. Cadet Buell Guernsey Bucknell being appointed captain in his place.

Hazzard's chum, Dion O'Hare, suspects Bucknell of causing the trouble, and fights him, but is whipped. Later, Hazzard catches Bucknell hazing the plebe, Robin Blair, and challenges him to a fight. He thrashes Bucknell, but later he is summoned to the cadet court of honor; his coat has been picked up near the scene of the fight, and some articles of jewelry found in it which had been stolen from cadets. He refuses to answer to the disgraceful charge, and the cadets sentence him to "Coventry"—no cadet may associate with him or speak to him, except in the discharge of duty. Hazzard is crushed by the humiliation, but he resolves to bide his time and try to forget his woe in strenuous football training.

Hazzard is to play in the Army-Navy game, in Philadelphia, but Bucknell enters his room in the hotel on the night before the game and drugs him. O'Hare catches Bucknell in the act, and in the fight which

follows the hotel is set on fire. By threatening instant exposure of his villainy, O'Hare makes Bucknell promise not to play in the game, but he breaks the promise, and plays a brilliant game until he sees Hazzard appear on the field. The sight breaks him up and he is taken out, while Hazzard is put in his place. Hazzard wins the game for the Army team.

O'Hare and Blair testify against Bucknell at a court-martial, and he is dismissed from West Point. Cadet Blair is so humiliated at the trial that he resolves to leave the Point, and Hazzard advises him to go and make a new start at the Panama Canal, in which his enthusiasm has been aroused by his father's old friend, Colonel Roger Outram. Bucknell tells Hazzard that he can prove that O'Hare is the mysterious jewelry thief, and that he will do so if Hazzard does not leave West Point. So Hazzard, to save his friend, joins Blair in starting for Panama. They meet Colonel Outram in New York, and he sends them to act as detectives for the government on a tramp steamer bound for Panama with a cargo of dynamite.

CHAPTER XV.

THE STOWAWAY.

IN the night, early in the second dogwatch, a dark shadow stole over the silent pier, slid past the watchman on duty, and up to the side of the tramp steamer *Flying Guetzal*. The hand-over-hand climb up the thick

hawser was difficult and dangerous, especially where rat funnels blocked the rope. But the stowaway made it, and reached the concealment of a capstan. From there he glided to an open hatchway and down to the deck below, where he felt safe for the time.

As a tugboat came up to take the steamer out of the harbor, Hazzard heard two ship's officers, who were standing at the neck of the hatch, talk of going over both holds for stowaways. Therefore, as the tug made fast and valiantly shouldered the big ship out of the North River, he came up out of the hold and dashed across the deck to the foremast. He chose a moment when the crew and the few passengers were taking last looks astern at the New York shore line to make the break, but even then it was a long shot. He made the fore stick, however, and desperately clambered up to the crow's nest. There he crouched, out of sight of those below. It was a tight place, but the only safe one on the whole ship at the moment.

After the tugboat left he breathed easier. The only way he could be sent back to New York now would be for the *Guetzal* to speak some ingoing ship to take him aboard.

That night the lookout went up the fore stick, and found a half-frozen man in the crow's nest. It was hours before Hazzard was in good shape again, and even then he was content to lie under warm blankets in the forecabin. He knew that he was safe from the officers that night, for the men before the mast are inclined to treat stowaways kindly, so he slept peacefully.

Next morning he was aroused by the voice of Styles roaring down the companion:

"Avast there, you stowaway squab!"

Hazzard, feeling somewhat ill, floundered as quickly as he could to the deck.

"So you did ship with us, after all, you spy! Well, we'll show you! You put your teeth into the wrong biscuit, my buckaroo."

Before Hazzard could evade him, he had him by the nape of the neck, and ran him along the deck ignominiously.

The stowaway could do nothing to help himself with that grip on him.

When they stopped, Hazzard looked up in the face of a tall man with a bulbous nose that was positively blue. His face was wrinkled, and his eyes seemed to be just deeper wrinkles in an evil face.

"Captain Piper, this is the spy I told you about!"

"Ah, so this is Outram's man," Piper said, with a leer. "Here on board to watch us, eh? You hired bloodhound! Styles, give him a taste of how we treat watchdogs of his stamp! A taste, Mr. Styles! Make him afraid."

"Aye, aye, sir!" said Styles, letting go of his captive.

Hazzard side-stepped warily, but the big mate wheeled, and caught him about the body. The two went down on the deck together, Hazzard underneath.

The mate was up first. Then Captain Piper barked:

"Kick him, Styles! Kick him! Jump on him!"

Any other man would have detested such work and refused; not so the mate. He lifted one foot for a vicious kick.

"Shame, shame!" a voice suddenly cried. "Shame on you, you brutes! Kicking that man!"

Hazzard rose to his feet, and turned to see the speaker. A slender young girl in a white middie blouse and navy-blue skirt was standing in the companionway behind Captain Piper. Her pretty face was white with righteous wrath, and her violet eyes big with horror. Evidently she was unused to such scenes of violence, yet a girl brave enough to express her feelings boldly.

Bucknell was with her, and he spoke up: "Why, Miss Clayborn, you mustn't interfere. The mate is only giving that stowaway the beating he deserves."

Miss Clayborn turned on him with flashing eyes. "Mr. Bucknell, if that's the kind of a man you are, you are a disgrace to West Point, and it's well you left."

Bucknell winced, but did not answer. The indignant girl turned to Styles and

Captain Piper. "I shall call my father at once if you strike that man again," she said.

Piper snarled and stamped the deck in a black rage, but he had to order Styles away. He dared not say a word to Miss Clayborn, because he knew that her father was in a position to have him severely punished for any misconduct.

Hazzard returned to the fore-castle. Shortly after noon, Styles sent for him, and he was put to work. Determined to take out their spite on him in the worst way they could, they set him to scrubbing decks. Down on his knees, he slaved every day at this back-breaking task. His hands cramped in the icy water, and his muscles and bones ached terribly from the long hours bent over the deck with a swab. When darkness fell, it brought no respite. One deck done, Rod was ordered to another to scrub that all over again. It was often ten o'clock when the starved and weary slave was gruffly ordered to go below. The next morning he would be aroused at daybreak to begin again his laborious task.

Hazzard realized that it was merely a despicable attempt to torture him, but he kept silent; for, in the meantime, he had been able to do his real work. Each night he had taken a look over the cargo to see that all was safe. And while at work he had his eyes and ears open for anything suspicious. So, although he knelt all day long, and scrubbed decks for Styles, he also watched and listened outside of companionways and open hatches as he had promised to do for Colonel Outram. Strangely enough, he saw nothing of Blair; it was evident that his comrade had secured an effectual hiding place.

Bucknell made it a point to pass Hazzard as often as possible, and taunt him while at his scrubbing. "Ah, Hazzard," he would say, "how does the ex-cadet hero like hard graft? Takes the ram-rod out of your back, eh? Don't feel so spick and span, do you? Some come-down; but, believe me, you'll get lower than this. It's just your sort that does."

CHAPTER XVI.

HAZZARD IN ACTION.

YOU'RE a sensible man. Why not go in with us? You won't have to do anything, only keep your eyes closed and your mouth shut. We will do all the work and take all the risk. All we want you for is a witness."

Hazzard was quietly climbing up the ladder to the bridge with the captain's coffee when he overheard these words, and he stopped suddenly. For some reason, unknown to him, he had been relieved of the scrubbing task, and been given the post of cabin boy. It was one of his duties to take coffee to Captain Piper each night at half past ten o'clock.

"Well, captain," said a voice, "I'm not down here for my health. Your price suits me to a T. I'll swear the dynamite exploded, and we went to kingdom come and back. You can depend on me."

It was Bucknell's voice, and that was all Hazzard was able to hear, so after a minute's waiting, he coughed slightly, then proceeded up the ladder. Neither the captain nor Bucknell suspected that he had heard them.

The *Flying Guetzal* was steaming through the West Indies now. It was a breathless, tropic night, with great, brilliant stars hung low in the deep, blue heavens, and purple shadows all about on the glowing waters. These purple shadows were the keys—the thousands of palmy, coral keys of the West Indies. The tramp seemed to have swung miles off the beaten path to take a shorter but more dangerous course through the maze of shoals.

As Hazzard was returning to the cabin, he heard Colonel Clayborn tell his daughter:

"That, my dear, is Cape Verde." Then, as another crescent of purple keys rose to view, he said: "That is Flamingo Key, the next is Seal Key, and the one ahead is Jamaica Key. Then those you see ahead now are the Sisters, Bonavia and Ragged Isle. Before long we should pass the Little

Brothers. Beyond them are Columbus Bank and Dangerous Isle."

Colonel Clayborn at this point addressed the mate, who was passing. They talked in undertones, but Rod heard them clearly:

"Mr. Styles, I surveyed through these waters before the Cuban war, and I know that Dangerous Ledge is not far ahead of us. That is a very unsafe place to cruise at night. Many ships have piled up on Dangerous Ledge. Why is it that you are in these treacherous waters, so far from the regular passage?"

"Why, we tramps most always use the Crooked Island Passage," answered Styles rather sullenly. Then he walked on, apparently not caring to continue the conversation.

Rod went below and entered the low, close-smelling fore-castle quietly, to avoid waking the sleepers. He lay down on his bunk, but did not intend to go to sleep, for it would soon be time for him to make his regular nightly inspection of the cargo. But the fatigue of the long hours at scrubbing was too much for him, and in spite of his efforts to keep awake he fell into a sound sleep.

He was awakened by a sudden shock that made the steel ship tremble fearfully. He leaped from his cot, wide awake at once.

With astonishment, he noticed that all the other occupants of the fore-castle had already gone. He didn't stop to ponder on the strange circumstance, but went dashing up the fore-castle ladder, which was now pitched at an angle of forty-five degrees to port. Gaining the deck, he saw that it stood up before him like a mountainside, with the bridge, deck houses, and stacks leaning crazily to port. It was evident that the ship had run onto a reef.

Excitement and confusion reigned on deck. Men dashed in every direction. The mate and the second mate bellowed orders from different parts of the ship, while Captain Piper bawled confusing commands from the bridge.

Miss Clayborn, wrapped in a dressing gown, and clinging with fear to her father, passed the mate, Styles.

"We're on Columbus Bank! We're stuck on Dangerous Ledge! We're sinking!" Styles howled at them.

Hazzard kept cool, and surveyed the situation. All about were blue-black keys, nearer than ever he had seen them before. Close alongside, the water was capped with white foam, indicating a great line of hidden coral reefs. The *Guetzal's* bow was far above the stern, and leaned heavily to port. There was no doubt that the ship had rammed a ledge, but she did not seem to be sinking. Styles had lied. Why?

Before Hazzard had time to debate further, Styles panted dramatically to the after port-quarter boat. "Man the lifeboats!" he cried. "Man the lifeboats!"

But the men only appeared more confused, and were seemingly panic-stricken. In the chorus of voices, however, Hazzard heard only one, the cook's, that expressed real fear. The rest, he told himself, were only pretending.

Finally the lifeboat was lowered. Styles produced a huge revolver, and flourished it as he cried, in the voice of a scared boy speaking a piece at school:

"Stand back! The girl and her father go first! If any of you don't wait, you're dead! That's all!"

The second mate led the trembling girl and the colonel into the boat. Then he called to Bucknell to enter after them. Bucknell looked straight at Miss Clayborn, drew himself up, and said:

"No! I will stay with the ship to the last. Let those who fear go."

At this display of heroism a murmur of awe came from the officers and men. Hazzard laughed.

The frightened cook and four sailors entered the boat. Styles turned on Hazzard and brandished his revolver. Hazzard entered the boat with the second mate at his heels.

As the boat pulled away from the steamer and shot across the glistening water to port, the second mate drew a revolver and faced Hazzard. "Hump your back, you spy, and pull on that oar," he said in a low voice, intended only for the man addressed.

Hazzard obeyed the order and pulled. Also he watched.

Straight for Key San Domingo the boat headed. Just before they rounded the low, palm-jungled island to windward and passed from sight of the *Guetzal*, Hazzard took a look at the ship. With a grim smile he noted that no other boat had put off, but that again men rushed about the deck. This time, however, it was not in panic, but as men who toil in great haste. He decided it was time to act. Watching his chance, when the second mate was shouting a command at one of the sailors, he reached over, struck his wrist a sharp blow, and sent the revolver spinning into the water.

The second mate jumped for him with a roar. He side-stepped neatly, and swung for the fellow's jaw, and the mate tumbled overboard with a splash. Hazzard leaped to stern and dived. When he came up, several yards away, he saw that the sailors were too busy rescuing their second mate to pay any attention to him. He settled down for his long swim back to the *Guetzal*.

On the starboard side of the ship he made a discovery—the anchor was down. The *Guetzal* had glided up to the reef at slow speed, climbed easily a short distance, and then the anchor had been dropped to hold her there. At any moment the anchor could be lifted, the screws reversed, and the ship could slip off the reef, practically undamaged.

With an amused smile, Hazzard began climbing the anchor chain. In a minute he had reached the deck, crept unnoticed past the busy men who scurried over it, and gained a stateroom aft.

In his cautious trip across the dimly lighted deck he had seen enough to inform him of the plotters' intentions. The whole crew was engaged in getting the valuable cargo of dynamite out of the hold. He had heard Styles' voice come from below, shouting to Captain Piper, who, with shaded lantern, stood over the hatches and supervised the men who piled the fifty-pound boxes of dynamite on the deck. It was evident that the plotters intended to steal the cargo, then limp into Colon and make

the claim that it had been thrown overboard to save the ship.

Dripping wet, Hazzard stood in the stateroom, and, while formulating a plan of action, looked out at the scene before him. Suddenly a rocket, with an angry hiss and a flash of flame, shot up from the bridge, and went flaring into the dark sky. It was followed by another and another in quick succession. Then a dark figure climbed down the ladder and approached Captain Piper.

"Fine fireworks, Mr. Bucknell!" the captain said. "Those beggarly beach combers are late, but that signal will get them sure. Hey! There is the answer already!"

As Captain Piper spoke, a bonfire burst suddenly into flame on the nearest key. In a moment seven small boats shot from their concealment, and came racing over the water toward the *Guetzal*. Hazzard knew that the time for him to strike was at hand.

Cautiously he struck a match, and looked around the stateroom. It was Bucknell's room. There were his bags on the floor, his clothes on the wall, and his guns in the corner. He picked up a rifle, made sure it was loaded, and slipped from the stateroom. Again he passed the hurrying workers unseen, and reached the ladder. Then, rifle in hand, and now in full view of Captain Piper and his men, he boldly climbed up to the bridge. Not one of the hurrying, excited schemers saw him.

From the high bridge, Hazzard looked down at the fore-castle head with its cargo of dynamite piled in tiers on all sides of the hatchway. Down in the hold he could see the sweating men and the mate, Styles, with his lantern.

Now the crew on deck crowded to the starboard bulwark. Hazzard looked, and saw that the small boats had come alongside. The boats were lighters, such as are used in most West Indian harbors to unload ships too large to approach very near the land. They were manned by ragged negroes, dark-skinned spongers, and beach combers. In the first lighter was a dark-mustached man wearing a panama hat and

white duck clothes. He scrambled aboard.

"Ah, Don Ernesto Omelas!" greeted Captain Piper, with an evil cackle that was intended for a laugh. "So you are in time for once with your bunch of wreckers!"

He turned to his men: "Throw down the ropes!"

Bucknell was one of several who threw down the ropes to lash the first lighter alongside. This done, Captain Piper's crew began cautiously to lower a fifty-pound box of dynamite to the outstretched hands of the West Indian negroes in the lighter.

One box was placed in the lighter in this way; then a shout of authority came from the bridge.

To a man, the plotters whirled in fear and looked up just in time to see Hazzard lower his rifle and aim it at the dynamite boxes in the hold of the ship. Then a cool, steady voice rang out:

"Stop! Make one move and I'll blow up the ship and every one of you thieves!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TURN OF THE TIDE.

EVERY man of the half hundred below went white and trembling as the full meaning of Hazzard's terrible threat dawned on them. Keeping the heavy rifle aimed at the dynamite, he addressed Captain Piper.

"Order away the lighters!" he commanded. "There will be no more unloading until we reach Colon."

But the cowardly Omelas and his crew of fear-shaken half savages did not wait for the captain's order. Hazzard's threat was enough for them. Omelas started to climb down to his lighter, and his men began to cast off the ropes that lashed it to the ship.

But they stopped suddenly. For at that moment something startling happened. The mate, Styles, did an insanely desperate thing. He whipped out his revolver and took quick aim at the man on the bridge. Murder was in his blazing eyes.

Hazzard saw the move. His hands tightened on the rifle in what he told himself was his death grip. It all happened in a fraction of a second, but in that flash of time Hazzard realized that the crazed Styles would shoot. And he determined that the instant Style's revolver cracked, he would send a rifle bullet crashing into the dynamite boxes.

Even the wildest imagination could not picture the appalling horror of the terrible explosion that would follow, yet his finger tightened on the rifle trigger.

Then, at that breathless instant, there came an interruption that neither Styles nor Hazzard had figured on. Bucknell was standing by Styles when he drew his revolver. In a flash he saw what the mate was about to do.

Under the circumstances, it was a brave thing that Bucknell did. Fear had paralyzed him, but in the face of certain death even cowards sometimes become desperate and do courageous things.

Bucknell sprang at Styles with a lightning leap. So quick was he that before Styles could shoot he tore the revolver from his hand.

"You fool!" he gasped. "That's suicide! Do you want us all wiped off the earth?"

Styles started to curse Bucknell for interfering.

"Shut up!" Bucknell bellowed at him. "Even if you shot him first, he would fire that rifle, just as he said he would. You don't know Hazzard as I do!"

Even in that perilous moment, when he had just escaped a terrible death, Hazzard could not help smiling at the compliment thus wrung from the lips of his old enemy.

"Styles," said Hazzard, "you belong in a home for feeble-minded seamen. Haven't you brains enough to realize that I am in command? If you——"

He cut his sentence short. His keen eyes had sighted a strange occurrence. Silently he watched and tried to grasp the meaning of the mysterious actions. But the more he saw, the less he understood. While he was speaking to Styles, one of the crew whispered

something to several of the other men, then four men separated from the rest of the crew.

In a second the four had drawn pistols. But, to Hazzard's amazement, not one of the armed men even looked up at him. Instead, they turned on the traitorous officers and the rest of the crew.

In an instant Bucknell was disarmed, and Styles, Piper, Omelas, and the crew had been ordered to hold up their hands. Then they were searched and their weapons taken from them. The four men did their work so swiftly that Hazzard hardly realized what was going on before it was all over. But even this was as nothing compared with the amazing thing that happened then.

While three of the men kept the plotters covered with their automatic pistols, the other one coolly walked up to Styles, Piper, and Omelas and pulled their hands down. A few quick movements, a clicking of steel, and it was over. When Hazzard saw what had happened, a cry of astonishment broke from his lips, and he nearly dropped the rifle in his excitement. Then the one who seemed to be the leader of the four men turned and looked up at the bewildered man on the bridge. Hazzard recognized him. It was Metzgar, one of the green hands who from the first had been friendly to him.

"Come on down here, you fire eater!" cried Metzgar. "You had us scared stiff for a while. You sure turned a clever trick on these pirates."

Hazzard was silent. Things had been happening a little too rapidly for him to be sure of anything. Perhaps this was just a scheme to get the upper hand on him.

Metzgar saw the question in his face. "Oh, it's all right," he said. "I'm a secret-service agent!"

Then one of the other men spoke up, and with joy Hazzard recognized him as Blair.

"It's all right, Rod," he said. "Don't be afraid of a trap."

Thus assured, Hazzard went down the ladder to the deck. Metzgar met him. "My name's Callahan," he said,

wringing his hand. "Hazzard, that was one of the nerviest things I ever saw in my life. You had us sweating with fright when you made that threat with the rifle. Both my men looked sick."

He pulled a letter from his pocket. "This will explain better than I can."

Hazzard took the letter and read it. It was from Outram:

DEAR ROD: This will introduce Secret-service Agent Callahan. If anything happens, obey him. He is an experienced man in dealing with such deviltry as I fear is afoot.

OUTRAM.

"I didn't make myself known before," said Callahan, "because I thought we could do better working alone. But when you pulled off that trick on the bridge, I was sorry I hadn't told you. You see, I was able to get only two of my men shipped with me, and we figured that the three of us were so outnumbered that it wouldn't be wise to start anything. So we planned that one of the men was to try to follow the lighters to keep track of the stolen cargo. Then, when we got into Colon, we would put the whole crew under arrest. I found Blair where he hid in the hold, and helped him to stay hidden until to-day. While you were away on the lifeboat, I got a chance to tip him off as to my identity, and he prepared to act with us. Everything was going along smoothly when you nipped the whole plot."

Callahan chuckled as he continued: "Outram told me to look after you, but you don't need any one to take care of you. You saved the day. Do you realize that?"

Hazzard was about to answer when he saw something over Callahan's shoulder that stopped him. "Look!" he cried. "The beach combers are getting away! The lighters are beating it back to the keys!"

Callahan laid a kindly hand on his shoulder. "Don't you worry any more about this. My men let them go purposely. We don't want such small game. And especially we don't want that box of dynamite. That's good evidence of theft, and helps our case. The first thing to do is to get under way.

We'll make Captain Piper and Styles run the ship into Colon for us. I don't think we'll have much trouble in getting off this reef, and we'll pick up the lifeboat with Colonel Clayborn and his daughter, and continue the trip."

Everything went off much as Callahan planned. The crew, although a hard lot, and to a man in the plot for a share of the graft, were completely cowed. When told that they would not be prosecuted, they gladly went back to their posts, and did their best for their new masters. The anchor was lifted, and the boat slid easily off the reef. A little later the lifeboat was picked up, the second mate was put to work, Miss Clayborn and her father returned to their quarters, and the ship once more proceeded on her way.

Captain Piper worked with a secret-service man standing over him with pistol in hand. The second mate and the others did likewise. But the first mate was surly. The ship had not gone far before he put up a fight. Callahan promptly clapped the handcuffs back on him. Then he chained him to Omelas, who was worthless as a seaman, and locked the two in a cabin. After that there were no more signs of resistance.

Hazzard and Blair moved into an empty stateroom aft, and took things easy. The two did their part in standing watch to relieve the secret-service men, but when off watch Hazzard spent much of his time with Miss Clayborn. He explained to her the mysterious events of the night, and that, with other matters, gave food for many interesting conversations.

Bucknell took the air in sullen silence. He avoided every one. The secret-service operatives did not seem to know of his part in the plot to steal the cargo, and Hazzard decided not to say anything about what he had overheard. It was more than likely that Styles or Piper would inform on Bucknell, anyway.

At the close of a tropic day, as a vermillion and gold sunset was swooping down with the suddenness peculiar to the torrid zone, the low Panama Coast Range was sighted ahead. Haz-

zard stood in the bows watching the sun sink behind the purple hills into the unseen Pacific. It was a sight he never forgot. Soon the rusty-nosed tramp made into Colon harbor. Before them, the coast of Panama extended across the horizon in a low fringe of gray, nodding palms with the sun-bathed hills in the background. As they drew nearer, Colon harbor appeared like a huge basin of gray water set in a round, jagged rim of mud. It had rained like Niagara that afternoon, and steam rose from the near-by land. On these shores, behind the dripping palms, the straggling, dreamy outlines of the town were jumbled in a confused and shapeless mass.

The ship drew near the wharf, set in a line of weather-beaten, corrugated-iron warehouses, and in a few minutes Hazzard and Blair were striding down the gangplank.

With regret, Hazzard said farewell to Miss Clayborn and her father as they took a cab for their hotel. He was still watching the disappearing cab when Blair grabbed him by the arm. "Look!" he exclaimed.

Hazzard turned, and saw two members of the famous Isthmian police, clad in soldierly khaki, go aboard the *Guetzal*, and take charge of Styles, Omelas, and Piper.

"I wonder where Bucknell is," said Blair.

"Why," said Hazzard, "he left the minute the gangplank was down. Guess he wasn't going to take any chances of the secret-service men finding him out at the last minute."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY.

IN a few hours Hazzard and Blair had seen all they cared to of the show spots in Colon. The tropic night had settled black and heavy by the time they reached the outskirts of Cristobal, where the United States army post is situated. They got only a glimpse of that neat little place, with its fine schools, churches, modern fire department, and rows of pretty, flower-bor-

dered cottages. With the falling night, just as black, as heavy, and as sudden, came rain. The travelers had arrived in the Zone during the closing days of the eight months' rainy season. Had they known about the blinding, drenching rains, it is not likely that they would have ventured on their long walk in that black, tropic night.

They started at once to return to Colon, and find the hotel to which Callahan had recommended them. In a minute they were wet through and through. The puddles became water-courses, the muddy streets like streams boiling in a freshet. They could scarcely see the dim street lamps through the rain.

A cab, old and rickety, drawn by an undersized horse, also old and rickety, splashed through the mud past them. They hailed the cabby eagerly, the brown-skinned Panamanian drew up his tired horse, and opened the cab door for them, and they sprang in.

"Don't see how we can get far with this outfit," said Hazzard; "but at least we are out of that sea of rain. Now, what's the trouble!"

The cab had stopped suddenly. Hazzard wiped the mist off the window, and looked out. The poor little cab horse was floundering in a river of mud. It tried bravely to pull ahead, but could do nothing. Finally, in exhaustion, it stood still, and the brutal cabby rained terrific blows on its back unmercifully.

"Blair, I'm going to get out and walk," said Hazzard. "My weight gone will make the cab light enough so the horse may get back to Colon with you. Wait for me at the hotel."

Blair protested that he wanted to walk with him, but Hazzard cut him off and turned to the cabby. "Stop beating that horse!" he commanded. "Get off and help him pull out of this hole!"

The driver knew from his tone that it was wisdom to obey. He jumped down from the seat and took hold of a wheel. Thus relieved of the weight of both men, and aided by their help at the wheels, the horse soon pulled the cab out of the mudhole. The cabby

got back to his seat, and drove on. Hazzard waded through the rain and mud to the side of the street.

The sidewalk was not paved, and, therefore, was little better than the middle of the street. But close to the houses he found it easier going. Yet that was bad enough, for the rain made it impossible for him to see where he was going. An hour later, half drowned with rain, covered with mud, and completely worn out, he found himself staring dumbly at a street light and a two-story building, both of which he remembered seeing just after leaving the cab.

Blinded by the rain and confused by the winding streets, he had wandered in a circle. He thought the matter over, and decided it would be impossible to get to the hotel that night.

"I'll knock at one of these houses and ask for lodging for the night," the tired man told himself. "It surely won't cost more than at the hotel, and anything will be better than to be drowned here in these mudhole streets."

He knocked loudly on a door, and after a time the door opened. There was a rustle of skirts in the darkness, and a girl's voice called:

"Ah, Pierre, you have come at last! And you have brought the papers from monsieur. How is he, the Count Ferdinand?"

Hazzard hesitated; not because the girl spoke in French, for he had learned to speak French fluently while at West Point, but he was startled at being mistaken for some one else. Finally he stammered: "Madame—madame——"

He was interrupted by a bewitching, bubbling laugh, full to the brim with mischief.

"Pierre, you are a Pierrot! Always you try to fool me. Because it is dark you try to make me believe you are some one else—some wanderer blown in out of the storm."

This was said in a ringing voice, but what followed was so low as to be merely a weird whisper that sounded ghostly and mysterious in that dark hall:

"Pierre, for Heaven's sake, speak! He is worried to-day; he has been talking, talking all day long. Of the count he spoke mostly, as he always does. But of Lebrun, Pechin, and Lacassagne also. And of Kennard, the American. He said they were all wastrels and thieves; all but Kennard, the American. He said they were thieves and headstrong fools. He said the count might fail. That if he followed the advice of Lebrun, Pechin, and Lacassagne they would all fail and be ruined. Ah, Pierre"—grasping Hazzard by the wrist—"what if he is waking up? What if he should wake up?"

Hazzard's bewilderment at hearing these strange words was great, but it increased when the girl, still holding his wrist, started to lead him rapidly down the black hall. In another moment she was leading him up a flight of stairs, at the top of which, to his relief, was a light that came from three candles in rich sconces on the wall. The sconces were of ornate metal, gilded, and the floor of that upper hall, in deep contrast to the hall below, was covered with soft carpets and rugs.

Then Hazzard had his first glimpse of the strange girl, and she of him. She was about seventeen—tall, dark, and very beautiful in a dark-eyed, raven-haired way. She was clad in an old-fashioned but rich dress of a sober color, and wore a red rose at her breast. So startled was she when she saw a stranger that her face became like marble, her eyes grew wide with fear, and she leaned weakly against the wall.

"Who—who are you?" she stammered. "Where is Pierre?"

"Mademoiselle," answered Hazzard, in his best French, "I am a stranger in Colon. I became lost in the darkness, and sought shelter from the fierce downpour. I did not mean to impose on you, but your words startled me so that I could not find voice to tell you of your mistake. As for Pierre, I don't know any Pierre."

Just as he finished speaking, a door was flung open behind him. He turned, and found a tall, dark man confronting

him. The man drew back and looked questioningly at the girl.

"A stranger who has been driven in by the storm, Gaston," she said.

The man eyed Hazzard sharply. "I will speak with him," he said.

The girl bowed and disappeared behind the draperies down the hall.

Gaston now addressed Hazzard in English: "Monsieur is an American, that is so? Will monsieur then explain his business here?"

Gaston was clad in a white duck suit, and, while he was fully as tall as Hazzard, he was slender, and appeared in delicate health. His tone was cold and unfriendly.

Hazzard repeated what he had told the girl. "So I knocked at your door," he went on, "thinking I might obtain shelter for the night. As I can't very well go on, I ask that you will kindly take me in. I will pay——"

"Sh!" interrupted the man warningly. "Don't speak of paying me for a night's lodging. If I ask you as a guest to stay to-night under the roof of the Convoiseurs, you will not pay Gaston Convoiseurs for the hospitality."

"I am a West Point man," said Hazzard, thus giving the best reference he could. "I have in my pocket letters as to my character, and an introduction from Colonel Roger Outram, the engineer, to Colonel——"

"I know, of course!" hastily put in Gaston, again warning him mysteriously not to continue his sentence.

Hazzard was growing more mystified all the time. Why was this strange fellow so afraid to have him mention the name of Colonel Goethals, the chief engineer and chairman of the Isthmian Canal Commission?

"As Monsieur Outram is your friend," went on Gaston, "I ask you as my friend to be the guest of Gaston Convoiseurs to-night. Outram lectured at the Ecole de Paris while I was a student there, and was my friend, which makes you my friend, also."

"So you are an engineer, too!" cried Rod enthusiastically.

He would have said more, but was taken aback by the look that came into

the other's face. It was a sad, bitter look that made deep lines on an otherwise fine face. Without another word he followed Gaston as he turned and led him down the hall to a clean but poorly furnished bedroom. Gaston left him, but returned presently with a black servant, who brought hot chocolate and rolls.

After the servant had gone, Gaston asked a few questions as to his guest's comfort in a very courteous way, then turned to go. With his hand on the doorknob, he faced Hazzard. "Monsieur, please let me explain," he said. "I am not an engineer. I lied to you. There was some one listening. I had to! You cannot understand."

With these strange words, which left Hazzard more bewildered than ever, Gaston closed the door, and left him alone.

CHAPTER XIX.

CHAGRES PETE.

UTTERLY perplexed, Hazzard repeated Gaston's remarkable statement as he crept into bed and prepared for sleep. But, although tired and worn from his long struggle in the storm, he had seen just enough of the mysterious household to make rest almost impossible. Sleep finally came to his troubled mind, but not for long. A low rumble of voices in the next room awakened him. He sat up and listened intently.

"Pierre has come at last. He was delayed by the rain, for it made a wash-out on the tracks near Bas Obispo. But he has orders from the chief, sir. Will you hear them now, or wait until to-morrow?" It was Gaston speaking, in French.

Then came the answer in a full, deep, commanding tone: "Wait? How can I wait when Lebrun and Lacassagne are at my throat?"

Hazzard heard a stirring, a rustle of papers, then the voice of Gaston reading. He strained his ears to catch every word:

"—on eve of ruin. Double-dealing of Lacassagne and Lebrun and

Pechin to blame—will ruin us all—the smash will come unless you tell where stolen—where did Pechin dispatch the five—have found the sunken and abandoned—Pechin and Lacassagne in custody—will arrest Lebrun to-morrow—must have your—tell all in report—"

A silence followed. The message had been read in such a low tone that Hazzard heard only disconnected sentences. Again there was quiet, except for the scratching of a pen. Gaston said good night, a door closed, then all was still again.

For a long time Hazzard puzzled over the meaning of the strange things he had heard, but the longer he thought it over the farther at sea he found himself. He fell asleep with his mind in a maze. He was awakened by a knock on the door. He sat up in bed and saw that it was broad daylight.

Gaston entered. "Good morning, monsieur. Your breakfast will be served here."

After breakfast he dressed hurriedly, intending to say farewell to his host and leave that house of mystery as soon as possible. It was becoming more weird and disagreeable all the time. He waited a while for Gaston to return, then tried the door leading out of his room.

It was locked on the outside!

Hazzard stood back, amazed at this discovery. Those mysterious voices in the night, the strange actions of his host!

He had an uneasy feeling that some one was looking at him. Slowly he raised his eyes to the window before him. With a cry of astonishment, he sprang to his feet.

A face with low, evil brow, bushy black beard, and snaky eyes was leering at him through the window. It disappeared instantly, and soon he heard a knock on some door near his room. The door was opened, and the visitor entered. He heard voices, and knew that Gaston and the visitor were in the room next to him with the man of the commanding voice. Gaston was speaking:

"Monsieur, the man from Count de

Lesseps is here. This is his confidential agent, Monsieur Dernes, an American. He can be trusted to carry the secret to Count de Lesseps."

"What in the world is the meaning of this?" thought Hazzard. "De Lesseps has been dead for years. Is this a madhouse I've been dragged into?"

The man with the commanding voice now spoke:

"I beg pardon, but what is monsieur's name again?"

"Pete Dernes is my handle, pard," said the visitor, in a harsh, unpleasant voice. "They call me 'Chagres' Pete."

A silence followed this. Then the other asked:

"Monsieur is an engineer?"

"No, I'm not what you would call a star-gazing transit guy, but I've bossed these muchachos down here enough to know how to follow a straight line, and old De Lesseps is a pal of mine."

"Monsieur is a young man to have become so early the friend of the great De Lesseps," spoke that commanding voice. "Perhaps monsieur is the head of some bureau—some new official, that he is so in the favor of De Lesseps?"

"No," said Dernes, "I'm no bureau chief. I represent some New York financiers who mean to back the company with the needed money. That's why I'm down here, and so close to De Lesseps."

"Ah, I thought monsieur said he had been bossing muchachos on the canal? Would a representative of New York financiers be working as a subforeman?"

This apparently angered the lying Dernes. He started to bellow an answer, but was interrupted by another thrust:

"Perhaps you represent the embezzlers—Lebrun, Pechin, and Lacasagne?"

Again the angered Dernes started to speak, but the commanding voice silenced him with dramatic, stinging words:

"Fraud! Liar! You say you come from De Lesseps? You lie! You come from those thieving scoundrels!"

"But I have letters and references

from De Lesseps. I am his right-hand man. I am——"

"Bah! Forgeries!"

A silence followed, broken at last by hoarse whispers and low growls. Then a chair scraped back, and some one arose.

"Tell me, or I'll make you tell!" threatened Dernes. "I'll ruin you. I'll have you discharged. I'll——"

"Bah!"

"I'll charge you with stealing. I'll send you to prison for embezzlement. I'll——"

The harsh bellow of Chagres Pete grew more angry and more threatening. Hazzard stood tense with excitement. "It's about time for me to take a hand in this affair," he told himself. "If that ruffian goes much farther, this door won't hold me."

CHAPTER XX.

A PAGE FROM THE PAST.

BEFORE Hazzard had further reason for interference, Dernes was silenced, for the other man with the commanding voice brought matters to an abrupt close.

"Leave the room, Monsieur Dernes! I refuse to deal with you!"

Chagres Pete stamped from the room and slammed the door behind him. In a moment he and Gaston were standing on the rear porch, talking in eager voices. Chagres Pete spoke in a loud, bullying tone. Gaston answered him meekly, even fearfully.

As soon as the fellow left, Gaston, with pale face, confronted Hazzard in the doorway of his room. "Monsieur Hazzard, I have come to ask of you a great favor. I——"

"And I want to know why I have been locked in this room," broke in Hazzard hotly. "What is the meaning of——"

Gaston raised his hand and motioned for silence. "If monsieur will be so good as to listen patiently I will explain all." He sat down and motioned for the other to do likewise. Then he began, in a voice too low to be overheard in the adjoining room:

"Monsieur, you are in the strangest house in Panama. My father was Convoiseurs, the engineer, who was one of the heads of the old French company under De Lesseps many years ago. He was a good engineer and an honest man—one of the very few who did not steal right and left. But men above and below him did waste and steal, and the great French company became undermined by corruption and went to the wall. My father was cleared of charges of corruption and theft, but the shock of the company's collapse was too much for his honest old heart. For years he brooded about it. Then, when the Americans took charge, about ten years ago, paralysis struck him. Slowly his mind failed.

"And now, monsieur," he continued, "for ten years my father, the great engineer, has lived under the delusion that the French are still building the canal; that still the great Ferdinand de Lesseps is alive, and at the head of the company. Totally paralyzed and unable to leave his chair, he, in his pathetic madness, believes he still holds the position of influence and trust he once held under the old French company. He lives over those bygone days, month after month, year in and year out. And I, my younger brother, Pierre, and my sister, Madelaine, have humored him in this belief. We have even built up the idea in his poor, shattered brain, for when he was paralyzed the doctors feared that reference to the truth—of De Lesseps' death, of the suicide of his fellow engineers, and of the utter ruin of the old company—might cause the paralysis to clutch at his heart.

"We began telling him," he went on, "of De Lesseps' return to management, of the company's prosperity, of the work's progress. His weakening intellect grasped at the pleasant lies, and he grew stronger and more cheerful. He began writing reports to De Lesseps, and we, his children, could not do less than cheer him with replies of our own invention. We wrote out orders from De Lesseps such as our father used to get, and in his old, cheerful manner he

would reply, giving advice and suggestions. Once begun, this chain of deception could not be dropped. The shock would kill my father. He cannot learn of the true state of affairs, because he cannot move from his room."

Gaston paused and averted his face. Hazzard could see that he felt keenly his father's plight. The ex-cadet was touched by the simple story of the devotion and sacrifice of the children to their father. An honest engineer had taken to heart the fall of France's hopes and the ruin of De Lesseps. And through the long, desolate years following, his loving children had striven to keep him happy in the thought of the canal's completion under the old French régime. This explained the strange reports in French, and the frequent mention of the name of De Lesseps. But the secret that old Convoiseurs held, which Chagres Pete had tried to pry from him? Would Gaston tell that?

"Of course," went on Gaston quietly, "the high monthly salary and generous expense account the old French company allowed my father ceased when the company failed. But my father does not know that. He still believes he holds his high position, and draws the steady income. For years we have sacrificed everything in order to satisfy the demands for luxuries that my father felt his salary entitled him to. We have denied ourselves necessities that he might have every whim satisfied, for we felt that his last days should be as happy as we could make them. So, while father thought I was studying engineering at the Ecole de Paris, with plenty of money, I was in the United States slaving as a clerk to make money for the family."

For a long time neither spoke.

"And now," began Gaston again, "I will come to the point. You understand how we are placed by our poverty and my father's pride. Well, often in my father's letters to De Lesseps, he wrote of the waste and corruption of his fellow engineers and bureau chiefs. In one of his reports he spoke of five locomotives imported from Antwerp to be used on the canal. They were of the

latest model at that time, and very valuable. He noted that they were sent to the Isthmus, but were never mentioned again. Now he makes sensational charges against three engineers—Lebrun, Pechin, and Lacassagne—whom he believes are still at work on the canal with him. He charges them with having abandoned the five locomotives up in the hills in the San Blas country. And now, with my father facing a crisis again, with us on the verge of dire poverty, I think I see in this old secret of the abandoned locomotives an opportunity to make some money."

"After what you have told me, I am ready to do you any service in my power," said Rod.

"Ah, Monsieur Hazzard, I feel that I can trust you. The trouble is to get my father to tell where these locomotives are hidden. He will not trust the secret in writing, for he fears Lebrun, Pechin, and Lacassagne. He asks that De Lesseps send a man in person. We have tried in every way by making up letters from De Lesseps, and even from the three embezzlers, to get my father to tell, but he will not. So in desperation we decided to get Monsieur Dernes to pretend that he represented De Lesseps. It was while I was sending for him that I locked your door, for I did not wish you to leave your room until I returned. I feared you had overheard things, and did not wish you to take any action until I could explain. Dernes is an unscrupulous scoundrel, who has got me into his clutches through a debt. Yet I knew of no one else to trust. But my father suspected him, and refused to divulge the location of the locomotives."

"And now you want me to pretend that I am from De Lesseps, and get your father to tell me?" asked Hazzard.

"That is it exactly."

Hazzard pondered the matter. Deception of any kind was distasteful to him. But in this case he readily saw that it was in a good cause. "I will do my best," he said.

"Thank you, monsieur."

"What am I to say?"

"Simply that you are the man from the Count de Lesseps. You are an en-

gineer and a gentleman. My father will trust you. Here are the credentials from De Lesseps that we prepared for Dernes. If father asks for them, it is well that you be prepared."

Hazzard glanced at the papers and thrust them into his pocket.

"Are you ready?" asked Gaston.

"Yes."

"Good! Follow me."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SECRET.

AN old man with a frosted imperial sat in a wheel chair in the room next to Hazzard's. Although withered with age and paralysis, the man showed a commanding figure, and his eagle eye spoke eloquently of his keen intellect and executive ability. A wave of sympathy went over Hazzard as he noted that the man's eyes were too bright. The fever of an unbalanced mind was burning fiercely. He also noted the rich furnishings in the room—the pretense of wealth that the young Convoiseurs kept up for their father's sake.

Old Convoiseurs looked keenly at the visitor. "What! Another man from De Lesseps already?"

Hazzard calculated swiftly that Pierre must have taken out the message early that morning. It had hardly time to reach the make-believe quarters. "I came as soon as Pierre brought your report, sir," he began hurriedly, in French. "You mention another man from the Count de Lesseps? Monsieur Convoiseurs, is it not a mistake? I am the only man sent from the chief. And besides, no other had time, for we just received your message."

The old man seemed to swell with triumph. "Ah!" he shouted. "Was I not right? Was I not right?" Then he called: "Madelaine! Madelaine! We were right! That fraud, that liar Dernes, was not from the great De Lesseps. He was an impostor. This man will take my message. Madelaine, you stay with us. I want you to know the secret also, so that if anything goes wrong with De Lesseps' man you can tell the count."

Gaston understood, bowed, and left the room.

Madelaine and Hazzard drew chairs close to the old engineer. Monsieur Convoiseurs searched his coat pocket with his good left hand and drew forth a soiled and crinkled map.

"An old map," he muttered, "made when we began the canal seven years ago."

Hazzard averted his face. Seven years! What if the old engineer learned the truth—that it was many times seven years?

Convoiseurs put the yellow parchment down on the arm of his chair, and Hazzard looked at it carefully.

"Here is the map of our diggings," explained the old man. "Culebra, the excavations at Colon, and the site of the dam at Gamboa. Now, in purple here is the line of the Panama Railroad. Look over here near Corazal, in Ancon. There is the station of Maria Sala. There is where the north spur began that Pechin built to carry dirt up from the canal bed. See where it crossed the canal? It is torn up now, they tell me. Now look northwest to Cocoli, on the north side of the canal. That's the native town of Cocoli, where Pechin's dirt-train spur had its terminus. There, also, is where Lebrun began his private roadway up to the fabled gold mines in the mountains of Veragua. And that is the point of the whole story.

"You see, it was this way," went on Convoiseurs, in a deep, pleasant voice; "it was a time between the visits of De Lesseps to the Isthmus. Lacassagne, with a salary of thirty thousand dollars a year and a private car, was director general, and had full sway. Under him, and grafting right and left, were Pechin and Lebrun. They had heard of some gold mines, rich as those of the Incas, up in the Veraguan Mountains, just north of the ten-mile zone. It was supposed that these were the famous mines from which Balboa got his gold. In those few miles were many obstacles. The jungle, dangerous and precipitous mountains, and hostile Indians, closely related to the San Blas tribe, one of the few unconquered tribes in the world.

But it was thought that if a railroad could be thrown into the hills and jungle for fifteen or twenty miles, the mines could be worked to line the pockets of the grafters.

"So the line was built," continued the old man. "It cost a life for every tie. It never paid in gold, or even in wood or limestone for ten yards of its cost. The gold mines failed, and the track was torn up. I and only a few others who escaped the vengeful Indians know that the grafters planned that five valuable Antwerp engines should be left in the hills, so that they could get their graft again by buying more engines with government money. Then De Lesseps came back again, and the whole thing was hushed up. But I want De Lesseps to know where these engines can be found."

"But have you the old surveys, landmarks, levels, grades, and altitudes? Can an engineer find them?" asked Hazzard.

The old man chuckled with delight. "Ah, that is it, monsieur. That is why I need an engineer to take the message to De Lesseps."

Then from a few notes on the back of the parchment map, he told Hazzard how to find the abandoned engines. With a remarkable mind for detail, he showed the whole sequence of grades and altitudes.

Hazzard took down a few notes and memorized the rest. Only an engineer could have made any sense of what he wrote. Madelaine could not follow so rapidly, and she got permission to write the whole thing down plainly.

Then Hazzard took leave of the old man, and left. As he passed down the hall to meet Gaston, he became aware that some one was talking in his room. He stopped and listened. It was Chagres Pete.

"Why did you let him in on the secret?" bellowed the ruffian. "Now he'll know everything and ruin it all. Why didn't you wait? I could have got it out of the old man sooner or later."

"Sh! I heard the door close. Hazzard must be coming." Gaston's voice

was still meek. Evidently he feared Chagres Pete.

Hazzard tapped on the door, and was told to enter. Gaston introduced him to Dernes. Hazzard was struck by the appearance of the man. Tall, broad-shouldered, and powerful, his snaky eyes leering out from that black, hairy face, he was as evil appearing as Hazzard had judged him to be from that glance through the window and from what he had overheard.

"They call me Chagres Pete down on the canal, stranger," he rasped as he shook Hazzard's hand. "Glad to meet you. Chagres Pete is your friend."

His loud voice filled the whole room, and his hand gripped Hazzard's until it hurt, but all this did not deceive the ex-cadet. He greeted him coolly.

"Did you succeed?" asked Gaston.

"I did. Shall I tell you now?"

Chagres Pete broke in: "Gaston, you leave me and this feller alone a while. I want a talk with him. Then he'll tell you. I want to see if he's square."

"Square?" repeated Hazzard angrily. "What do you mean?"

"When Gaston goes I'll tell you."

Gaston left the room. Chagres Pete saw the door close behind him, then he faced Hazzard.

"You have the secret of the engines, of course?"

"Yes."

"Jumping tarantulas! That's great news. Let me tell you something: Our fortune is made!"

"The engines belong to the U. S. government, and the reward for finding them to Gaston Convoiseurs and his brother and sister."

"That's just the point!" put in Dernes triumphantly. "That's just where you're wrong. You see, you're in with a fellow who's going to make you rich in spite of yourself. You see, these engines are up in the jungle. You and I alone know where they are. We take a look at them, and if they are in good condition we will come down and offer to buy them from the government. We'll say we have examined them, and that they are all junk. They will believe us. They won't bother to

send an inspector, for that would cost more than what we offer for the junk. So we'll get five good, serviceable engines at the price of junk, then we'll fix them up a little, bring them down to the seacoast, and sell them back to the government for several hundred times what we paid for them. Oh, it's a pipe, son, and we'll both make a pile."

"But where does Gaston Convoiseurs come in? What part does he get?"

"He gets trimmed, that's what! Why, he's so old-fashioned honest he wouldn't go in with us, so we leave him out altogether. See?"

"Yes, I see," replied Hazzard. "And I want to say to you that you are the most barefaced scoundrel I've ever seen. Hold on now! Your devilish scheme isn't going to work. I will tell Gaston how you intend to cheat him. I'll inform the government about your junk scheme. Besides, I'll get the secret into the government's hands before you can start your thieving plans. You are the one who is out of this deal!"

"You will think better of it when I set my Jamaican thugs and Panamanian cutthroats on your back!" cried Chagres Pete.

Hazzard, more disgusted than alarmed, wheeled, and left the furious Dernes alone in the room.

Gaston was waiting at the end of the hall. Hazzard approached him, and as they began talking Dernes came out of the room, walked toward the rear of the house, and disappeared through a doorway.

Hazzard and Gaston had been talking only a minute when Madelaine came running to them, face pale and eyes wild with fear. She gasped out what had happened. Chagres Pete had crept up behind her as she was copying in a notebook the directions for finding the engines. He had torn the book from her roughly, thrown her into a corner, then fled down the back stairs.

In a moment Hazzard and Gaston were in the street, and hot after the thief, but he disappeared around a corner, and when the pursuers tried to pick up the trail the few Panamanians who were in the street only looked at them

stupidly, and refused to answer their questions.

CHAPTER XXII.

DESPERATE MEASURES.

THAT evening, while Hazzard and Blair were sitting in the lobby of the hotel, after the former had related his strange experiences, Gaston Convoiseurs walked in. Hazzard jumped up, shook hands with him, and introduced Blair. Then the three sought a quiet corner and sat down for a talk.

"Monsieur Hazzard," began Gaston, speaking in English, "Madelaine overheard and has told me all about your experience with Chagres Pete. How can I ever make amends for the trouble I brought onto you when I asked that favor?"

"The easiest way to please me," said Hazzard, "is not to mention it at all. But tell me, are you going to take that matter up with the Canal Commission at once?"

"Yes, I have already attended to that. But I was told that the matter would have to wait until Colonel Roger Outram returns from the United States. He has full charge of the purchase of supplies, and this matter of the engines cannot be attended to except by him in person, as it is out of the ordinary routine of business. So neither Chagres Pete nor I can do anything until he returns."

"I know Colonel Outram; he is a very good friend of mine," said Hazzard.

"That's good. His influence will aid you in getting a good position in the canal work."

"Yes; I have letters from him to prominent officials and engineers."

"Have you any definite plan as to where you will go to work?"

"No. I am willing to begin at any place and work up."

Gaston thought for a moment. "I'll tell you what to do," he said finally. "Come to my office in the morning. I can tell you what places are open, and also direct you to the officials to whom Colonel Outram has given you letters.

And," he added, in a low voice, "if I were you I would get out of Colon as soon as possible. Chagres Pete is a dangerous man, and he never forgets. No doubt he already has his Jamaican spies and cutthroats following you."

"I'm not afraid," said Hazzard. "He won't dare show his hand."

"Ah, you do not know Chagres Pete or the Isthmus. Take my advice, be cautious. And get out of Colon as soon as you can."

Gaston rose to leave. At Blair's suggestion, the two Americans accompanied him to his home. There they said good night, with a promise to call at his office early the next day.

As they started on their walk back to the hotel, neither of them noticed a dark, silent figure that followed them. Nor did they see anything unusual in the fact that before they had gone two blocks there were several Jamaican negroes walking only a few feet ahead, and several dark-skinned Panamanians across the street were keeping abreast of them.

At a signal from the dark figure, the Jamaicans and Panamanians began to close in on the unsuspecting pedestrians. At a dark alley three more natives crowded around, and the fight began.

Hazzard and Blair were seized from behind so suddenly that they could not defend themselves. The two burly negroes in front whirled and sprang at them.

Hazzard saw a pair of glittering, evil eyes, and the flash of a knife. There was no time for fair fighting. His arms were pinioned to his sides, so he did the next best thing. His foot shot out and caught the negro squarely in the stomach. The Jamaican was lifted off his feet, doubled up like a jackknife, and sent sprawling into the mud, howling with pain.

But the Americans were hopelessly outnumbered. Before they had time to raise a cry, they were gagged, carried into the alley, and bound hand and foot. Things happened quickly then. The captives were carried to the end of the alley, and into the yards of the Panama

Railroad. They were thrown onto the rails in a dark spot and the murderous thugs started to flee.

Just then a lantern came bobbing down the tracks. Fearing that their victims would be discovered, the Panamanians returned, picked them up, and threw them into an empty box car. Hazzard heard one of them say in Spanish that when the man with the lantern had disappeared they would return and put them back on the track. Then the cutthroats fled into the darkness.

Painful minutes dragged by like hours, but still the gang did not return. An engine was heard slowly puffing down the track toward them. Then, with a bump, the car into which they had been thrown began moving. For ten minutes they were jolted around; then, with a clanging of a bell, a shriek

of a whistle, the car moved again, and soon settled down to a steady run.

With mingled feelings of relief and anxiety, the captives realized that they were aboard a freight train, and fast leaving Colon behind them. They were safe from Chagres Pete and his wretches, but their money and other valuables, together with the letters from Outram, had been stolen by the desperadoes. The thongs that bound them cut painfully with the jolting of the train, as, unable to move, they lay face downward on the dusty floor, gasping for breath.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The December mid-month TOP-NOTCH, out November 15th, will contain the next installment of this serial, so you have but a little while to wait. Back numbers will be supplied by news dealers or the publishers if you have not read the earlier chapters.

Long-Range Danger

IN October, 1899, Sir Thomas Lipton's famous racing yacht, *Shamrock II.*, had a very narrow escape. She was returning from an unsuccessful struggle with the American champion, *Columbia*, when a big shell fired from the United States practice ground at Sandy Hook dropped into the sea less than fifty yards away.

The modern service rifle has such a tremendous range that a bullet fired high may do damage at such a distance that it is impossible to tell whence it came.

Four summers ago some marines were drilling on the high ground east of Plymouth Sound, England, when one man gave a shriek and staggered back. A bullet had passed completely through his left hand, shattering it badly.

Of course, an inquiry was held, but to this day it remains a mystery where that bullet came from. Not one of the detachment so much as heard the report.

The Flying-Fish Puzzle

THE orthodox scientific opinion is that the "wings" of the flying fish merely serve as a parachute to sustain the fish for a brief period in the air, after it has launched itself out of the water by a powerful, screwlike movement of its tail. According to this view, the fish has no power of directing its flight after it has left the water.

However, Mr. Allingham, who is a nautical expert attached to the British meteorological office, and is in constant intercourse with seamen, reports many observations that tend to controvert this opinion. Certain observers claim that the wing fins are in constant rapid vibration, and seem actually to serve the purpose of flight.

One vessel master watched a fish that had attained an altitude of twenty feet above the water, and was flying toward the mizzen rigging of his ship, when, apparently noticing the obstruction, it changed its course about sixty degrees, crossing the vessel's stern to regain the water. Many other similar observations are mentioned. A series of moving pictures might solve this question once and for all.

Adventures of Steve Blake, Traveling Man.



*Hang the
Expense!*
By
J. A. Fitzgerald.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

FOLLOWED by a grinning darky weighted on either side with heavy grips, Steve Blake propelled himself through the crowded Minneapolis depot, and swung aboard the express for Chicago.

"Here we are, Sam," called the jovial salesman, as the porter staggered into the parlor car, the double load pulling his smile all out of place. "This is my stall. Drop my scenery behind the chair."

Sam grunted audibly as he pushed the luggage into place. "Phew, Mistah Blake, but dey wuz awful heavy!" he gasped.

"Nonsense!" returned Steve. "I'll bet they don't weigh a ton. Here's half a dollar. Buy yourself a can of oxygen."

"Mistah Blake, I wants to thank yo' fer——"

Two sharp whistles drowned the porter's loquaciousness.

"Mail me the rest of it!" shouted Steve, as Sam started for the door on a run.

"Ovah the rivah!" yelled Sam, when he reached the platform.

"Finnan haddie!" answered Steve.

The other passengers were still laughing at the amusing dialogue when

the train pulled out. Steve was about to sit down when he noticed an elderly woman leaning on the chair just across the aisle, apparently unable to decide what she would do with several large parcels that rested on the seat. The rack above her head held two suit cases; the space about the chair also was filled with her belongings.

"Let me put some of that stuff in my rack," suggested Steve, transferring the bundles as he spoke.

The bewildered woman looked her gratitude. "Thank you ever so much," she said sweetly. "My niece expected to make this trip with me, but a few minutes before the train started she telephoned me at the station that she couldn't come. That's how I happen to have so many traps. I hate to bother you."

"No bother at all," said Steve. "I've got oceans of room over here, and there's no use making a fool of it."

Having made her comfortable, Hinkle & Co.'s star business scout returned to his chair, and gave himself up to a mental inventory of the results of the trip, by far the most successful he had ever made through that territory. Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota had yielded surprising returns in the five weeks that he had been racing about those three prosperous States, and now, with his order book filled, he was heading for New York on the last lap

of his journey. The success of the trip was all the more gratifying because Fred Hinkle, head of the big notions and house-furnishing concern, hadn't expected him to do much more than shake hands with their customers, and keep them in line.

He reached into his pocket and drew forth a letter he had received from Hinkle the day before. "The idea of your grabbing so much business in that territory during the off season, with real money as scarce as seats in the subway at the rush hour, is positively uncanny," the concluding paragraph read. "We have all come to the conclusion that you are a journeyman hypnotist. Your achievement convinces me that you could persuade Satan to lay in a line of fire extinguishers."

The big salesman chuckled aloud as he tucked the letter back in its envelope. "That order book doesn't look much like an off season," he mused. "The boss must be tickled to death. This has been my banner year, all right."

In reviewing the achievements of the preceding twelve months, it was only natural that he should dwell at length on the failure that came very near outweighing all his business successes—the failure to win Martha Lake, the beautiful girl whose singing voice was all that stood between him and complete happiness. Watching the speeding landscape, the details of their delightful courtship came back to him with a rush. He recalled how he had met her and been smitten by her charm and beauty, only to find to his horror a little later that she was the sole proprietor of the worst voice he had ever heard—a voice that had every one in her neighborhood arrayed against her.

At their last meeting, after being informed by a mutual friend that her family had cut off her allowance in a last desperate effort to discourage her hopeless vocal career, he had proposed to her, and been told that he would have to wait until she had convinced the world that she was a wonderful singer. All was still fresh in his mind. He laughed bitterly when he recalled that he had unwittingly supplied her with

the funds to pursue her hopeless ambition; that the fifteen hundred dollars he had forced Professor Phinney, the bogus singing teacher, to return to her had enabled her to continue her nerve-shattering, profanity-increasing course.

"You've simply got to forget her, Stephen, old scout," was his decision after that last meeting. "That's all there is to it. Too bad your first flyer in feminine preferred has turned out so disastrously. But you'd be foolish to go on nursing a false hope. That girl is never going to stop shrieking. By the time she convinces any one she can sing you'll be an accomplished harp player."

But forgetting her proved to be the hardest job he had ever tackled; his determination to do so was largely responsible for his tremendous success on the road, because he worked early and late in an effort to back their unsuccessful romance into an out-of-the-way corner of his memory. At such times as this, however, with nothing to do but look out the car window and think, he found it next to impossible to keep his thoughts from reverting to pretty Martha Lake.

A loud voice at his elbow roused him from his retrospective mood. Turning, he saw the Pullman official talking earnestly to a heavily built, flashily dressed, sullen-looking fellow who displayed a button of the Commercial Travelers' Association in the lapel of his coat. An enthusiastic member of the organization himself, the sight of its emblem prompted Steve to give his whole attention to the argument. He was surprised to learn that the discussion concerned the old lady with the excess luggage, who, oblivious to what was going on, was sleeping peacefully.

"I hate like anything to wake her," whispered the parlor-car attendant. "She appears to be worn——"

"Well, why should I be compelled to suffer for her stupidity?" snorted the other.

"It isn't her fault at all," remonstrated the conductor. "The porter put her in the wrong seat."

"Well, I paid for that seat, and I'm

entitled to it," the angry passenger grumbled. "Her seat is three cars back."

A determined-looking woman broke into the conversation at this juncture. "Why can't you use her seat?" she demanded.

"I've been using it for half an hour," he retorted. "And I've had a baby bawling in my ear all that time. I don't intend to stand it any longer. I don't like to disturb this old lady, but why should I be compelled to put up with the annoyance?"

"Sh! Not so loud!" cautioned Steve.

The warning came too late. The sleeper stirred uneasily; the next instant she was wide awake, staring up at the men above her, a puzzled look in her kindly blue eyes.

"I'm afraid I'll have to disturb you, madam," whispered the conductor, as gently as possible.

"Have we reached Chicago so soon?" she inquired, shifting her gaze to the window.

"No, it isn't that. You're in the wrong car. The seat you are occupying belongs to this gentlemen. Your seat is three cars back."

A frightened look came into her eyes. She looked about her in a helpless manner, her glance resting on the face of the man who was entitled to the chair. She found no encouragement there. As she started to rise, a wave of protest swept through the car.

Steve, his eyes ablaze with indignation, stepped to her side. "You take my seat, madam," he said, with forced calmness. "Fortunately most of your parcels are over here, anyway."

A round of applause greeted the genial drummer as he escorted the bewildered woman to his chair, afterward placing the rest of her luggage beside her.

"Mr. Grand Stand is on the job!" sneered the flashy-looking person.

"You bet I'm on the job," returned Steve, wheeling about quickly, and looking the fellow in the eye. "I was just waiting to see how far you would go. You are a disgrace to that button you are wearing."

There was something in Steve's attitude that caused the ungracious drummer to back away. In the depths of Blake's eyes he saw something that he didn't like. Steve had never been angrier in his life. It was with difficulty that he controlled his temper.

"I wouldn't have disturbed the woman if it hadn't been for that howling infant," the other protested to Steve. "I take it that you don't mind bawling babies."

"Not half as much as I do bawling adults," was Steve's parting shot, as he started for the third car back, followed by the cheers of the passengers.

CHAPTER II.

FRIENDSHIP'S CALL.

THE unpleasant incident served to upset Steve's tranquillity for the rest of the journey. He was intensely proud of his calling, and it made him good and sore to think that a member of the craft should be guilty of such churlish conduct. On reaching Chicago he went direct to the Auditorium Hotel.

"Hello, Steve!" came in a chorus from the clerks behind the desk, the minute he was sighted crossing the lobby.

"Howdy, playmates!" he returned cheerfully. Half a dozen hands shot toward him. "Help yourself, but leave me one or two fingers to clutch a pen," he said, with a merry chuckle.

"You're looking great!" exclaimed one of his admirers.

"Feel just like twins," he replied. "You all appear to be convalescent, whatever that is."

Seizing the pen, he sprayed his name across the register. He was about to head for the barber shop when he received a resounding whack between the shoulders.

"Wait, and I'll get you an ax!" cried Steve.

Two hands seized his arms, and prevented him from turning. "Guess who it is," commanded a voice behind him.

"Samson," said Steve.

"Nix!"

"Sandow."

"Wrong again."

"I surrender."

His arms freed, Steve turned and gave a glad cry of surprise. "Bob Kelly, or I'm a fabricator!" he shouted joyously. "How long have you been in town?"

"Blew in yesterday. Should have gone on last night, but heard you had made a reservation, and decided to stick around and tease you a bit."

Arm in arm, the two old friends started for the barber shop, Kelly feeding Steve the latest Broadway gossip, while the big fellow was having his "hedge trimmed," as he was wont to describe a shave.

"Got a line on you at Baltimore a few weeks ago," Kelly went on. "I met a fellow named Andrews, who told me about your big clean-up at Fairfield, a few miles from there."

Steve decided that Kelly would not be interested in knowing that Tom Andrews was a stepbrother of Martha Lake, none of his fellow traveling men being aware of the fact that Steve had a life-sized romance on his hands. As a matter of fact, Fred Hinkle, the boss, was the only one who had guessed the secret.

"Andrews is a fine chap," volunteered Steve.

"Aces up, all the way," said Kelly.

"How are all the bunch?"

"I only met a couple of them at the club," said Kelly. "I reached New York on Friday, and hit the trail west on Monday. Oh, I forgot to tell you that Eddie Griggs came very near losing his job with the Sanitary Equipment people."

This announcement brought Steve to an upright position with a suddenness that came very near costing him his nose, the barber just missing that feature by the fraction of an inch. Steve was very fond of Griggs, as was every salesman who had been in his company.

"Off the wagon again, I suppose," ventured Steve.

Kelly shook his head. "Had two weeks of it this trip," he replied.

"I'm awfully sorry to hear it," said Steve. "He's such a square little chap.

He'll never get over the death of his wife, I'm afraid."

"That's the whole trouble. He went to pieces when she died two years ago. He was as steady as a church up to that time."

"He's through unless he cuts it out," said Steve. "There's no place for a boozier in this game any more. Competition is too keen. You can't blot up that red stuff during business hours and get away with it. We'll have to read the riot act to Eddie."

"He's having his last chance right now," said Kelly. "I came west with him as far as Buffalo. He'll be working that territory for a few days. Do you make Buffalo on the way back, Steve?"

"I didn't intend to, but I will now. I'll drop off there to-morrow and look him up."

"Fine! He says he is glued to the sprinkler, but I'm afraid that when he gets by himself he'll start nibbling again. Anyway, he'll do more for you than any one else."

A dinner that stretched over two hours afforded the two chums ample time for the exchange of trade gossip, and late that night, Kelly, representative of one of the largest shoe houses in Massachusetts, continued his journey west, fortified with a few valuable hints from Steve as to where he might find a little easy picking. Steve arrived in Buffalo about nine o'clock the next night. Going straight to a hotel favored by most traveling men, he made inquiries for Griggs.

"Eddie is here, all right," said the clerk. "It looks as if he was getting ready to qualify for the old-settler class."

Steve didn't need any blue print with this statement. He knew that Griggs' thirst had got the better of him once more.

"Let me have his room," requested Steve of the telephone operator.

"He's in the café," said the clerk. "He's been having his mail addressed there since he arrived."

Steve hurried to the barroom of the hotel. Long before he reached the

swinging doors he heard Griggs' voice raised in maudlin song. But he wasn't prepared for the surprise that greeted him when he entered the room. Griggs, bleary-eyed and disheveled, sat at one of the tables, toying with a high ball. Opposite him, sober and smiling, was the fellow with whom Steve had had the argument on the train. Their eyes met the instant Steve crossed the threshold, Griggs' companion simulating a mild state of intoxication as Steve approached the table.

"Come on, Eddie! Don't try to drink it all!" commanded Steve, taking Griggs' arm before the latter was aware of his presence.

"Steve Blake!" exclaimed Griggs. "Put it there, Steve!"

Steve took the shaking hand, and looked the unfortunate fellow squarely in the eye. "Didn't you promise Bob Kelly you would stick to the wagon this trip?" asked Steve.

A flash of intelligence came into the heavy-lidded eyes.

"I'm sorry, Steve," pleaded Griggs. "But I couldn't resist Mr. Hascall's kind invitation. We're both in the same line, and we expect to split a big order to-morrow. Shake hands with Mr. Hascall, Steve."

Hascall rose with careful unsteadiness, and extended his hand, but Steve did not clasp it. "I know all about Mr. Hascall," he said.

Griggs was too weary to appreciate the significance of the remark. Hascall made a further effort to get into Steve's good graces.

"Won't you join us, Blake?" he inquired. "We've been hitting it up pretty strong for a couple of days."

"You appear to be able to stand a lot of ginger ale," observed Steve, flashing a knowing smile at the stuff in Hascall's glass.

Hascall's only reply was a deep scowl. He realized that Steve's alert eye had detected the old ruse; had seen through his intoxication pose. Without a word he rose to his feet and strode from the room. Steve hated to think that any member of the profession would deliberately set out to incapacitate

a fellow worker for the purpose of having the field to himself, but Hascall's simulated tipsiness aroused his suspicion. He put Griggs to bed, but before doing so got enough information out of him to strengthen the belief that Hascall was planning to take advantage of Griggs' failing.

After much interrogation, Griggs told Steve that the Nonpareil Realty Company was going to award the plumbing contracts for fifty houses the next day; that he had submitted samples and prices to the company two days before; that he had met Hascall, the representative of a Minneapolis plumbing establishment, and that at Hascall's suggestion they were going to ask the company to divide the order.

For the honor of his craft, Steve hoped that his suspicions would prove to be groundless, but he decided to take no chances with Hascall. The good-natured drummer kept a close eye on Griggs for the rest of the night, losing his own sleep in order to forestall any plot to betray his friend. He roused Griggs before eight the next morning. Griggs surveyed himself in the mirror, and fell back with a shudder.

"I'll never be able to attend that meeting this morning," he said dejectedly. "It's a good thing we arranged to split the business."

Steve felt sorry for the trembling figure, shot to pieces from the results of his protracted spree. "Are you sure that Hascall will split?" he asked.

"He gave me his word. That's why we were celebrating. The business was coming so easy."

"You're the only one that was celebrating," remarked Steve.

"What do you mean?" said Griggs. "Hascall has been drinking ginger ale."

Griggs' weary eyes opened wide at this information. A traveling man who had been knocking about the country for years, it didn't take long for even his befuddled brain to grasp the full significance of Steve's remark.

"Do you think he would double cross me?" he gasped.

"I'm hoping he won't," said Steve.

Griggs sank into a chair and stared at the floor. "He's got me in a hole, Steve," came from the bowed figure. "If he wants to put it over on me, I'm helpless. I'm in no shape to appear before those business men. I trusted him implicitly. I'd trust any one who wears a C. T. A. button. If I fall down this trip, I'm done for all time."

Steve's eyes were moist as he placed his hand on Griggs' shoulder. He had known Griggs long before the trouble which he had tried to drown in strong drink—when the broken man before him was one of the most resourceful salesmen in the country, a man whose squareness and lovable qualities were bywords on the road.

"Eddie," began Steve gently, "I'm not going to scold you; I'm not going to spill a sermon. Anything I might say along those lines couldn't make you more penitent than you are right now. You ought to realize by this time that you've got to side-step the stagger stuff."

Griggs rose to his feet. He swayed a bit unsteadily as he faced his companion, but there was a resolute look in his eyes. "I've taken my last drink, Steve," he announced slowly. "I've learned my lesson this trip. It doesn't matter whether Hascall tricks me or not, I'm done with liquor for all time. An earthquake couldn't shake me off the chariot now."

Steve shook his hand warmly. "That statement has the right ring to it," he said. "There's a chance that Hascall will play fair, but we'd better play the thing safe. I'm going to handle your end of the argument at that meeting today. When does it take place?"

"At ten o'clock. Steve, you're the best pal a fellow ever had."

Having an hour to spare after breakfast, Blake took a hurried course in sanitary plumbing from Griggs, examined the latter's sample books, and did everything to familiarize himself with the various terms.

"I'd take a contract for piping a flock of skyscrapers right now," he declared confidently, as he sallied forth to look after the interests of his friend.

CHAPTER III.

THROUGH THICK AND THIN.

THROUGH the stupidity of a cabman, Steve didn't reach the offices of the Nonpareil Realty Company until half past ten. Fearful that he might be too late, he brushed by the attendant at the door, explaining his mission as he was ushered toward the room where the meeting was in progress. Here he paused a moment to think up something particularly good for an opener. Through an open transom came to him what was being said on the other side of the door.

"What's become of the Sanitary Equipment man?" he heard some one ask.

A harsh laugh followed this query. "I guess he doesn't think this order big enough to bother about," said a voice which Steve recognized as Hascall's. "He's been soused for the last two days."

Steve opened the door and stepped into the room. Hascall's face went scarlet at sight of him. His confused manner made it plain that he was wondering whether Steve had overheard his last remark. Steve's quick eye took in the half dozen directors, and he sized them up for broad-minded, successful business men, who were human. He felt easier.

"What were you about to say?" one of the directors asked Hascall.

Hascall gulped hard once or twice, then declared that it had slipped his memory.

"Well, if that's the way the Sanitary Equipment man feels about it——"

"Beg pardon, gentlemen," interrupted Steve, "but I can't stand by and see you imposed upon. The Sanitary Equipment man is extremely anxious to get at least part of this order. I overheard Mr. Hascall's remarks as I approached the door. I couldn't help hearing them. Mr. Griggs will feel very badly if he loses his share of this business."

"Then why isn't he here to look after it?" demanded Hascall, losing his temper.

"No one can answer that question better than you!" Steve shot back.

The directors were regarding the two men intently. Steve's earnestness and Hascall's confusion had them guessing.

"Do you represent the Sanitary Equipment people?" asked one of the directors of Steve.

"No, he doesn't!" exclaimed Hascall, before Steve could reply. "He's a butt-in. That's all he is."

Hascall was furious. His conduct convinced Steve that he had deliberately planned to take advantage of Griggs.

"Mr. Hascall is right, gentlemen," Steve said slowly. "I am a butt-in. I could tell you a long story of why I have butted in, but I don't intend to. Your time is too valuable. My name is Steve Blake. I've been on the business trail for fifteen years. Ask any of your local dry-goods merchants about me. Mr. Griggs is one of my very best friends. He has an unfortunate failing; he drinks too much. He is one of the very best fellows in the world. He has been on the toboggan for some time. This is his last chance. If he loses part of this order he is down and out. I'm trying to save him. I wouldn't be here making this plea if I didn't know that the Sanitary Equipment Company's goods are the equal of any on the market."

Steve's sincerity had made a deep impression on the directors. Several of them nodded understandingly while he was speaking.

"It's a fine company to do business with," interposed the chairman.

"I know this stunt of mine is unusual, gentlemen," Steve went on. "But I've known Griggs a good many years. He was not always unreliable. He was ashamed to come here to-day. Give him a chance. He has promised to travel by the all-water route——"

"Gentlemen, I want to protest against this," interrupted Hascall, jumping to his feet. "I've worked hard for this order, and I think that I'm entitled to it. Why should I be compelled to divide the results of my labor with a drunken rival?"

"I'll tell you why, Hascall," replied

Steve, looking him squarely in the eye. "Because you promised to split the order with him. Because, after making the agreement, you suggested a celebration, and then turned around and allowed him to fill himself with liquor while you were drinking ginger ale; because you alone are responsible for his present plight. Because you have not played fair with him."

The accusations came from Steve with a rush. The directors were keenly interested in the dénouement.

"I want to apologize to you, gentlemen," Steve resumed, "for airing my friend's troubles at this inopportune time. I assure you I wouldn't have done so if Mr. Hascall had not misstated the facts. Now you know the real reason why Mr. Griggs is not here. He trusted Mr. Hascall; Mr. Hascall has tried to double cross him. It grieves me deeply to be compelled to say this about a fellow traveling man."

Hascall wilted under the searching gaze of the directors.

"Pretty good when a guy as old as Griggs pulls the baby act," he protested feebly.

"I guess we'll defer the awarding of those contracts for a day or two," said the chairman.

Hascall, his face livid with rage, picked up his hat and hurried from the room. Steve thanked the directors for their attention, and again apologized for his interference. Hascall was out of sight when he reached the corridor. He found Griggs, the picture of anxiety, waiting for him in the lobby of the hotel.

"The jury is still out," announced Steve in answer to his queries.

"Hascall was out to do me, all right, wasn't he?" Griggs asked.

Steve nodded.

"I thought so," exclaimed Griggs. "He passed me in the dining room a few minutes ago, and refused to speak. I guess he's left the hotel."

"He had it all framed up to flop you," Steve explained. "I had it out with him before the directors. I told them the truth about your absence and his despicable conduct. I don't know

what my eloquence is going to get you, Eddie, but I think we've spiked Mr. Hascall's game."

Not until then did Steve tell of his previous meeting with Hascall.

Griggs was still expressing his gratitude when his champion got in the train for New York a few hours later.

"No one will ever have to apologize for me again, Steve," he declared, with great firmness. "I'm on the dry dock for all time."

"Freeze to the filter, and you can't lose. Where do you go from here?"

"Cincinnati."

"Better buy yourself a set of blinders," cautioned Steve. "That's the worst place in the world to break in a new pledge."

CHAPTER IV.

THE FRUITS OF LABOR.

AT noon the next day Steve bounded into the office of Hinkle & Co., in Chambers Street.

"Hello, everybody!" he called cheerily.

There was a rush to shake his hand; to congratulate him on the success of the trip.

"Welcome home, Little Eva!" shouted Trimble, the auditor, entering the showroom from the shipping department. This reference to Steve's generous proportions scored a bull's-eye. The laughter was spontaneous.

"When did he regain consciousness?" asked Steve, jerking a thumb in Trimble's direction.

"Two days after I examined your Fairfield expense account," came the quick retort.

"Nix on the expense thing," cautioned Steve, in a stage whisper. "Here comes the boss."

Fred Hinkle strode over to where the group was bandying words with the big drummer. "I heard everything that was said," announced Hinkle, with a smile.

Trimble winked at Hinkle. "What do you think of a fellow that will charge seven dollars for a breakfast?" he inquired, with mock seriousness.

Hinkle looked at Steve. "How about that?" he asked.

"I can explain that breakfast," Steve replied; "but I don't want to embarrass Trimble."

"Me?" said Trimble, with a laugh. "Go as far as you like. I don't know what you're driving at."

Steve assumed his most solemn expression. "I only ate sixty cents' worth of that seven dollars myself," he began.

"Who ate the rest?" some one asked eagerly.

"A hungry auditor," replied Steve. "He said he was a friend of Trimble's, that he was in hard luck, and I invited him to split a roll with me. The first thing he bawled for was fried gold-fish."

The laugh was on Trimble this time. "Who—who was the fellow, Steve?" he asked.

"Said his name was Girard," Steve answered.

Trimble nodded. "I know the chap, but only slightly," he said.

"It's a good thing for the boss' bank roll that you didn't know him any better," put in Steve.

Hinkle helped himself to a good laugh. "You go ahead and bring in the business, Steve," he chuckled. "Hang the expense! I'll stand for all the gold-fish breakfasts so long as you deliver the goods. How on earth did you get so much business this trip? You've had us all guessing."

"Luck more than anything else," was Steve's modest reply. "I seemed to drop in on them just as they were out of my line of stuff. It surprised me just as much as it did you."

"Come into my office for a few minutes," said Hinkle, leading the way. "I've got something to tell you that may interest you."

They took seats on opposite sides of Hinkle's desk, the boss regarding Steve with an amused expression for some time before he spoke. The big drummer felt certain that Hinkle's manner presaged an inquiry about his affair with Martha Lake, the head of the firm having evinced a friendly interest in the romance from the day that

Steve had taken him into his confidence.

"Steve," said Hinkle slowly.

"Present," answered Steve, with an airiness he didn't feel. He was sure that his love affair was to be dragged out again.

"Steve, I'm going to send you to Europe," Hinkle announced, after another long pause.

The salesman's eyes brightened. His smile illuminated the room. "Honest?" he asked.

"Honest," declared Hinkle.

Steve drew his chair closer. For years he had been looking forward to a trip across the water, but he hadn't felt that he could afford it. The chance to travel at the expense of the firm, with the opportunity to win laurels in a new field, sounded too good to be true.

"Don't wake me up! Let me dream on!" he said excitedly.

"No dream about it," Hinkle assured him. "I've got several reasons for shipping you across the pond. I want to reward you for beating our rivals to that seven-thousand-dollar order in Fairfield, for your splendid showing on the recent trip, and I want you to get a line on the European way of doing business. Schiller, our European representative, is ill in London. You will look after our interests over there until he is able to get around. He'll give you the necessary credentials."

"How can I ever thank you?" Steve said, his face beaming with happiness.

"By forgetting that little love affair that has been worrying you," the boss replied. "You're too clever a fellow to go on wasting your time in that direction. I don't like to discourage you, but I don't think she's ever going to stop shrieking."

"That's a million-to-one shot," said Steve.

"When did you see her last?"

"Not since the day I proposed. I don't know where she is now. Major Andrews, her stepfather, wrote me

from Baltimore, asking me if I could give the family any information concerning her. I was unable to help him. She can bleat her head off for all I care. I'm through."

Hinkle knew that Steve did care. He knew that the big salesman had met with the bitterest disappointment of his life.

"You're not going to forget her in a hurry, Steve," Hinkle said gently. "It will be a long time before you can dismiss her from your thoughts. But you would be foolish to go building air castles. The European dash will keep you busy for a couple of months, and help you forget your little tragedy."

"When do I start?"

"As soon as you can get ready. What vessel do you prefer?"

"Anything from a rowboat up. Give me a life preserver and I'll swim over."

His eagerness tickled Hinkle. "You appear anxious to leave us," he remarked.

"It isn't that. I just want to see where those countries over there have anything on Uncle Sam's bit of real estate. I've been hearing about foreign goods and business and folks for years, and I'm keen to do a little plain and fancy comparing on my own account."

The boss was busy studying the ship news in a morning newspaper. "The *Princess Flora* sails——"

"Cut the *Princess!*" interrupted Steve. "I'm through with skirts for all time."

"How about the *Generalissimo*?"

"Just my size. I guess it's the only ship that will fit me. When does it hit the salt splash?"

"Saturday morning. That will give you two days to pack your trunk."

"Me for the big ferryboat," said Steve joyously.

The adventures of Steve Blake in England will make up the next tale of this series. It will appear in the number of TOP-NOTCH that follows this—on the news stands November 15th. The Blake series began in the October 15th issue. Back numbers may be obtained of news dealers or the publishers.

Untempered Steel-

By
Burt L. Standish

A Tale of College Athletics ~



(A COMPLETE NOVELETTE)

CHAPTER I.

THE IDOL OF CORNELL.

COME on, Cornell! We've got 'em going! Rip up that line again!" High and dominating, the voice rose above the clash and turmoil of the college gridiron. There was a touch of pleading in it, a ringing note of command, a subtle undercurrent of perfect confidence which inexplicably stirred the jaded men to fresh effort. Yet Hugh Cabell—"Hughie," his teammates fondly called him, and sometimes "Dixie"—was neither captain of the Cornell varsity nor quarter back. His position was at left tackle. Strictly speaking, it was not his place to shout admonitions and advice, but no one ever thought of criticizing, even mentally, a fellow whose dashing recklessness on the field had won him the right to do and say almost anything he pleased.

It was a rare gift, that power of infusing confidence and courage. Harland, the captain, lacked it, and proof of his fineness and loyalty to the college lay in the fact that no touch of jealousy or pique had been bred in him by this other man's ability to stir and goad the team as he had never done in all his life, and never could. Cabell had little executive ability, and the tact and diplomacy necessary for the making of a

good captain were absent from his make-up, but he played his position brilliantly, and he could lead a forlorn hope in a manner masterly and unequaled by any one of the other warriors. Harland, whom the honor of Cornell and the success of the team dominated beyond mere personalities, was only too thankful for the help rendered by his invaluable lieutenant.

Battered, panting, but with stubborn purpose written on each sweat-grimed face, the men sprang into position, and the line formed again. The sharp, staccato voice of Bobby Lee ripped out a signal. There was a quick pass, a sudden, grinding, forward surge; then out of the chaotic mass Cabell was the first to emerge, face colorless, but a reckless smile twisting his lips.

"That's the way to do it!" he shouted jubilantly. "Four yards, sure, that time. We've got their goat! We're going straight down the field!"

Again they lined up swiftly, and again came that fierce, resistless rush that plowed through the enemy's defense. Again it was Cabell's voice that urged them on.

Up to this moment things had been going rather badly with the wearers of the white and crimson. The Penn State team, solid in defense and daring in attack, had seemed, during those first two quarters, quite invulnerable.

A touchdown within the first ten minutes of play gave them the insuperable advantage an early score always creates, and afterward, though they did not cross the Cornell goal line again, their defense was like a stone wall, against which the opposing team flung itself in vain.

Then came the break—a forward pass fumbled, the pigskin snatched up by Cabell, and carried a dozen yards before an unerring tackle sent him crashing down. It was a small beginning, a mere accident, but it was the turning point. After that how could the others fail to respond to the urgings of a man who was always in the van of the attack, and whose quick brain and ready wit had practically turned the tide?

Swiftly the gains, small at first, became greater as the rushes increased in steadiness, growing machinelike, confident. A dash around left end netted close to thirty yards, and threw the play well within Penn's territory. On the ten-yard line there was a momentary rally, a fierce struggle in which men piled up in inextricable masses, and for a moment it seemed as if Cornell would fail to make the necessary gain—would be forced to attempt a field goal.

But the fear which held the watching throng breathless for a moment proved groundless. Stirred to their very souls by Cabell's ringing, magnetic voice, filled with new strength, power, and determination by his dashing brilliancy, the line of panting, grim-faced men plunged on, sweeping back their adversaries, to force the ball at last over that vital chalk line.

The roar surging out across the field presently gave place to crashes of organized cheering which lasted long after the few remaining minutes of the third quarter had passed.

"Cabell! Cabell! Cabell!" yelled the frenzied mob of undergraduates.

Their idol, hearing the sound as the teams changed sides, felt an odd thrill go through him. "One quarter more," he murmured, the blood tingling in his

face again. "Only fifteen minutes left. Surely——"

An arm was flung suddenly across his shoulders, the muscles tightening spasmodically. It was Bobby Lee, his face agleam with hope and triumphant delight. "We've got 'em on the run, old man, thanks to you!" exclaimed the quarter back exuberantly, swinging along at Cabell's side. "We'll make another touchdown, of course; we can't help it now."

"Sure thing!" agreed Cabell. "They've cracked, and there's no time for them to rally."

"Even if they do, we'll lick 'em!" confidently declared Lee. "You've fired the fellows up to such a pitch that they'd break down any defense ever formed. And you—— Jove, Hughie, I never saw you fitter. They'll keep on fighting like demons, but you've turned the tide. You go through their line like a bull, and mix up in every play as if you thought the sweetest thing in life was to be mashed at the bottom of a piled-up ton of solid bone and muscle."

Cabell laughed and slapped the quarter back lightly on the shoulder. But, as he turned away, a facial muscle quivered, and the bright color ebbed swiftly from his cheeks. Fight like demons? Les was right; they probably would. Certainly they had the reputation of scrapping out every inch of a losing battle, and, when their blood was up, of being none too careful in the manner of their fighting.

The thought sent a chill touch of dread flickering along his spine. Deep down underneath everything Hugh Cabell, the dashing, reckless idol of his teammates and of the whole college, was shamefully afraid!

CHAPTER II.

THE BIRTH OF FEAR.

IN spite of a demeanor which seemed to stamp him a man ignorant of the meaning of fear, Cabell never went upon the gridiron without a sense of shrinking terror. He who seemed to delight in leading each attack, and

whose body so frequently took the brunt of the enemy's onslaught, was living a lie.

There was no trace of spontaneity in his amazing plunges into the line. Not occasionally, but always, he had to force himself by sheer will power to make that forward rush, every fiber of his being crying out against it, and his legs constantly threatening to carry him the other way. When the crushing bulk of bodies piled up over him he had to clench his teeth to force back the cry of nervous apprehension which surged into his throat, almost choking him. He was not first on his feet because—as every one supposed—of an overwhelming eagerness to go after the enemy again without the loss of a single second, but rather for the reason that the press of bodies roused in him a frantic fear that his ghastly experience of a year ago was to be repeated.

The memory of that day—the day which first saw the birth of this monster that had come to torture and embitter all his waking moments—would cling to him forever. There were a thousand common, unheeded things to keep it fresh. Dreary, lowering skies—the skies of that October afternoon when he had first tasted fear; the lined-out gridiron; the looming goal posts, against one of which he had been hurled so cruelly; even the padded armor of the game itself—all were stabbing darts to his shrinking spirit, and never failed of their effect.

Cabell's trouble, though he had never analyzed it, was a life made too easy. Handsome, accomplished, having charm of manner and that rare quality of personal magnetism which is a powerful and inexplicable attraction, he had never been obliged to strive for friendships; the rough places in his path were always smoothed and made pleasant for him by others. A born athlete, from his earliest school days he had always "gone in" for something. At Lawrenceville he played both baseball and football, and excelled in each. He fancied he preferred the latter sport, but through force of circumstances he drifted into baseball, mak-

ing a showing in the last year which attracted more than local attention.

The first year at Cornell saw him out on the gridiron in September, but, with a chance on the freshman baseball team a practical certainty, he did not exert himself overmuch, and advanced no farther than the second eleven.

Then came the turning point. Cabell's forte was pitching. He made the freshman team without difficulty, and would have risen to the varsity baseball squad but for a twist of fate brought about by Ward Gunnison, his one-time rival, but now his roommate and closest friend. As an athletic sport, Ward knew baseball, and nothing else. With him the game was a passion rather than a pastime; he thought it, talked it, lived it, dreamed it. He was the sort of man, uncommonly clever at the start, who improves noticeably with each succeeding week of play; and at the end of that first season, in which the two friends had alternated on the mound with no very great satisfaction to either, Cabell suddenly announced his determination to quit the diamond and go out in earnest for football in the fall.

"It's no deprivation to me, old man," he explained in answer to Gunnison's earnest expostulations. "I've always liked the game, and I think when I go into it for fair I'll make an even better showing than I have at baseball."

He would have been scarcely human had he not shown a certain amount of tolerant pride in his athletic versatility. To make good at one major sport, then deliberately drop it in favor of another, with the certainty of equal success there, is something rare enough in college annals, or anywhere else, for that matter. And he did succeed. Flinging himself heart and soul into football with the enthusiasm he showed in everything that gripped him, he forged ahead to the extent of becoming one of the first substitutes, in which capacity he had the good fortune of playing in three games before that disastrous clash which threatened to be his undoing.

It was a game against Dartmouth,

their old-time rival, and from the very start the pace was strenuous. As a whole, the visiting team was no stronger than in former years. In fact, the presence of Blount, a new sophomore tackle, alone prevented it from being weaker. Rumors had been rife concerning the prowess of this brawny addition to the enemy's line, but for once the reality surpassed expectations.

From the side line Cabell watched the giant with a kind of surprised wonder. Tireless, ruthless, almost savage, he seemed to do the work of three men, plowing through the line, breaking up the defense, hurling old, experienced players aside as if they had been mere featherweights, and finally forcing Cornell to pit two of their best fighters constantly against him.

Naturally the brunt of his attack fell upon Marsden, the opposing tackle, and early in the third quarter the latter was carried off the field with a broken collar bone. Cabell was hastily summoned to take Marsden's place. Without the least sign of it in his bearing, Hugh was conscious of a slight touch of uneasiness as he ran out. The manner in which Marsden had succumbed to the overpowering strength of Blount was not a little disquieting, and did not encourage his successor to hope for much better accomplishment. But Hugh, buoyed by a certain amount of self-confidence and a good deal of innate pride, plunged into the fray as if he had not the slightest doubt in the world of ultimate success.

There followed an experience the like of which Cabell had never even dreamed. There was no actual fouling. Blount simply played the game with every ounce of his enormous strength and every particle of his indomitable spirit, roused to a pitch of fury by the failure of his team thus far to score. Against him the Cornell tackle seemed powerless. Again and again he was smashed down by the superior weight and power of his opponent; again and again he scrambled up, bruised, battered, bleeding. But instead of being stung to anger and fierce reprisal, the constant hammering pres-

ently began to rouse in his breast sensations of timidity and shrinking—the first Cabell had ever known.

He was having his first experience in the elemental, brute clash of man against man. In his easy, sheltered life he had never been up against that sort of thing before. A rough-and-tumble fight with bare fists would probably have had much the same effect; but, though he was an admirably scientific boxer, Cabell's easy good nature and universal popularity had so far warded off the experience. His temper had become bland and placid, refusing to rise to that height of hot fury which stings a man to feats of self-forgetful, reckless daring which he might hesitate to attempt in a normal state of mind.

The climax came in a fierce, deciding clash toward the end of the last quarter. Cornell had made a touchdown, but missed the goal, following which Dartmouth, by a series of desperate rushes, forced the ball into the very shadow of their opponent's goal posts. Blount played like a fiend, and to the apprehensive throng along the side lines a certain tie, and probably defeat, seemed impending.

Cabell, breathless, battered, shaken by the ordeal through which he was passing, quivered with apprehension as he heard the Dartmouth quarter's shrill voice. He was wishing fervently that the whistle would sound to end it all, and it was pure instinct which made him plunge forward at Blount's knees. The next second he was slammed fiercely against something solid, hard, unyielding; men heaped up on him until he felt as if breath and life were being crushed out of him. Then came that awful stabbing pain, as if his ribs were tearing through his heart and lungs. He tried to cry out, but his voice was smothered by the press of human beings above him. He tried to force his way to light and air, but was held helpless, as in a vise. His agony grew sharper, more intolerable, until at last he fainted.

He awoke in bed, with two ribs broken, to find himself the pride of the college. He had stopped the wonderful

Blount and saved the game. The whistle had sounded at the moment of his losing consciousness, and the ball was discovered at the bottom of the crush, less than a foot outside the goal line.

But from that moment fear held him in its grip. He could never enter a football game without that sense of cold, icy horror—that sickening fear of physical hurt. It was pride alone which forced him to hide his shrinking under an outward semblance of reckless daring; forced him to ever-increasing nonchalance and seeming disregard for danger, lest the shameful secret locked in his breast should be suspected.

CHAPTER III.

BEHIND THE MASK.

SCARCELY had Cabell recovered from the nervous shiver brought on by Bobby Lee's innocent remark, when the teams had changed positions, and were squaring away for the final quarter. The Cornell tackle fancied he saw in the faces of the opposing men a fierce determination which had been absent before. The broad backs, with each rippling muscle outlined under the damp, clinging jerseys, seemed broader, more powerful—somehow, more steadfast. They were stiffening for the final struggle, he thought; making ready to fight their way down the field with every ounce of strength and every particle of skill and cunning they could summon.

Hugh moistened his dry lips; the strain was telling, as it always did toward the end of a game. A fresh terror assailed him, the terror of snapping nerves and shattered self-control, which might suddenly expose to his comrades the ghastly truth. It acted as a sort of counterirritant, and made him plunge into the fray a moment later without a trace of hesitation or shrinking.

Following a volley of kicks came the line-up and the scrimmage, into which he plunged like a battering-ram. The opposing rush stopped suddenly, with the abruptness of a body crashing at a stone wall. There was a momentary swaying back and forth of the living

mass, the base of which was held as in a vise. Then the balance tilted, and the whole close-packed, struggling group collapsed, the man carrying the ball among them flung back for a loss.

Following so swiftly as to be almost a part of the same movement, there was an irresistible upheaval of the pile, and Hugh Cabell emerged and staggered to his feet. For a moment he stood swaying, white-faced, sweat-dabbled, a fleck of blood tingeing the grayness of his set lips. Then came that old familiar stiffening of his body and backward toss of his shapely head.

"That's it, fellows!" rang out in the vibrant, compelling voice. "Don't let 'em fool you! We've got 'em spiked; they can't score."

Inwardly he was writhing, quivering with fear and the shock of his narrow escape, shuddering still with the horror of the weight of bodies which had crushed him down into the trampled turf for an instant before the strength of desperation had enabled him to fling them off. He had suffered no damage this time beyond a few bruises and abrasions, but who could tell what moment might bring the catastrophe he dreaded with every fiber of his being? The next untangling of that mob of breathless, tattered men might leave him sprawling senseless, an inert clod, crushed, broken, maimed—perhaps worse!

With nerves well-nigh shattered, he would have given the world for a chance to quit the game then and there, but there was no chance. He could not bring himself to feign an injury that would let him out; the risk of detection and exposure was far too great. He was bound fast to the juggernaut of his own creating. There was nothing left but to struggle on to the bitter end.

On the side lines and throughout the great stands the swarming undergraduates greeted his feats of reckless daring with bursts of prolonged enthusiasm. There wasn't another player on the team who could come up to "Hughie," they declared hoarsely one to another between the crashes of mad cheering. Repeatedly they saw him lead the at-

tack or meet the charge of the opposing line with an apparent disregard for self which sent blood tingling through their veins or brought gasps of anxious horror from the lips of the more timorous. There was no one quite like him, in their opinion.

And when at last the game ended, with Penn State shut out and defeated, it was Cabell's name which first thundered back and forth across the field, and Cabell himself was the first object of the enthusiastic assault of the joyous under classmen.

"Cut it out, fellows!" he protested, when they laid violent hands on him, and hoisted him shoulder high in spite of his struggles to keep the ground; "I want to hustle back to the clubhouse."

"You'll get there, all right, without walking a step, Hughie," said an exuberant sophomore. "After the game you played to-day, we've got to let off steam somehow."

Vainly the tackle sought to escape on the plea of catching cold. A blanket was thrown over his shoulders by solicitous hands, and the procession started triumphantly across the field through the close-packed mob of students swarming closer with each step.

Cabell's face was no longer pale. A bright flush—the flush of shame—burned in his cheeks. How little they realized what a sham he was! If they only knew the truth, jeers and sneering glances would take the place of cheers. Once he looked down and met the awe-struck eyes of a callow freshman fixed on him in adoring hero worship. From the other side presently came a fragment of speech that stabbed him like a knife blade:

"Isn't he corking, Jimmy! If I could ever be like him, there wouldn't——"

Under the sheltering folds of the blanket Cabell's hands clenched spasmodically. If only they would let him alone, and not force all this undeserved attention upon him, it wouldn't be so bad. He felt like a thief stealing the credit of his teammates, yet deep down within him was joy—pure joyous relief and thankfulness that the ordeal was over at last; that he had survived an-

other game without the breakdown and humiliating exposure which he felt was sure to come some day in spite of all he could do to prevent it.

At the clubhouse entrance they let him down reluctantly, and he hurried into the dressing room, the echoes of that last enthusiastic cheer ringing in his ears. Here it was almost as bad. On every lip were praises for his playing and the wonderful way in which he had borne the brunt of the attack for the better part of the afternoon. Only Chester Liddell and one or two of his particular friends held aloof, but that was to be expected, and Cabell felt only too thankful to them for not joining in the chorus of laudation which he found so difficult to accept naturally. Long practice, however, enabled him to treat with a careless ease something which brought no pleasure or gratification. But he was one of the first to leave the clubhouse, accompanied by Geoff McNair, the only other member of his fraternity on the eleven.

The latter's roadster was drawn up on the grass just inside the gates, and it took but a moment to flip the crank and whirl out into Kale Street to the accompaniment of a jubilant running comment on the game by the owner of the car.

Cabell's part in the conversation was slight. He seemed thoughtful and absent, as if his mind was on something quite different and not so pleasant. But as the machine turned uphill toward the campus, he started slightly, and straightened perceptibly in his seat.

At the side of the road stood a touring car, the tonneau occupied by two women and an elderly man. A young chap just closing the tool box, and the chauffeur occupied with pumping up one of the rear tires, made it evident that whatever troubles they had had were over. McNair, who had slowed down a little at first sight of the other machine, withdrew his hand from the brake, and jabbed the accelerator with his foot.

As the roadster slid past, gathering speed for the climb, the older woman smiled and nodded pleasantly; but,

though Cabell politely acknowledged the salutation, he was scarcely conscious of it. He saw only the flushed, piquant face of the girl, her gray eyes smiling into his as she waved a slim, gloved hand. As the group vanished, an expression of keenest pain flickered across the tackle's face and was gone.

Suppose that she should come to learn what lay beneath the mask he strove so hard to keep in place? What would she do? What would she think if she knew him for the shameful coward he really was? A picture of her face flashed before him, the eyes no longer alight with sympathy and friendship, but coldly scornful. He winced. Rather than let that happen he would—

His face blanched suddenly, and he shivered. What would he do?

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONFSSIONAL BOOK.

AT the fraternity house that night everybody was in high spirits. The result of the game, particularly the part played in it by one of their most popular members, roused the entire crowd to jubilation. At dinner they lived over the contest, discussing the various features from every point of view. Later, in the big living room, they talked over the football situation generally, and made optimistic forecasts for the two really big games of the season—Dartmouth and U. of P.

Cabell was naturally the hero of the hour. There was no fulsome flattery or even out-and-out praise. To hear the others assail him with slighting, often opprobrious remarks, the uninitiated might have supposed him quite the most incapable football player that ever drew breath. But Hugh understood thoroughly the language of inversion; he knew exactly how much that seeming sarcasm meant. If only it had been deserved, the joshing, laughing comment with its undercurrent of liking, of affection, of admiration, it would have filled him with joyful pride and deep, abiding happiness. As it was,

each word cut into his sensitive spirit like so much vitriol.

The end came at last with the unpleasant recollection of the morrow and work which had not even begun. One by one the fellows reluctantly departed to green-shaded lamps and hard desk chairs, and tasks allotted by unfeeling instructors, leaving behind only a few fortunate mortals with brains more agile or consciences more easy than the average.

With Ward Gunnison, his roommate, Cabell was one of the first to depart. In their quarters on the second floor he switched on the lights, got into a loose, disreputable smoking jacket and slippers, and dropped down at his desk with a faint sigh of mingled weariness and relief.

"Tired?" asked Gunnison, jerking his chair round and placing the light back of it.

"A little," admitted Cabell.

In reality he was as fagged out as if he had been drawn through a knot hole, but it was not so much physical weariness as the result of the intense mental strain he had been under all day. He was conscious of an almost irresistible desire to unburden his mind to some one—to obtain the relief which the mere act of confession brings. Of course, the impulse was impossible of gratification. The very ones to whom he might have confided his shameful secret without a chance of its going farther were those, like Ward, whose faith and good opinion he valued too highly to risk destroying it.

He sat idle for a space, tapping the blotter absently with a pencil. Then, assuring himself that Ward was occupied, he opened a drawer, and took out a flexible, oblong notebook such as they used in chemical lab to enter the results of their experiments.

This book was a record, too, but of a very different nature. The closely written pages comprised the outpourings of a soul in torment. Barred from the possibility of confiding his troubles to any human, Cabell had chosen this method of relief when the strain be-

came so great that confession of some sort was imperative.

In short, terse phrases, which neither palliated nor excused, he laid bare his soul. Not once did he spare himself, but, rather, seemed to find a grim pleasure in making blacker the character he painted with such unconscious power and vividness. There was nothing mawkish or sentimental in this strange, disjointed narrative; no striving for effect in bursts of stilted, high-flown eloquence. But for all that, the pages fairly cried out with a tragic despair which was heart-rending. For ten minutes or more the pencil sped over the white paper, leaving behind a trail of bitter, scornful self-reproach with which the man tried to goad his shrinking spirit into a realization of the shameful truth. It had almost the effect of a stinging call-down from Les Harland, and as he wrote Hugh felt stealing over him a little of the relief he sought.

Presently he closed the book, put it carefully out of sight, and picked out the German textbook and opened it at the advance. But somehow he could not fix his mind upon it. In the face of this vital menace which threatened to ruin his whole career, German or any other study seemed amazingly trivial and unimportant. If only he could summon courage to confess to Ward, or Les Harland, or any one, what he had just written in the book! Not only would the relief be infinite, but there was a possibility that they might help him to overcome his weakness. If only he could goad himself to that point! But he knew that he never would. He knew himself for a moral as well as a physical coward. His wretched pride alone would keep him from acknowledging the shameful truth, until some day a breakdown on the field would blazon it far and wide to send him into the dust, a falling star, never to rise again.

He had a ghastly conviction that this day would come soon. The very thought of Dartmouth and the awful Blount sent cold shivers chasing up and down his spine; Blount raging, invin-

cible, a dozen times more powerful and brutal than he had been a year before. Long brooding and retrospection had bred a certainty that this man, at least, had fathomed his weakness, had read it in his eyes, sensed it by that curious intuition by which players find holes in the opposing line—and deliberately played upon it for his own ends.

"Hughie, were you ever in all your life—afraid?"

The sound of Gunnison's voice—musing, meditative, oddly hesitating—made Cabell catch his breath and grip the edge of his desk spasmodically. For a moment he could not speak. Had Ward found out? Did he suspect, after all? Was his own hand to be forced in spite of everything? Strangely, after that first chill of apprehension, a wave of something like relief surged over the tackle. Of his own free will he had found it impossible to confess, but if his friend had guessed his secret, what then?

CHAPTER V.

FETTERS OF DREAD.

JUST what do you mean by that, Pink?" Cabell asked. His voice was cool and steady, but he did not trust himself to face his chum.

"I mean, really afraid," Gunnison explained slowly. "Afraid so that your stomach flops the way it does sometimes in an express elevator, and you feel sick and shivery, and your legs wobble, and you hate yourself for wanting to be anywhere else but where you are." Hesitating, he laughed in an embarrassed way. "Of course you don't know what I mean, old man. I reckon I must be getting dotty in my old age, or else this afternoon made me a bit jealous of you."

Cabell turned and stared in astonishment at the slight, wiry figure curled in the morris chair across the room.

"Jealous?" he questioned, in an odd tone.

Gunnison ran his fingers through the tangle of sandy hair, and nodded. His freckled face glowed darkly underneath

the tan, and there was a queer expression in his blue eyes.

"Sure!" he affirmed. "I don't know what got into me, but as I saw you bucking that line time and time again, at the bottom of pretty nearly every pile-up and always the first to be up and after 'em again, and heard you yelling at the fellows to make 'em keep at it, I—well, I thought of what a poor, miserable coward I am myself. It hurt!"

"But you're not a coward!" protested Cabell.

Gunnison smiled faintly. "Oh, yes, I am," he returned quietly. "I've always been. As a kid I'd never get into a scrap if there was a possible way out; I was afraid of being hurt. I never played football for the same reason. I've always hated myself for being such a gink, but somehow it never hit me so hard as when I saw your nerve and sand to-day. You were corking, Hughie—simply corking!"

Cabell's hands gripped the chair arms. The momentary hope of relief by talking over his troubles had vanished. Ward suspected nothing. Moreover, something in his tone, a look in his eyes, made Hugh wonder whether much of his roommate's liking was not founded on an intense admiration for supposititious bravery. To confess would be to lose that liking which had come to mean so much to him, and he dared not risk it.

"That's all rot, Pink!" he said emphatically. "How can you be a coward after the way you went through the ice last Christmas to pull out your kid brother, and pretty near drowned yourself? If that wasn't nerve, I'd like to know what to call it."

Gunnison linked his slim, nervous fingers about one knee. "You're wrong, Hughie," he said quietly. "That wasn't nerve; I was simply petrified, but as there was no one else to go after the kid I had to." He squirmed uneasily. "I'm a good swimmer, you know, but ever since that day I've never been able to force myself into water out of my depth." He sighed. "No, a fellow will do things now and then when he's driven to it which may seem

brave, but that's a different breed of cats from the grit of a man like you, who doesn't know the meaning of fear, and risks his neck a dozen times in one afternoon without even thinking about it. I wonder how it feels to be that sort," he concluded, glancing wistfully at his chum.

Cabell did not answer; he could not. He managed to force a deprecating smile to his lips, and mutter something about a fellow getting used to the thing he did day after day without thinking whether it was dangerous or not. Inwardly he was writhing. Each word uttered so quietly and so unconsciously by the freckled-faced fellow across the room had been like a stinging dart to his sensitive spirit. He knew himself to be an infinitely greater coward than the man before him. Gunnison at least had the grit to acknowledge his timidity, but he, sham that he was, a creature beneath contempt, was afraid to show his fear.

He wondered if Ward thought him unsympathetic and unfeeling. He did not mean to be. If there was any one in the whole wide world capable of thoroughly understanding and appreciating his chum's troubles, he was that man. But just now he simply could not bring himself to discuss the subject. He was unnerved, worn to a frazzle, sick to death of the lies he had been living, if not actually telling by word of mouth. And so he turned their talk into other channels. There was a brief period of half-hearted grinding, then bed.

Because of a good measure of real physical weariness, Cabell slept well and woke refreshed. He awoke, too, with hope revived and stronger in his breast, for hope is difficult to kill. One thinks it dead beyond the possibility of resurrection, then one little thing—a word, a phrase, a smile, perhaps; or just a sweep of sunlit, cloudless sky—brings back to palpitating life something one felt had gone forever.

After breakfast Hugh ran up to his room, closed the door, fished out the diary from the bottom of the drawer, and read it over from beginning to end.

It was not easy. He had to force himself to do it, and not for the first time. He had a vague hope that somehow this shameful record of his cowardice and double life might goad him to genuine, manly courage. It was this reason alone which held his hand at moments when the temptation to destroy the book was strong; this reason mainly which moved him to add at intervals those stinging, self-reproachful paragraphs to something which already made him tingle with shame and humiliation. The perusal hurt this morning, as always, but also it had something of the effect he strove to get.

When he had finished, Cabell stood motionless for a moment, face crimson, eyes full of the most bitter scorn, lips moving with muttered vows of strangling the monster which rode him like the Old Man of the Sea, and made his life so utterly miserable and wretched.

He joined the group of his classmates in the hall below, and sallied forth into the crisp October morning in a mood almost of exaltation. He would conquer! It might be hard at first, but he could do it if he brought every ounce of his will power into the struggle. After all, what was there really to be afraid of? Knocks and bruises were matters of no consequence, and few men were ever badly hurt even in the most desperately contested game. He had been wretchedly weak not to take this determined stand long ago.

The mood continued all morning. For weeks untold he had not been so happy and carefree. The conviction that all the worry and deception was practically over and done with made him feel like shouting aloud in the exuberance of his relief.

The reaction was staggering. Hugh arrived a little late for practice, and found Dartmouth's recent victory over Williams the principal topic of conversation in the dressing room. It had been a sensational game from start to finish, with Ledgard Blount's tremendous power and fierce aggressiveness the most notable feature. As during the previous season, but with vastly increased strength and cleverness, the

giant tackle had carried everything before him, leaving in his wake a trail of bruised, battered, limping players who had failed utterly to hold out against the human battering-ram.

As Cabell listened to the details which one of the scrub had gathered from an eyewitness, he felt again that cold, shrinking dread he thought had gone forever. He tried his best to down it, but without avail. A vivid picture of the raging, brutal Blount hurling his huge bulk crushingly upon the line—upon Cabell himself—flashed into his mind and stayed. It was there when he left the clubhouse with the others; there when the varsity lined up against the scrub. As he plunged into the first scrimmage cold sweat broke out all over the tackle's body; despair filled his soul.

The fetters of fear still held him. Worse yet, they were drawing tighter. Up to this time the shrinking had not come upon him save in the progress of a real game against another college team. Now he was afraid of his own scrub.

CHAPTER VI.

THE IMPASSABLE WALL.

IN the days which followed it was remarkable that Cabell's manner did not arouse suspicion, at least in the intimate association of the fraternity house. No matter how great his self-control, no man can labor under such a strain and suppress every sign of it. The constant mental turmoil and struggling against what seemed more and more inevitable brought about in Cabell a certain brusqueness and irritability. Periods of ill-concealed depression alternated with bursts of feverish gayety that could not fail to attract attention.

His associates noticed it, and indulged in speculative comment now and then, but the tackle's behavior on the field made it impossible for any one to guess the truth. One and all, his friends decided that Hugh was following the example of many other members of the varsity, and allowing himself to worry unduly over their chances in the two big games of the season—the only

games in the entire schedule which really counted with loyal Cornell men.

Unobtrusively and with careful optimism they sought to encourage him by comments on the improvement shown by this or that member of the team, by score comparisons, and in many other ways. His own playing was so dashing, so nearly flawless, that no one thought of referring to it. He seemed to them merely a victim of too severe training, which so often results in mental strain and unnecessary anxiety.

So Cabell was left alone to fight a losing battle against that insidious enemy which was slowly but surely undermining his whole being. The struggle, heretofore intermittent, became nearly continuous. The hours of practice became hours of torment as keen, almost, as the distress he had previously felt only during the regular games. He fought hard against it by every means he could think of, but in vain. And when the swift passing of a week brought Saturday's game with Oberlin, a team of lightweights never to be feared, Hugh had a ghastly feeling that the break he dreaded must come then and there.

It did not—quite. He managed to hold himself together, but it was only by the narrowest possible margin that he escaped exposure. Afterward, in the dressing room, happening to catch Chet Liddell's gaze fixed on him with a curious intentness, he wondered, with a sudden chill, whether he had escaped after all. Did the fellow suspect anything? From his place on the scrub he was always watching and waiting for a chance to pick flaws in the playing of the man he hated, and now it looked as if his waiting had been rewarded. The longer Hugh thought about it the more certain he became. Some little slip, unthought of at the time, might easily have given Liddell an inkling of the truth; and, knowing the man as he did, Hugh realized that he would not keep his lips sealed.

Cabell shivered. Then a spark of anger blazed up, rousing his manhood to a last desperate stand against impending ruin. If his resolution did fail

him, if he should stumble and fall, Liddell would be the first to leap upon his prostrate spirit and trample it with deep delight. The two had not got on well together, although there had never been an open outbreak; but from the time when Cabell's spectacular entrance into football, a year ago, deprived his classmate of a chance to make the varsity, and set him back among the lesser substitutes, relations had been strained. Another feature had lately entered into the affair, adding to Liddell's resentment. He had made several unsuccessful attempts to gain the friendship of Barbara Winslow, the popular niece of one of the university professors, and, instead of attributing his failure to the charming young woman herself, he laid the blame on Cabell. Cabell was one of the favored few, he reasoned; disliking him, Hugh had deliberately turned Miss Winslow against him by scurrilous innuendoes, if not by actual lies.

Hugh himself knew nothing of this latest addition to the fanciful score against him, although he was made aware, by the growing venom in Liddell's manner, that the fellow's dislike had increased. He knew that his own downfall would be greeted with joy in that quarter, and it was this realization which stirred in him a resentful determination to thwart and disappoint the sorehead.

With an effort—so many things had lately come to mean an effort—he pulled himself together and started a discussion regarding the probable result of Dartmouth's game with Penn State that afternoon. Determination to accomplish his purpose made him forget his fears for a space. Without a qualm he pointed out the strength and weakness of Cornell's greatest rival. He even dissected the mighty Blount, contending that the man's personality and reputation for being invincible had more to do with his phenomenal success on the gridiron than anything else. The fellow was only human; if they went after him hard enough, and kept hammering at him, they'd get him in the end as effectually as if he were the weakest player in the line.

Again his words put new heart into the doubters, but it was the same old story of rousing in others a courage and confidence totally lacking in his own breast. When the immediate necessity for putting up a good front before Liddell had passed, Cabell was seized again in the grip of that monster, made stronger, perhaps, for visions his own words had conjured up.

Saturday night passed, and the following morning brought news of Penn State's defeat by Dartmouth with a score of 18 to 0; also fresh details of Blount's success in tearing to pieces the weaker team's defense.

Unable longer to sit about and listen to the resulting talk and surmise, which continued into the afternoon, Cabell slipped out and started up the hill to Professor Martin's residence. It seemed to him that the one person in the world capable of taking his mind off himself was Barbara Winslow. Her manner was sympathetic, her personality soothing; yet, after a scant fifteen-minute call, Hugh departed more down-cast than before.

The girl had seemed quieter and more reserved than usual. Once or twice he caught her eyes fixed on him, and in them he thought he detected something like regret, or pity. He realized that his abnormal sensitiveness was probably entirely to blame, and that he was reading in her manner something which wasn't there at all; but the dread of what she would think if she learned the truth returned tenfold, putting to flight any hope of relief in her presence.

He got through his classes in the morning, but back at the house, toward noon, he was filled with a curious consciousness of having reached a crisis. The thought of the Dartmouth game, less than a week off, loomed constantly in his mind, and with it a picture of Blount, a dozen times more powerful and menacing than he had been before. Shut up in his room, he took out the diary and with feverish haste set down a brief record of his struggles in the past two days. He paused an instant, perspiration dampening his forehead.

Then his pen moved swiftly on, almost without his conscious volition.

"In spite of everything," he wrote, "I have a ghastly feeling that I shan't be able to face it—that I'll show myself a spineless coward by quitting before the Dartmouth game."

The pounding of feet on the stairs and the sound of voices made him drop his pen, shut the book, and thrust it hastily under a pile of books and papers on the desk. He had scarcely taken a sheet of note paper from a pigeonhole when the door was flung open, and Gunnison, Ken Gardner, and McNeil, all talking at once, entered without ceremony.

"Boning, you old lobster!" accused Gardner, who considered that occupation a woeful waste of time. "Oh! Writing a letter, eh? Well, listen! Old Bart's going to land in town this afternoon and stay all night. What do you know about that!"

"Great, isn't it?" put in Gunnison. "We haven't set eyes on him since June."

"That's fine!" exclaimed Cabell delightedly. He hesitated for a fraction of a minute. "How's he able to get off? What time is he due?"

There was not the slightest visible change in his voice or manner, but during that momentary pause his whole point of view had been suddenly reversed. At first the thought of seeing Bart Hilliard again aroused in him the keenest delight, for the older man held a peculiar place in Hugh's esteem. In spite of the fact that certain of his classmates who knew him only superficially had christened him "The Saint," Hilliard was far from being in the category of the "too-goods"; he was simply a human, lovable fellow with a fine sense of honor and a quality of deep sympathy which drew men to him like a magnet.

But on the heels of that first natural enthusiasm at the prospect of seeing again the man he liked so well, there came to Cabell a flood of remembrance, and with it a shrinking from such an encounter just then. Bart was sure to size up the situation and guess what

was troubling him. It was a way he had, bred partly from that very sympathy which was usually such a boon to others, partly from a keenly analytical mind. He would be certain to strip the painfully adjusted mask from Cabell's emotions. The thought of losing Hilliard's liking and regard, as he surely must if the truth were known, was intolerable. He forced himself to take part in the talk of the other fellows, and presently went down with them to lunch, but his mind was elsewhere, and the only thing that stuck was the realization that Bart would arrive late in the afternoon, and come directly to the frat house.

After lunch there was the usual hustle to make the chemical lab on time. With a mind still wholly intent on his latest difficulty, Cabell snatched up books and papers from his desk, and followed the others. His abstraction continued in the laboratory, making him useless for any sort of work. He simply pottered aimlessly about, while Ward, who saw that something was troubling his chum, looked after the details of the scheduled experiments without comment. When the time came to enter the results Hugh found that he had forgotten even his notebook, in spite of a vague impression of having taken it from the desk with the other things. It was not in the pile he had dropped carelessly on the farther end of the bench, so he must have left it behind.

It did not seem a matter of the least importance. The everyday routine of books and classrooms and laboratories had become dwarfed and belittled by the imminence of that peril which loomed bigger with every passing moment. The question that troubled him now was: What could he do to stave off the meeting with Hilliard and all that must surely follow in its wake?

It seemed as if his mind, worn out by constant deceptions of the past week, had suddenly refused to work. It was as if he had come face to face with an impassable stone wall which he was too tired even to try to climb.

Presently he found himself watching

Ward as he entered neatly in his notebook the figures and tabulations of the first experiment. A moment later, in a curiously detached fashion, as if it were some one else speaking, he heard himself remarking that he could copy that off later, so there wasn't much use in his waiting around any longer. Then he walked out.

CHAPTER VII.

THE QUITTER.

FIFTEEN or twenty minutes later Ward Gunnison finished his work, and, gathering up his books, also departed from the laboratory. The day was clear and bracing, with a touch of Indian summer lingering in the air, and he had promised McNeil to play a few sets of tennis on the house courts. Geoff had not returned, however, so Gunnison got into flannels and tennis things, then sat down at his desk to scratch off a belated home letter in the moments of waiting.

He had barely scrawled the date and superscription when the slamming of a door below made him straighten up and glance expectantly toward the head of the stairs, visible from where he sat. Geoff was almost on time for once in his life, he thought, as the thud of hastily ascending feet came to his ears. A moment later his eyebrows went up in surprise at the sight of his roommate, who, he supposed, had long ago started for Percy Field and the regular afternoon practice. A jocular question rose to his lips, but the sight of his chum's face choked it back.

With eyes oddly dilated, Cabell flung himself into the room, and slammed the door behind him. For an instant he stood motionless, breathing hard, as if he had been running. Then he tossed a crumpled ball of yellow paper down before the astonished Gunnison.

"Read that," he said hoarsely. "It just came."

He had disappeared into the bedroom before Ward could smooth out the ominously colored sheet which he knew before he had even touched it to be a telegram.

"Mother dangerously ill," he read. "Come at once."

It was signed "Beverly Cabell," and sent from Boston, where, Ward knew, his chum's mother and sister were spending the winter with Mrs. Cabell's brother. He sprang up and hastened into the bedroom. Cabell was throwing things into a bag which stood open on the table. He did not look up. Ward noticed that his hands were trembling a little, and that his thick hair lay plastered on his forehead with perspiration.

"I'm mighty sorry, old fellow," Gunnison said slowly. "But probably it isn't half as bad as it sounds. Very likely by the time you get there you'll find everything all right—or nearly so."

For a moment Cabell did not answer. His head was bent over the bag, into which he thrust a last article, and snapped it shut.

"Thanks, old man," he said at last, turning to the closet for his derby. "You're mighty good, but—I don't know. You'll let Harland know? I've just time to make the train."

"Don't worry about that for a second. I'll chase down to the field right away and put him wise. Good-by and good luck. Don't forget to drop me a line."

Their hands met in a firm grip, but even then Cabell's glance was averted. A moment later he was pounding down the stairs, leaving Gunnison in the middle of the bedroom, his freckled face bearing an expression of troubled concern which no worries of his own had ever brought there.

Presently he moved to the window and glanced out. At the corner Cabell was just swinging aboard a car. As Hugh was swept out of sight Gunnison, recalled to the duty before him, slid into a sweater, grabbed up a hat, thrust the telegram into his pocket, and ran downstairs.

In the clubhouse he found the squad ready to take the field, one and all wondering what had become of the missing player. Ward's first words to Harland brought the men flocking around him, and in an instant the dressing room re-

sounded with exclamations of profound dismay.

Cabell gone, and the Dartmouth game less than a week off! Without the splendid work and magnetic presence of the star tackle they wouldn't have a ghost of a chance against the New Hampshire university. They would be mowed down, snowed under, beaten unmercifully. Led by the invincible Blount, the opposing team would plow through their line as it had done a year before, only a hundred times worse; there would be no Cabell to stiffen the defense, lead the attack, and beat Dartmouth's formidable tackle at his own game.

Not all the men, or even the majority, openly voiced this opinion; but, as the telegram was passed from hand to hand, the faces of those who remained silent were eloquent of the utmost consternation. At first Gunnison was indignant that no one seemed to consider Hugh himself and all this blow might mean to him. But swiftly he realized that the fellows were not really heartless and lacking in consideration. It was natural that the tremendous gap made by Cabell's probable absence from the team should be first and foremost in their minds.

"That's about enough, fellows," suddenly broke in Lester Harland peremptorily. "We're mighty hard hit, I admit, but there's never anything gained in crying over spilled milk."

His eyes ranged swiftly over the downcast faces around him, and not one of the men who watched him guessed that he would have given the world for a measure of that magnetic quality with which the absent tackle had so often at crucial moments infused fresh courage and confidence into his teammates.

"Besides," went on the captain grimly, "we're not going to admit that the strength of the team lies in one man, without whom we are powerless. Hughie may come back in time—I hope he does. But we've got to go ahead on the supposition that he won't, and fight all the harder on Saturday to make up for his absence. We've wasted too much time already. Chet, hop in at

left tackle and see what you can do to fill the hole."

As the players started in a body for the door, Gunnison stepped back against the lockers, his face downcast and troubled. If he had not already known how great a power his friend was on the varsity he would have learned it now in a passing glance at that crowd. Here a shoulder sagged, there a head drooped or a foot dragged. Scarcely was there a face that did not show, more or less, the disheartening concern felt by its owner at the thought of going into a game without Hugh Cabell.

There was one notable exception. Chester Liddell strode along with shoulders squared and arms swinging. As he passed Gunnison their eyes met, and into Liddell's face there leaped an expression of such sneering triumph that Ward scowled and his teeth came together with a snap.

"The rotter!" he muttered, glaring after the upright figure swinging along so blithely. "He's glad! He doesn't give a hang for the team so long as he has a chance to step into Hughie's shoes, which he couldn't fill if he tried a thousand years."

Presently he walked out upon the field, and watched the practice for a while. But it was so lacking in snap and go that he soon gave it up and went away. He was a fine example of the best type of college man—loyal to the core, and so keenly enthusiastic about everything which tended toward Cornell's supremacy that it hurt to see this slipshod performance and realize that it was doubtless a forecast of what would happen on the following Saturday.

Back at the house he learned that McNeil had shown up at last, and, finding no word from him, had gone off again in his car. Somehow it annoyed Gunnison, though he acknowledged that he himself was altogether to blame. He was in the mood for an hour or so of slashing tennis, not so much for the desire for exercise as to take his thoughts away from the unfortunate occurrences of the afternoon. But there was no one else in the house with

time or inclination to play, so at last he went up to his room with the idea of getting through with enough work to make him free that evening.

The project was not altogether successful. Constant thoughts of Hugh and the possible tragedy toward which he was speeding, mingled with uneasy remembrances of the discouraged squad he had left down on the field, rendered impossible any close application to books. Finally, with an exclamation of impatience, he grabbed up his things, left the house, and started for the gym.

Half an hour's vigorous exercise, followed by a refreshing swim in the tank, went far toward restoring him to a normal frame of mind. After all, things might not come to the worst. Possibly Mrs. Cabell would take a turn for the better before the last of the week, and if Hugh got back as late, even, as Saturday morning, he could still go into the game.

The main gymnasium had been empty when Ward left it for the tank, but now, as he approached the communicating doors, he heard the voices of a number of persons, all of them apparently talking at once. A step or two farther on he paused, frowning at the recognition of Chester Liddell's unpleasant tones. As he hesitated, wondering how he could bring himself to meet the fellow he so deeply disliked without saying something disagreeable, he caught a sentence or two which seemed to send every drop of blood in his body flaming into his freckled face.

"Bah!" sneered Liddell. "Hugh Cabell's mother is no more sick than mine is! He ran away because he was afraid—afraid to face the Dartmouth team and Ledge 'Blount! Afraid of being hurt, the quitter!"

The chorus of incredulous exclamations scarcely penetrated to Gunnison's consciousness. The blood had drained swiftly from his face, leaving it white, with eyes that glittered strangely from between narrowed lids. He trembled slightly. Reaching out one hand, he gripped the edge of the open door.

"You don't believe me?" came again

in Liddell's voice. "Well, I'll prove it!"

There was a brief pause, the sound of a heel clicking on the concrete floor, the slight creaking of a locker door. Ward stepped nearer the opening between the rooms. He had ceased to tremble; something in the tense lines of his lithe body reminded one of a panther crouching to spring.

"It's in his own handwriting," resumed Liddell gloatingly; "a sort of diary. I picked it up in the lab this afternoon, and stuck it in here after I'd discovered what it was. Just listen to this:

"Every day the horrible fear seems to get a tighter grip on me. It was all I could do to get through the game yesterday without blowing up. To be afraid of Oberlin! What will happen a week from now against Dartmouth and Ledgard Blount is only too certain. If there was any way of getting out of it, I'd take it, but there isn't. I've got to stick it out as long as I can, and then—Heaven help me!

"You see," jeered Liddell, "he couldn't stand the strain, so he skipped out. For all his bluff and big talk, he's a miserable coward!"

"You lie!"

The two words, repressed, almost quiet, were charged with such a steely menace that the members of the little group whirled as one man to stare in amazement at the slim chap with the pale, freckled face who advanced slowly toward them from the tank room. Liddell hesitated an instant, then broke into a raucous laugh.

"Did I hear you make a remark, Pinkie?" he drawled contemptuously.

"I said you were a liar!" was the answer, as Gunnison reached the edge of the group and stopped.

The big man flushed angrily, and took a step forward. Then he paused and laughed again. "Of course you'd say that!" he sneered. "Everybody knows you think the sun rises and sets by this precious friend of yours. Luckily I've got the proof of what I say right here in my hand. Do you want me to read another extract?"

"No!" Like an explosive the word issued from Gunnison's pale lips; like

a projectile from a gun his wiry figure leaped forward. With one hand he gripped the book and tore it from Liddell's grasp; with the other he dealt the football player a blow in the face which sent him staggering.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FAIR TEST.

LIDDELL'S roar of fury resounded through the vaulted room, and, recovering, he came lunging back at his slighter antagonist. Instinctively the latter dodged. He had jammed the notebook swiftly into his pocket.

As Liddell pulled himself up and whirled around, two of the onlookers who had been dazed by the suddenness of the fracas recovered themselves and sought to stop the fight. One of them received the full impact of a blow intended for Gunnison, which sent him skidding across the concrete floor. The other got the big man's shoulder, and that was enough to discourage him from further interference. There was a swift widening of the circle as the men stared in incredulous bewilderment at the unexpected encounter.

Time and time again the lightweight escaped the other's swinging blows by the merest hair. Once or twice he did not escape them, and they bowled him sprawling on the hard concrete in a manner which should have ended the fight then and there. To the astonishment of every witness he came to his feet each time like a panther, and like a panther he bounded at his husky antagonist. Scarcely a blow that he struck was wholly wasted.

Liddell, slower and more unwieldy, at length began to feel the effects of his own furious rushes back and forth. His breath came in gasps; at last he slipped and fell.

Before the big fellow could get to his feet Gunnison was raining blows upon his head, his face, his body. He knew nothing of the rules of scientific boxing, and cared less. He was filled with white-hot rage against the man who had slandered the best friend he had ever known; lifted beyond the pale

of fear, of reasoning, of caution. Absolutely forgetful of himself, and transformed into quite another being, the ferocity of his attack was so overpowering that Liddell, beaten down again and again, presently ceased his efforts to rise, and fell back dazed and only half conscious. Then, at last, three or four of the astonished spectators rushed forward and dragged the victor away.

"Let me alone!" panted Gunnison, jerking his arms free. "I'll choke him with his lies! I'll make him swallow them!"

Liddell made an unintelligible sound, half grunt, half groan, and rolled over on his back, breathing heavily.

"Quit, Gunnison!" warned one of the witnesses peremptorily. "He's all in!"

"Is he?" said Ward, astonished. "So soon? Then I'll quit; but— Remember, Liddell," he went on harshly, "if you ever open your mouth again to slander Hugh Cabell, or try to put across any more of your lying forgeries against a man who's done more for the varsity than you ever could in a thousand years, I'll give you a *real* thrashing!"

Without another word, or even a glance at the gaping group, he turned and walked to the door, head up and shoulders squared. Outside, beyond the reach of curious eyes, he paused and, with a hand that shook a little, took out a handkerchief and wiped his forehead and face. There was a fleck of red on the linen, and for an instant he stood looking at it with an odd expression of surprise. He had not been conscious of any hurt until that moment, but now he became aware of a stinging smart on one cheek and sensations of sundry bruises on various other parts of his anatomy.

As he left the gym and cut through the campus toward the fraternity house, a curious sense of unreality came over him with a rush. Was it actually he who not only had provoked a fight with Chet Liddell, but licked him—he, an acknowledged coward, who had always been afraid of physical encounters? It seemed incredible. How had he ever

brought himself to conquer his detested timidity and act the part of a man for once?

The recollection of Liddell's lying slanders against Hugh stained his face a vivid crimson, and answered the question in an instant. It was enough to fire the veriest poltroon to action. What a cur the fellow was, deliberately to blacken the character of a man unable to defend himself! Liddell must have been deranged to expect any one to believe his defamatory allegations. The idea of Cabell, the fearless mainspring of the varsity, accused of cowardice would have been laughable had it not shown up a spirit so contemptible that Gunnison felt a stinging shame at the realization that the author of the slander had somehow attained the right to wear the coveted "C" upon his breast.

"Fancy the colossal nerve of the brute," growled Ward, "faking up a diary and expecting to deceive any one with it!" His hand touched the book in his pocket, but he did not draw it forth. "It's a forgery; it can't be anything else!"

But presently he recalled having seen Hugh several times writing a little secretively in a book much like the one he had snatched from Liddell. It seemed rather odd that the latter should have known of something which Ward himself had discovered by accident. This did not in the least disturb his faith in Cabell, but when he reached the house he was moved to slip up to his room without even pausing to inquire whether Hilliard, the popular alumnus, had arrived.

He told himself it was because he wanted to freshen up and remove all possible traces of his encounter in the gym; but when he was alone, with the door shut, he made no effort to wash, or change his things. He stood for a long time beside his desk, then slowly, with an odd movement of hesitation, drew the book from his pocket and held it in his hands.

In appearance it was like the one he had seen Cabell writing in. It was also identical with their chemical-lab notebooks. All at once, as he stared at the

familiar checkered cover, Gunnison remembered his chum's curious insistence that he had brought his book to the laboratory that afternoon, in spite of his inability to find it with the others. Liddell had explained his possession of this book by saying that he had picked it up in the lab.

The strange coincidence sent an unpleasant shiver tingling on Ward's spine, and he dropped down rather heavily on the desk chair.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CLOSER BOND.

FOR a long time Gunnison sat motionless, staring at the book before him. He longed and dreaded at one and the same time to open it. If this were really his chum's diary nothing could induce him to read a single line. But how was such a thing possible unless Liddell had brazenly faked the extract he had pretended to read?

At length, tormented by doubt and an intense desire to settle once and for all the fact that there had been a deliberate plot against Cabell's reputation, he put out one hand and touched the cover. He was as familiar with Hugh's writing as with his own. A brief glance at one of the pages would be enough to tell him what he wanted to know. For a minute longer he hesitated; then, with a determined movement, his fingers flicked back the sheets.

Suddenly his hand stopped; then it dropped limply to the desk. His eyes widened, his whole frame stiffened. Staring up at him out of that page, which could have been written by no one save Hugh Cabell, a single sentence seared itself upon his brain in letters that burned like vitriol:

How little Ward suspects that the grit he admires is loathsome sham; that I'm a moral as well as a physical coward—a creature beneath contempt, afraid to show his fear!

A gasp came from Gunnison's set lips; a rush of color turned his face a vivid crimson. For a second he sat stunned, motionless, his eyes full of unbelief. Then a quiver of pain flick-

ered into them, and his lids drooped. When they lifted again his face had taken on a set, stony expression which told a little of what he was suffering.

Presently his glance strayed again to the book before him. He read a little more—a line, a phrase, a sentence. With unsteady fingers he turned the page. The misery in his face became deeper, but after a little the stony look softened into pity and infinite regret. Those bitter words of self-reproach, fairly pulsating with a sense of keenest despair and hopelessness, brought to him a vivid realization of what Hugh must have suffered, and stirred his sympathy to the depths.

When he raised his head from the book something had vanished from Ward Gunnison's face—something of faith, of admiration, of hero worship. But in its place had come another sturdier quality, which showed in the tightly pressed lips and hardened jaw, in the determined purpose gleaming in his blue eyes. He stood up and began pacing the room, his face thoughtful. In his mind was the vision of a college career shattered, of the man he had worshiped starting life under the burden of a shameful handicap that he might never overcome. He had a fear which amounted almost to conviction that Cabell would never return to finish his course. Though no longer possessed of the incriminating diary, Liddell was sure in time to spread about the truth. Many would deny it, to be sure; but if Hugh did not return to face his enemy and, by his actions, make the latter's slanders impossible of belief, there would always be doubts in some minds as to the cause of his inexplicable departure from Cornell.

The thought of all this was intolerable to Gunnison, for in the mental test through which he had just passed his friendship for his chum had been strengthened instead of weakened. Formerly he had looked up to Hugh almost as a person on a different plane, had fairly worshiped him because of that dashing bravery, apparently so different from his own self-confessed timidity. But with the shattering of the

idol had come something more human and infinitely more binding. Instead of a superior being, he had found a character as full of frailties and human weaknesses as his own. The relation was no longer a one-sided affair; he could give as well as take. He could render aid where it was desperately needed, and that was what he meant to do.

Hugh must come back. How he comported himself after his return was something which need not be considered at present. Surely, now that he had a confidant, the need of which every page of that diary expressed so eloquently, he could manage to force himself to play his part for the few remaining days of the season. Together they ought to find some way of keeping that hateful fear at bay for those two games. Crystal clear, Gunnison saw his duty: To find his chum and actually to force him, if necessary, to follow the only possible course to preserve his standing with his fellows, and restore in some degree his shattered self-respect.

His mind made up, Gunnison was swift to act. In Hugh's desk he found and noted down the address of Mrs. Cabell's brother. Hastily changing his clothes, he packed a bag, and sat down to write a few lines to Colin Campbell, the chapter president, explaining vaguely that he was called away for a few days. He hated the thought of seeming to sneak off like this, but he dared not give the fellows a chance for the storm of questions which would pour upon him if he personally announced his departure.

Finishing the note, he switched off the light and softly opened the door. Dinner must just have been announced, for the sound of talk and laughter from the living room below was dying away as the fellows descended into the basement dining room.

Having waited a minute or two, Gunnison left the note on Campbell's desk, and went softly down the stairs. From the basement he heard a laugh which sounded like Hilliard's. He wished he might have seen old Bart, if only for a

moment, but that was impossible. He let himself out into the street, and the door closed behind him.

CHAPTER X.

INTO THE BIG WOODS.

"GONE to Maine!" Gunnison's jaw sagged, and he nearly dropped the telephone receiver. He was phoning from the South Station, in Boston, and Mrs. Cabell herself had answered the call. She had been very ill, she said, but had recovered as suddenly as she had been stricken. Her daughter, Beverley, had sent the alarming message to Hugh, and he had arrived before it could be corrected.

"Yes," she continued, "just a brief shooting trip to Fish River Lake, near Ashland. He got in late last night, and took an early train this morning. He was tired out, and not at all well, and it seemed the best way of spending a short leave of absence from college. He'll be sorry to miss you."

"Sorry!" muttered Ward, when he had mumbled his thanks and hung up. "What a thundering mess! Fish River Lake—hunting trip—whew!"

Five minutes later he was deep in conversation with the man behind the "Information" window. Within an hour he hunted up an acquaintance in an office on Boylston Street, persuaded him to cash a check, and reached the North Station in ample time to have a bite of lunch and catch the noon train for Bangor. The journey seemed interminable. It was after nine when he reached Bangor, and, of course, much too late to get anything north on the Aroostook. He took the first train next morning, and when he finally stepped out of the stuffy, uncomfortable day coach at Ashland he was stiff and sore in every limb.

He would have given a lot for a chance to rest his weary bones, but he could not spare even an hour. It was Wednesday. Hugh must be back at Ithaca by Saturday morning at the latest. No time was to be lost.

Inquiry at the general store revealed the fact that Fish River Lake was some

nine miles distant as the crow flies, and considerably farther if one followed the tortuous roads made by lumbermen. The proprietor remembered Cabell's arrival late the night before. He and Joe Simmons, a guide, had started off at daybreak in the latter's canoe. They hadn't mentioned their exact destination, but perhaps Bill Welsh, who had driven in from Higgins' Camp Number Two for supplies, might know something about it.

Ward went out to where the teamster was loading up his wagon at the rear of the store. He found a hulking, hard-looking fellow with two weeks' growth of stubble disfiguring his countenance, and a sullen, grouchy manner. He knew nothing about Cabell and the guide, and his tone intimated that he cared less.

For a minute or two Gunnison was stumped. With no experience in woodcraft, he would be helpless so far as finding his way to the lake alone was concerned, and from the storekeeper he had learned that the few professional guides having their homes in Ashland were all out with parties. A certain Jim Allen might show up in a day or so, but there was no positive assurance of that; and, anyway, Ward hadn't even a few hours to spare.

He stood doubtfully in the doorway for a while, watching Welsh heave boxes and bundles into the wagon with vicious swings of his powerful arms, as if venting a chronic spite on these inanimate objects. He was not in the least a prepossessing sort of person. In fact, to Gunnison, unaccustomed to rough characters of any sort, he looked positively dangerous. But Ward was desperate, and at last, after a long period of hesitation, he asked whether it would be possible for him to get a lift as far as Higgins' camp. Fortunately he happened to add that he expected to pay for the accommodation. Welsh had already commenced a growling refusal, but at the mention of money he changed it into a grudging assent, announced that they would start in ten minutes, and continued his work.

Once committed, Ward was unde-

cided whether to be glad or sorry. When finally he mounted the seat and the wagon creaked slowly past the last frame shack of the little settlement into the lonely wilderness of scrub timber and thick undergrowth, his doubts on that score vanished swiftly. He was distinctly sorry. Moreover, he fervently wished himself back in the homely security of the cluttered store, for the unpleasant conviction suddenly came to him that the sulky giant at his side had been drinking. He tried to laugh down his fears, but failed dismally. The silence, the feeling of utter isolation, the sinister, taciturn fellow at his side who scarcely opened his lips except at intervals to drink from a flat bottle which he carried, all combined to wear upon nerves already jangling from the tense uncertainty of the mission. Swiftly Ward recalled the fact that not a single soul had the least idea of his whereabouts. This burly ruffian could knock him over the head, go through his clothes, and toss him aside in the underbrush with scarcely a chance of detection. The swift approach of early November twilight added to his fears.

When at last they reached the logging camp without a single one of his dire forebodings materializing, Gunnison's relief and thankfulness were as great as if the perils he had pictured were real instead of the product of imagination and inexperience.

Here at least he would be safe, he thought, as he dropped off the wagon in front of a commodious log house set down amid some smaller shanties beside the lake. He need remain only long enough to find out where Hugh was staying. It couldn't be far away, for one of the few grudging bits of information he had extracted from the taciturn Welsh was the scornful comment that "Fish River Lake ain't nothin' but a mis'able overgrown pond."

After dumping his passenger—having first made sure of the dollar he demanded for the lift—the teamster drove off into the darkness, leaving Gunnison to shift for himself. Ward hesitated doubtfully for a moment at

the entrance of the log house. The cheery gleam of light shining through the cracks and the occasional bursts of laughter from within were encouraging, so presently he pushed the door open and entered.

He saw a long, low room lined with wooden bunks and hazy with clouds of tobacco smoke. A great fire roared and crackled in a wide-throated chimney, and gathered about it in various attitudes of lounging abandon were fully twelve men. There was a sudden cessation of talk as the door opened; heads were turned in that direction. Gunnison stepped forward, blinking a little in the glare of the fire.

"I—I beg your pardon," he faltered.

"Holy smoke!" exclaimed a huge, rawboned, iron-jawed man who rose with a spring amazingly catlike for one so sizable. "Here he is! Told yuh the little runt'd likely come nosin' in here."

There was a general stir. Growling and muttering, the men got upon their feet, favoring the intruder with looks of distrust and hatred which filled him with a sense of alarm. His eyes took note of long-necked bottles and tiny dip-pers. Like the teamster, this crowd had been indulging in liquor.

The giant strode forward and grasped his arm. "That baby game won't go here," he rasped. "Yuh put it over on Mose Walloughby's crew, and made 'em b'lieve yuh was a tender chicken. Yuh got your sneakin' evidence for the revenues. Tom McGuire's down the river waitin' trial now, but they've got your number from Seebois to th' Allegash."

His iron fingers bit into Gunnison's arm. "Close the door tight, boys," he directed. "We're goin' to make it so hot for this spy that he'll throw up his job the minute he can crawl out of the sticks and git to the first telephone office. He won't wait to report in person to his superior."

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN FEAR FLED.

HUGH CABELL was not enjoying himself. Although fond of the woods and hunting, he found no pleas-

ure in either now. Twice that afternoon he had fired at a deer, missing both times because his mind was elsewhere. The soft browns and yellows of the autumn woods, the dark, rich greens of fir and balsam which usually rejoiced his heart, had resolved themselves into a mere background for that vivid mental picture of Percy Field with twin lines of battling men. He saw his own team being driven back, back, by the irresistible rush of Dartmouth and the mighty Blount. Always he seemed to see the Cornell line break and melt at that very point where he should have been, but from which fear had driven him—a quitter, a coward! Perhaps he could have done no better than the man who took his place, but at least he would have fought with them, gone down with them to honorable defeat, preserving some shreds of decency and self-respect.

With such phantoms flitting continuously through his mind, it was small wonder that he missed the two bucks that presented such fair and tempting marks through the stripped trees. He was even indifferent to the guide's ill-suppressed surprise and disapproval. But he was loath to return to camp even when dusk began to fall, for the simple reason that he hoped by physically exhausting himself to gain a measure of real sleep that night.

Darkness found them miles from the rough shack owned by Simmons at the head of the lake, and the guide suggested that, on the way thither, they might as well stop at Higgins' camp for a bite to eat.

Cabell agreed. He had dropped in at such places more than once during former trips into this section of the woods, and, though they were rough and ready, he usually found the timber cutters decent enough at heart. Besides, at the present moment, he welcomed anything which would divert his mind and bring even a brief respite from the unpleasant visions which had troubled him all day. Before they reached the camp a cheery gleam of light shone through the trees to guide them. Presently they saw that it came

from an open window in the long bunk house, from which sounds of uncommonly raucous laughter reached their ears.

"Boys seem to be enj'yin' themselves to-night," commented Simmons in some surprise. "Wonder if Fred could of gone over to headquarters. He said last week he might have to."

Hugh made no answer. It seemed a matter of small consequence whether the foreman happened to be around or not. He was looking for diversion, and the sounds coming through the open window seemed to promise that he would find it. Reaching the window, he paused to glance inside.

For a moment he saw only a smoke-filled room, the gleam of dancing flames in the big fireplace, and a group of lumbermen, most of them laughing loudly. A little farther off, indistinct in the haze, two figures were standing close together, and at first the watcher supposed them to be indulging in some rude dance or horseplay for the entertainment of the others. The comments from the audience quickly undeceived him.

"Give him another twist, Bud!" urged a grinning individual at one side of the fire. "He'll 'fess up in a minute."

"Sure," agreed another; "he'll squeal, the sneakin' spy!"

Cabell's teeth clicked together as he realized the meaning of what he saw. It was not the playful frolic he had supposed. The husky man who towered above the other's head was gripping one of the slender chap's wrists, and twisting his arm with cruel force. The latter's back was toward the window, but the unnatural position of his shoulders, the flung-back head, the strained appearance of his whole slight frame showed what he was enduring.

"By golly!" came in a surprised whisper from the guide. "The whole bunch is lit up. Somebody must 'a' smuggled in booze from over the line. It's dead sartin Fred's away, all right."

Hugh moved uneasily, stirred by the conviction that this was no place for him. A crowd of carousing woodsmen

who had reached the point of wantonly torturing one of their own number might furnish mental diversion, but it was not the sort he craved. He drew a long breath and was about to turn away when, all at once, there came from within a gasp, a slight struggle, and the slim fellow was whirled around to face the window. At the same instant an errant puff of wind sent the veil of tobacco smoke eddying toward the roof, and Cabell found himself staring into the pain-lined face and tortured eyes of his chum, Ward Gunnison.

Incredulity turned Hugh to stone. He stared in absolute unbelief. It was impossible. Ward was far away in Ithaça. Some freakish twist of fancy was deceiving him.

"Come," cried the big ruffian; "own up that you're a spotter before I twist your wing off. I know yuh, and lyin' won't do no good. It was you that got the evidence they nabbed Tom McGuire on. -- Own up!" He gave another wrench at Gunnison's wrist.

Ward cried out, and at the sound something seemed to snap in Cabell's brain. With a flying spring he went through the open window, landing on his feet like a cat. Another spring and he planted his fist fairly behind the ruffian's ear, knocking him sprawling. Gunnison also went down, but the grip on his wrist was broken, and he scrambled up, uttering a joyous cry at sight of his friend. Cabell, his nostrils dilated, on his face a fearful look of rage, gripped his chum and swung him round behind him.

"You miserable, white-livered louts!" he cried, hoarse with wrath, glaring at the astounded men. "You may think it is sport to see a big brute torturing a fellow half his size and weight—"

Gunnison shouted a warning: "Look out, Hugh! He's up! He's—"

The ruffian who had been knocked down was on his feet again. His face contorted with unspeakable rage, he uttered a roar, and charged.

Cabell side-stepped deftly, and smashed the man as he lunged past. Although fired himself by anger inde-

scribable, Hugh's brain had never been clearer, his command of himself never more complete. Of fear he felt not the slightest qualm. The monster that had ridden him so long had been cast off in a twinkling on beholding his friend's plight in the hands of the brutal giant.

Recovering from the amazement caused by Cabell's astonishing entrance through the window, one of the crowd shouted:

"Another spy! Nail him, boys! Don't let——"

"Hands off!" roared the giant called Bud. "He's my meat. Keep back and give me room. Don't let t'other one get away."

They obeyed. Bud Andrews, the greatest fighter in the Fish River country, was given all the room he could ask for in which to beat up the reckless young man who had assailed him in defense of a friend. Surely it would take him only a few seconds to do the job.

Cabell realized that those men believed that he would be scarcely more than a child in the hands of Andrews. He was aware that the seeming odds were at least ten to one against him. He knew that, beyond doubt, he would be mercilessly pummeled should the bully win in the fight from which there was no possible means of escape. Yet he was not afraid; far from it, he welcomed the battle with a fierce eagerness that was part and parcel of the tremendous rage that had taken possession of his whole being. With the flight of fear, confidence had returned; he believed in himself once more; as sure as he was living was he sure that he could whip this hulking brute of the backwoods.

Never before had any of the witnesses beheld such a fight. The stranger was swift as thought in all his movements—avoiding the rushes of Andrews, side-stepping, ducking furious wallops; parrying blows, any one of which would have knocked him down had it landed fair; puzzling the giant by feints and false movements, and now and then getting in with a smash when his antagonist left an opening.

Soon Andrews began to fume and snarl because of his inability to close with the slippery fellow who constantly avoided his charges, and smote him always when he sought to recover and turn for another rush. Then he tried to grapple, and Cabell was finally cornered. There was no escape for him now.

Like a tackler on the gridiron, Hugh plunged under Andrews' arms, caught him about the thighs, swept him off his feet, and pitched him upon his head and shoulders with a crash that shook the log structure. It was done with the same amazing suddenness that had characterized all of the college man's actions, and Cabell danced lightly away as the big man rolled over, sprawling, and scrambled up—danced away and came in like a flash of light, his arm shooting out like a piston rod, his fist, skinned and bleeding, sending the big man spinning and sliding against the legs of an amazed comrade.

"By mighty!" gurgled one of the gaping throng. "He—he's getting the best of Bud!"

"Yah!" snarled Andrews, rising again. "I'll pound the head off him! Gimme room!"

Battered and bleeding, he went after Cabell with greater fury than ever. It seemed that nothing could stop him, nothing could wear him down. Surely, in time, by sheer force of weight and brute energy, he would beat out his antagonist, overcome and crush him; and when the stranger was exhausted and helpless, when Andrews was at last master of the situation, there could be little question as to what would happen. More than one of the spectators had witnessed the finish of the great battle between the champion of the Fish River region and Hickory Jones, the Millinocket blacksmith, whose boast was that he had once whipped John L. Sullivan in a free-for-all fight; and they had not forgotten that Jones was carried unconscious to a hospital, from which, five weeks later, he emerged crippled for life. Infuriated as he now was, Andrews might not quit until he

had killed the stranger who had interfered in behalf of the spotter.

A sudden shout went up. Andrews had landed with one of his fearful swinging blows. The stranger had succeeded in partially escaping the full force of it, but it sent him reeling, blood on his lips. Snarling exultantly, the giant rushed after to follow up with other sledge-hammer strokes which must quickly bring about the expected finish. The end of the uneven fight seemed near.

But just when the bully was closing in on the staggering college man the latter ducked under his arm, whirled, and nailed him again on the neck below the ear, the impact of his fist sounding like the crack of a pistol. Then it was Andrews who staggered, clutching at the loose shirt of a comrade to steady himself. And before he could recover Cabell was at him, striking again and again, every blow counting.

Restrained by two lumbermen, Gunnison had watched the battle, his heart in his mouth, his brain awl with fear and wonderment. Again and again he had vainly struggled to break away, seeking to go to Hugh's assistance. At times he raved and raged at the men who held him. When he saw the giant apparently about to end it, following the blow that had knocked Cabell reeling, he cried out, kicking and twisting. Exhausted, he relaxed at last, and was unspeakably relieved and amazed to behold Hugh, still on his feet, hammering the giant with all the skill and vigor of a professional boxer trained to the minute.

The wonderment of the other witnesses was no less great. It was beyond their comprehension that the youthful stranger should not only be still on his feet and fighting, but apparently getting the best of his huge antagonist, who at last showed symptoms of faltering, and whose rushes were becoming spasmodic and somewhat aimless.

The truth was that blows from Cabell's barked and battered knuckles had half closed both of Andrews' eyes, partially blinding the ruffian. Seeing this, Hugh took more chances in close fight-

ing, having a care, however, to dodge away whenever the big man sought to grapple with him. With uppercuts, swinging wallops, and straight-from-the-shoulder drives, he hammered at the bully, who began to betray symptoms of grogginess. And always he was watching for the chance to land fairly, with all the strength at his command, the blow on which he relied to end the encounter.

That chance came at last. A punch in the midriff caused Andrews to drop his hamlike hands for an instant. Cabell improved the opportunity. His movements seemed deliberate with the cold calculation of one whose brain was keen and active, yet they were really made without loss of a fraction of time. With his feet planted firmly, he flung every ounce of his strength and weight into the smash that reached the point of Andrews' jaw.

The man went down, his head cracking on the stones of the fireplace hearth, and there he lay like one smitten by a thunderbolt.

The sudden silence of the room was broken at last by many deep-drawn breaths. One of the witnesses muttered:

"Well, I'll be blowed! Bud's knocked stiff!"

Another cried:

"Don't let the spotters get away! We've got to——"

Simmons, the guide, had entered the room by the door, and watched the astounding fight through to the more astounding finish. Now he spoke up:

"What's the matter with you fellers? He's no spotter. He's a college feller come in here for a little sport. And, believe me, they overlooked the genuine white hope when they passed him up!"

"But t'other one, he's the sneak that got Tom McGuire for smuggling booze over the line."

"G'wan, you bat-eyed gump!" retorted Simmons scornfully. "I see that spotter myself at close range, and he had curly black hair and gold-filled teeth. This ain't the same feller at all."

Breathing somewhat heavily, Cabell rested a bruised hand on Gunnison's

shoulder. "This is my chum and roommate at college," he announced.

"Then I vouch for 'em both," said Simmons; "I guarantee they're all right."

Another brief silence followed. Presently one of the woodsmen, who seemed to have some authority, spoke up:

"Then we all made a mistake; but Bud, I guess he made the biggest one. He seems to be comin' round," he added, as the fallen champion groaned and moved slightly. "It's more'n likely he'll feel ruther disagreeable when he rekivers. We don't want to be un hospitable, but it might not be real pleasant for the two young gents around here when he comes to and finds out what's happened to him."

"Come, Ward," said Cabell, slipping his arm across Gunnison's shoulders. "Let's get out."

CHAPTER XI.

THE FINAL TEST.

YOU did all that after you'd read the diary?" muttered Cabell, his eyes fixed on the swirling sweep made by his paddle in the water.

"Of course," returned Gunnison simply.

"Why?"

Ward flushed a bit. "I was afraid you'd never come back," he explained. "I couldn't let you throw yourself away like that if there was any possible way of preventing it. You see, Hugh"—a touch of bitterness crept into his voice—"I thought that all you wrote down about being afraid was true."

Cabell's eyes swept over the shadowy, rippling surface of the winding stream, past the motionless gray outline of the shadowy trees along the bank, past the gaunt, misty gray peak towering above them, and finally came to rest for an instant on the velvet-gray eastern sky just tinged with the rose hue of dawn. When his gaze returned to the face of his loyal chum there was in his eyes an expression which Ward had never seen there before, and which thrilled him inexplicably.

"It was true, old man, every word of it," Cabell said quietly.

"How could it be?" protested Gunnison incredulously. "How could you be afraid, and—and whip that bully as you did last night?"

Cabell shook his head. "I don't know," he answered, "but I was. Last night was different." He flushed a little. He was not an adept at expressing himself. "Something happened to me," he went on lamely; "I don't know just what. But I do know this, Pink: No fellow ever had a truer friend than you. If it hadn't been for you I'd be skulking in the woods this minute instead of going back where I belong."

In the bow Joe Simmons was barely conscious of the murmur of voices behind him. He had other things to think about. He could scarcely wait to get back to Ashland to narrate the story of the most amazing fight he had ever seen. He wished he had with him another witness to the astonishing encounter back there in the bunk house. That was the one big drawback in his anticipatory pleasure. When he told of Bud Andrews' being whipped to a standstill, knocked stiff and "put out" by this youngster from college, few would believe him—and he could not blame them.

Personally Hugh was glad that their appearance at the little settlement was so well timed as to leave them only a few minutes before the arrival of the first train south. He had no desire to discuss the fracas in which he had participated. He was not proud of the manner in which he had lapsed for a space into a creature controlled absolutely by a merciless and almost insane desire to crush and destroy another human being; yet, down in his heart, mingling with the wonder of it all, lurked a touch of grim pleasure at the thought that for the first time in his life rage had conquered fear.

During the tedious railroad journey the two friends had ample time to work out the details and explanations which would be within the limits of the truth, but it happened that they were under no necessity of explaining at all. The

members of the varsity—in fact, the entire student body—were so rejoiced at the reappearance of the star tackle that they asked few questions, taking everything for granted. Even the vague “accident” by which Cabell accounted for his cuts and bruises caused only a momentary speculation.

Gunnison had a harder time satisfying the fellows in the fraternity house about his inexplicable absence, but he, too, was aided by the stir and bustle which pervaded the entire campus at the near approach of the most important game of the season.

The two returned early Saturday morning, and Gunnison did not lay eyes on his roommate again until he found him in the clubhouse on Percy Field half an hour before the opening of the game. Ward was by far the more nervous of the two. He was a little reassured by Cabell’s composed manner; but then the tackle had never outwardly shown anything else, even in the old days which now, oddly enough, seemed so far away.

They chatted casually for a few minutes, during which time Gunnison’s roving glance happened to rest on Chet Liddell’s puzzled, disappointed face, and he derived no little pleasure from the sight. Then, as the order came for the squad to take the field, he could repress his curiosity no longer.

“Say, Hugh,” he whispered as they reached the open together, “do you feel the least bit—er—nervous?”

“A little,” Cabell acknowledged. Then he smiled grimly. “If I begin to get cold feet I’ll think of our experience with Bud the other night. It ought to act as a tonic.”

He was much more nervous than he admitted. It was not the old nerve-racking, shivering fear which the very thought of the game had roused in him; that seemed to have vanished for good and all. But he could not look forward with even an assumption of cool indifference to the approaching struggle. The very sight of Blount, burly and confident, sent a tremor through him.

In the first rush he was carried off his feet and flung violently to the

ground by Blount. As the players piled up on his prostrate body, with a little of the old panic he thrust them off with a mighty heave, and got on his feet. Dartmouth had gained five yards. When Hugh realized that the play had been made possible by Blount’s beating down his own defense, a touch of angry color flecked his face. That color deepened when he met the giant’s gaze a moment later, and perceived his look of challenge and disdain.

In the ensuing scrimmage, in his eagerness to stop the advance, Cabell dived too soon, and it seemed as if the entire opposing team tramped over his spine. He was on his feet swiftly, consuming anger in his heart. Blount was trying to put him out! The anger grew. When the Dartmouth quarter called the signal, Hugh gathered himself, and, an instant later, plunged forward at precisely the right moment, arms sweeping wide to encircle as many legs as they could compass. The forward rush of the enemy stopped with a jerk, the mass of players swayed like a pyramid balancing on its apex, then collapsed, burying the Cornell tackle beneath the ruin.

The heaving struggle with which Hugh forced his way through the mass was different from the panicky effort to escape that had moved him before. There was a ferocity in the strength with which he flung aside impeding players which could not possibly have its origin in fear. His jaw was hard and set; his eyes flashed. In the vibrant, ringing voice with which he urged his teammates to get busy there was a new note which sent queer shivers down the spines of some and etched lines of stubborn determination on the face of every Cornell player.

Again and again the battling lines came together fiercely. With every scrimmage Cabell became stronger and more merciless. As the ball changed sides, in attack or defense alike, the Cornell tackle was mainly intent on opposing and thwarting the man who had roused his anger. The game seemed presently to develop into a battle royal between the two.

Once Harland caught Cabell by the arm. "Careful, Hugh," he warned; "he's trying to do you up. Don't take such chances! We can't spare you."

"Don't worry, Les," was the instant assurance. "You won't have to."

His blood was up. Again white rage had conquered fear. No man living could put him out! Let him who tried it beware! Again and again he met, without a qualm, the man he had once thought invincible, and downed him. Again and again he led the assault or bolstered the defense, always in the van, often the first to go down, nearly always the first to gain his feet for another plunge. Raging, tireless, eyes gleaming with a fierce joy, voice raised constantly in pleading or command, he was a sight to inspire his comrades with unlimited confidence and to fill the enemy with consternation. As in that extraordinary combat far away in the big North Woods, the anger which dominated and transformed Cabell did not make him lose his head. His brain had never been cooler; he never for an instant lost sight of the real object before him; not an opening escaped him. And, toward the end of the second quarter, it was due mainly to his quick-

ness of thought and execution that the first down was made.

From that moment the spirit of the once invincible Blount was broken. He was cowed and overcome by this raging demon where he had expected to find a spineless bluffer. With his fall it seemed as if the Dartmouth team practically gave up hope. Twice the triumphant Crimson and White forced the ball over their opponent's goal line. When it was all over a zero represented Dartmouth's scoring.

Delirious with joy, the spectators overflowed the field, caught Cabell before he could escape, carried him round and round the gridiron in triumph, as they had done many times before. But this time the happy tackle made no protest, no effort to squirm from their grasp. His cheeks were flushed, but not with an overpowering shame and sense of unworthiness. His lids did not droop as he met the eager, sparkling eyes of a girl who bent over the railing of the grand stand. Instead, he laughed aloud, and waved a bruised and grimy hand. He could enjoy it all because it was his by right. He had conquered fear at last, and come through the test of the gridiron triumphant.

The Letter That Slipped In

A STORY demonstrating the lasting effect of a proof reader's error was told by Sir Everard im Thurn in the course of an address to the members of the Royal Horticultural Society of England recently.

It had been noticed, he said, that in the course of its growth the nut which is now known as the coconut was similar to the face of a monkey, and so the Spanish and Portuguese word "coco," meaning a grin or grimace, was attached to it.

When Doctor Samuel Johnson was writing his famous dictionary, he had an article on the "coco nut," but a careless proof reader passed a mistake in the spelling of the word, the compositor having inserted an "a," and the word appeared as "cocoanut." This spelling of the word has been followed largely ever since.

Under the Circumstances

WHAT," said the visitor to the village of his childhood, "has become of the one boy I hated—Willie Hawker, the sneak? In prison, no doubt—he bore that fate on his face."

"Hush!" said the villager. "He is now Mr. Hawker, the great millionaire."

"What?" cried the visitor. "My dear schoolfellow a millionaire! I must call upon him and revive the old friendship."

Salvage Bound.

By Frank H. Shaw



(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

WANTED: A TOW.



“WHAT I want is a bit of salvage work,” said Captain Wingleaf, tenderly polishing the ebony-black pipe that was his constant companion. “A broken-down German liner would be about my notion of a blessing. I’ve prayed the tramp skipper’s prayer every night since I got command: ‘Luck send me a tow.’ But so far I’ve prayed in vain. And I need it, Lord knows I need it. That wife of mine—she’s done for if she can’t be moved south.”

His storm-battered face worked a little here, and I remembered an occasion when I had seen the sea fighter in his own place. His wife must have been close on forty-five, but she was still handsome, and her husband loved her vastly, in his unemotional way.

“A tow, that’s what I want—a fat-paunched liner, chockablock with passengers and specie.”

“I hope you’ll find it,” I told him politely. “But tows don’t happen along very frequently in these days—twin screws have settled that.”

“I know, I know. The man who in-

vented twin screws took the bread out of the mouth of many a hard-working tramp skipper. But there are still one or two of the old single-screw boats afloat, and if one of ‘em should break her shaft, and if I should happen along in time—well, my old woman goes south to the sun, and—and”—he polished away at the pipe again—“I’ll say an extra prayer o’ nights.”

He breathed on the burnished bowl; it was a beautifully colored pipe, of the same deep mahogany hue from bowl rim to stem end. Then he rubbed it afresh with a silk handkerchief big enough to make a sail for a lifeboat. The *Zenaphone* meanwhile pirouetted gayly about the seascape, and the breaking waves crashed like thunder against the stout teakwood door of Captain Wingleaf’s room. I had taken the uneasy tramp in preference to a liner because I needed a rest, and thought the plain fare and rough life on board the *Zenaphone* would mend my jaded nerves. The cure was working well. Wingleaf made an interesting companion, for in his forty years of seafaring he had been everywhere and done anything a mere human sailor could do.

“If that tow doesn’t come,” he said,

"my wife will die; that's the case in a nutshell. They told me so last time at home, before you joined us. That's why she didn't come down to see us off—first time she's ever missed. And"—he swallowed rapidly—"and perhaps she won't ever come down to wave us off again." Silence held us both for many minutes, and the sound of the pulsing of the engines was lost in the creaking of timbers and the whining of overstrained rivets.

"It's easily earned money, when you come to think of it, too," continued my companion. "All you have to do is to pass a towrope aboard, and steam ahead until you get to port—nothing more. And then they hand you five thousand dollars or so, maybe more, according to the size of the ship. A useful sort of a dream for a man who's in debt to his eyes, through no fault of his own."

Wingleaf never had complained to me, but I knew that the accumulated savings of many years had been withdrawn to pay the defalcations of his only son before Annie Wingleaf had been threatened with tuberculosis.

It was as though my thoughts had been painted in glaring letters on my face, for Wingleaf's manner became almost truculent on the instant. "Harry made a good finish," he declared. "It was very fine of him to go back into the burning house for that woman's dog. He did what was right; she'd befriended him, and she was fond of the dog. It was the only thing he could do. He had braced up, too; he was making good. It was—it was a pity he died. I believe it was the news of his death that helped Annie downhill, between ourselves. She never got over it. Look here, mister, I don't know why I'm talking to you like this, but you sort of draw confidence from a man just by saying nothing."

I continued that excellent practice, and stared out of the port at the play of storm-ridden water overside. Undoubtedly the *Zenaphone* was a hog in a seaway; she wallowed the seas aboard without a break, her well deck forward was full to the rails, and the chatter-

ing of her bridge stanchions made me rejoice in the fact that I was only a passenger.

"Let's go out on deck," suggested the captain. "She's throwing herself about like a pig in a trough, and she's half rotten. But she gives me sixteen pounds a month, and she's my ship." I took down his second-best oilskin and donned it; we slipped out of the door into sluicing water, and slammed its slabs of teakwood shut just as a foaming wave roared over the bridge deck. The funnel guys chattered and sang, the wash ports clanked, and the yell of the wind was deafening.

CHAPTER II.

"A GLUTTON FOR ROLLING."

SHE's not doing so badly," roared Wingleaf in a voice that would have rendered the bulls of Bashan envious. "Considering what she is, she's making fairly decent weather of it."

I thought of the *Senegal*, on which I might have crossed, with her dry decks and her comfortable cabins, her nimble stewards, and the hundred and one things that go to make up luxury in a modern, effete age. Then I looked again at Wingleaf, at the bewildered *Zenaphone*, at the surging majesty of the sea, that could not wreak her harm—and still was glad that I had come aboard. For I was shoulder to shoulder with workers and fighters, who asked little more of each day than that they be brought out with their bare lives, to face another and yet another day of battling.

We climbed the shaky ladder that led to the bridge and took up our positions on its drafty eminence. The first mate was crouched beneath the weather dodger, his hands thrust to the elbows in his pockets, dancing a slow jig to keep his feet warm, and peering through the driving spindrift that lay over the face of the waters like a cloud. The helmsman was hunched, shivering, over the little brass wheel that seemed so ineffectual a thing to control that writhing fabric of steel, and the sprays fell incessantly everywhere. There was

an unfamiliar look about the fore deck when the water cleared to a gigantic weather roll, and I mentioned the fact to Wingleaf, the words snatched violently from my lips as I spoke.

"She's smashed the ventilators," he roared. "She's inviting green water aboard. She's a glutton for rolling, isn't she?" And he bellowed something nautical to the mate, who crossed over.

"Yes, sir, I've seen to the plugs," he boomed. "She's all tight below."

"Go down and see if they're holding," commanded Wingleaf. "I'll stay here." Fargate, the mate, laughed cheerfully, and tightened the leather belt that kept his oilskin in place. "Very good, sir," he said, and went off the bridge.

I craned over the weather cloth, and saw him stand for a moment at the head of the ladder leading to the well; then he nimbly descended, to be snatched up by a sea and thrown with force against the bulwark plating. I thought he was done for, but no—he was up again, clawing at a ringbolt in the hatch, with solid water pouring over him. He poised himself, sprang, and reached a donkey winch, which he clung to as the water poured over him again.

"She's a merry sort of a brute," said Wingleaf, shielding his pipe in the hollow of his hand. "In a little while she'll begin to get uncomfortable."

Fargate was washing about in four feet of chilly water the while, clinging to whatever happened his way. He allowed himself to be swept under the topgallant forecastle, and when he reappeared he carried a tangle of canvas with him. Thereafter he worked as if on a level deck in smooth water, hacking with a blunt knife at the sailcloth, fitting it to the ventilator shaft, making all things secure with stout lashings of spun yarn. I did not envy him, and said so.

"Oh, that's nothing," said the captain. "a man gets used to it. They'll be handing round the chicken soup aboard the *Senegal* just now, though, and getting the names of performers for the concert to-night."

A blast of wind that cut like a rifle bullet smote down upon us, and laid our lee rail flush with the water. For a transient moment, so terrific was the squall that the wave tops were laid flat, whisked away into feathery nothing, and the veil of spindrift lifted, leaving all things clear. My eyes took in a fleeting impression of a wallowing bulk somewhere in the infinite, and I was conscious that Wingleaf, still puffing stolidly at his pipe, reached for the binoculars. Then I was torn from my holding and hurled to the lee rails. When I picked myself up, under the belief that every bone in my body was broken, the skipper was still peering ahead, although the spray fog had again shut down.

"What is it?" I asked excitedly. "What is it?" He brought the glasses down and altered their focus slightly.

"My pipe's gone out," he observed. "Must have been the spray. That over there? Oh, yes—I was going to tell you. It looks as if my dream was coming true—it's a broken-down liner; she's got distress signals up. You haven't got a match, have you?"

CHAPTER III.

INCLUDING THE PASSENGER.

"WHAT are you going to do?" was my next coherent remark.

"Tow her," he replied briefly. "How's that ventilator, Mr. Fargate?"

"All snug now, sir," replied the mate, who had returned to the bridge, and was wringing salt water from every inch of his clothing. "She won't leak there again."

"Very good! Have you got a match?" Fargate had a boxful, but they were saturated; the helmsman, however, supplied the need. When the clay was smoking again, Wingleaf remarked casually:

"You'll need a couple of lengths of the cable at least. Get it roused aft—lay some planks on the deck, and use the winches; that's your quickest way. And get the towing hawser up, too; we'll need it. There's that manila—that will give you the spring you need."

Fargate allowed himself to look a little bewildered. "The cables aft, sir?" he asked, in an injured tone.

"Yes; didn't I tell you? There's a tow ahead there, a big chap. Ten thousand tons of her, if she doesn't measure fifteen. A German, from the look of her funnels."

Fargate's mouth opened wide. "But—for God's sake, look at us, sir!" he cried, indicating the hapless *Zenaphone* with a sweeping, melodramatic gesture. "She's about all in now, and with that chunk of steel astern of her—"

Wingleaf only shook his head, and spoke again. "You might carry the cable round the whole after part; those bitts aft aren't worth a cent," he said. "As for you"—he turned to me, and I realized that the hours of my passengership were over for the present—"nip down and tell the chief engineer I want to speak to him." I went. There was no alternative.

Under the lee of the fiddley the mate took me into his confidence. "It can't be done!" he cried. "'Tisn't in human nature. This old wreck has all she can do to keep afloat, without tying another fifteen thousand tons to her tail. She'll pull herself into bed laths, and her engines'll drop through her bottom!"

"He'll do it, if any man afloat can," I said. The mate tacked off, sprays rattling affectionately on his oilskins, and I plunged into a roaring inferno of writhing machinery where oil spurted from every corner, and steam gushed forth in blinding jets. Gauges were chattering on the columns, the floor plates were awash, and a man was sitting on the spare crank, binding a sodden rag about a wounded finger. I asked for the chief engineer.

"The chief?" he said. "He's thumbin' his bearin's, an' whustlin' 'Bonny Charlie's Noo-Awa'! He'll be on the first platform, I doot."

I found him, and gave him my message. The oil-soaked man wiped his grimy hands with a piece of oily waste before answering.

"She's grummellin'," he remarked casually. "I doot she'll be greetin' sune.

Did ye say the skipper? Aye, aye, I'll come."

I followed him to the bridge, where I caught words—"unbearable strains," "creakin' like a wet board," and others; the chief engineer was expostulating. Then came Wingleaf's contribution.

"I want steam, and steam I'll have. Burn the fittings if the coal won't serve, but give me steam." The engineer vanished, and I peered through the spray fog. There was the liner—a vast monster, wallowing in the trough. I named her at a glance for all of fifteen thousand tons, and my soul went weak within me, comparing her with the *Zenaphone*. I was soon dispatched to lend a hand with the transporting of the cables from the bow to the stern. It was not light work; nowadays I sometimes waken from uneasy sleep to find sweat pouring down my face, and in my mind the recollection of the wheezing, groaning winches, the thud-thud of the great links on the deck, the yelp of the scalded men. But somehow the chain was carried aft and flaked down on the after well deck. Then I went back to the bridge, wondering if I should ever straighten the kink out of my back.

"You've just come in time," said Wingleaf. "I want help with these signals here." He was standing at the wheel, for he had sent the helmsman to aid in the bitter work, and from that post he told me which strips of bunting to bend onto the signal halyards. The gayly colored flags whipped me in the face.

"I'm telling him I'll take him in tow," thundered Wingleaf, and the wind tore the flags into ribbons before I got them to the span. "But I fancy I'll have to shout—we'll run down a bit nearer." He twisted the spokes, and the *Zenaphone* cavorted grimly across wave crests, hurling them over her forecastle and washing herself as bare as a bone.

"There's a megaphone in the chart house," was his next suggestion, but before I reached the top of the ladder I blundered into the mate, who had a gash across his forehead.

"The men refuse duty!" he shouted, and it seemed to me that his tone ex-

pressed: "I told you so," even if his words did not.

CHAPTER IV.

LIKE A LADIES' SCHOOL.

I THOUGHT you called yourself an officer!" was Wingleaf's caustic comment.

Fargate silently indicated the cut on his forehead, and the captain almost literally flung the wheel into his hands and left the bridge. The mate clung weakly to the spokes, and I fell down the ladder in the skipper's wake.

"You're full of complaints, aren't you?" he observed scornfully to the huddled crew. "Perhaps"—doubling his fist—"one of you will come up here and get something to complain about!"

No one ventured, but in spite of his threat not a man would consent to reeve the cable round the stern. They had signed on as sailors, they grumbled, not as a blooming salvage crew; they'd no intention of leaving their bones to the cod while there was a law to protect them.

Wingleaf's fist relaxed, but his face expressed infinite disgust. "You're right," he said. "You need the protection of the law that aren't men enough to do your work. Hand me that rope."

And the intrepid skipper himself climbed out over the taffrail to reeve the bridle round the cable so that it might not foul the screw. It was something of an achievement. The *Zenaphone* was squatting on her tail like a duck the while, and boiling surges flung themselves high in the air to thunder on her deck. Wingleaf was under water most of the time, and on several occasions I gave him up for lost; but always he emerged, still at his task. At last it was done to his satisfaction, and he faced the crew as they stood watching him, humiliated and ashamed.

"I'd take a ladies' school to sea and get better results," he observed cuttingly. "Bring that manila along, you slabslides, or do you want me to mop your own brows for you?"

After that he drove them to their work without eliciting a word of pro-

test, and when all was seemly went back to the bridge, to find that his steamer was being kept at a careful distance from the broken-down liner.

"We seem to be wasting time," he said. "We might have got a rope across by now. Shall I swim with it, Mr. Fargate, or shall I catch a bird to fly with it?" The mate flushed hotly, but said nothing. Wingleaf relieved him of the wheel, and after that I could only lean against the standard compass and gasp feebly. I thought I knew something about seamanship, but I discovered that I had not even commenced to learn the alphabet.

The skipper took the *Zenaphone*, old and wheezy as she was, across the ravening watery mountains as if she were a living thing. There were no words to do full justice to it; it was an epic poem of daring. I had an impression of uniformed men on the liner, flinging astounded hands to the boiling sky; I saw them shrink away from the rails—this was when a seventy-foot wave caught our bow and lifted it exactly above the liner's exhaust—I thought to hear their yells of despair.

"Stand by with a heaving line!" bel-lowed Wingleaf. "Get aft with it; I'm going to swing her." Fargate went aft as if shot from a gun, and the tramp steadied for an instant. The skipper caught up the megaphone, which he had recruited in some mysterious fashion, and his voice seemed to flatten the gale.

"Liner ahoy!" rang that stentorian shout. "Do you want a tow? Look out for my rope." A big, bearded man—I saw the glint of gold on his cap peak—leaned over the wing of the bridge, and waved his expressive Teutonic hands.

"You sink us, if you come nearer," he cried.

"That's my lookout. Do you want a tow?" Again the gale seemed awe-struck.

"You cannot tow in dat—she sink alretty yet."

"She'll float long enough to do your business, and it's coming away harder from the nor'west. *Do you want a*

tow?" The bearded man disappeared, and other caps showed above the painted cloths of the high bridge, which the sprays could not sweep. We lay beneath them like a barge beneath a warehouse. Presently the liner's captain reappeared.

"How much you want?" he demanded. Wingleaf juggled with the wheel spokes, and the tramp sidled a fraction of a fathom closer. For myself I was only praying that when death came it might be swift and painless; I regretted my ability to swim, for that would only prolong the agony of drowning. But I thought, in a detached fashion, my ears open to the conversation the while, that if I weighted myself with a couple of hatch battens I should sink at once.

"That'll be settled in the courts," Wingleaf cried. "Look to windward there!"

CHAPTER V.

THE ONE CHANCE.

FASCINATION drew my eyes where I did not want to look, and my craven soul sickened within me. The sky was blurred by livid, steely clouds, shot across here and there with black, slimy fingers, like a dream of the inferno.

"Do you want a tow?" repeated Wingleaf, eternally voicing his parrot cry.

"*Jah!* I gif a rope," replied the bearded man. "*Himmel* help us all!"

"It'll do that, don't you fear! If you can stop cuddling the compass for a minute, mister"—this was to me—"you might ring that docking telegraph to stand by."

I clawed my way to the brass standard, and rang violently as Wingleaf bore down on the wheel. It seemed as if the liner swung bodily, with incredible swiftness, across our stern, but common sense—such as remained—told me that it was the *Zenaphone* which swung. An active man could have jumped from the German's side to our taffrail, and it was a miracle that we were not crushed to driftwood. Far-

gate told me afterward—as if expecting to be disbelieved—that he touched the high side with his flattened hand as we sped past, but perhaps that was an exaggeration.

When I looked again there was a mere thread of space between ship and ship. The connection had been effected. It was impossible to lower a boat in that enormous sea, and all the oil carried by both ships could not have flattened its waves. Wingleaf had taken the one chance in a thousand, and had succeeded.

"If you'll take the wheel for a minute," he said patiently, "I'll go aft and see they get fixed up before the squall comes down." For the next quarter of an hour I had the destiny of the *Zenaphone* in my hands, and I did not relish my responsibility. She answered her helm when she felt so disposed, but most often she refused to be obedient, and her bow danced in giddy arcs around the horizon, frequently boring toward the awe-inspiring northwest. I prayed weakly for Wingleaf to return, for only he, I felt, could handle such a situation as it should be handled; but he was busy in a more worthy way.

He had to resort to force before he could get the men to handle the mighty hawser, for Fargate had lost his nerve. The second mate was a mere boy, unaccustomed to the handling of desperate men, who were driven half mad by fear, and all he could do was to work as one of the crew. But somehow the complex apparatus was set in order, and once more Wingleaf floundered to the bridge.

"I expect they can get that rope up without fouling the cutwater," he said caustically. "It's about all they can do. Stand fast; I'm going to back her down."

He did, and my old qualms, which I hoped I had conquered, returned with greater force than before. He held the *Zenaphone* poised within a hair's breadth of the liner—her name was the *Grosser Kaiser*—until such time as the crew had hauled the towrope aboard, and I do not know how he did it. Perhaps he was able to impart some of his

indomitable spirit to the tramp for the while—perhaps he merged himself in her and gave her his own soul, telling her of his great need. Be that as it may, the *Zenaphone* remained delicately poised until a clamor of voices announced that that portion of the work was done.

There was still much more to do, however. The two cables of the *Grosser Kaiser* were roused out from their hawsepipes and shackled together, and to this powerful bridle the *Zenaphone's* towrope was attached by means of shackles and lashings of rope as big round as a man's leg. I saw, over the liner's rails, a fringe of eager faces, watching the maneuvers in something approaching security, while we played the part of a submarine.

"All fast," came from the towering hulk. "Go ahead, captain."

Fargate staggered onto the bridge, and a man followed him, but Wingleaf would allow neither of them near the wheel. It was his own affair; he had claimed the right to fight a lone hand. The squall was very near. "Give her full speed," he said. "She'll need it."

Fargate rang the telegraph, and the decks began to throb. The towrope sprang into the air and rang like a harp string as it took the strain. The marvel was that it did not break, but it held, and at the same instant the squall broke.

CHAPTER VI.

STRAINED AT A GNAT.

ALL that had gone before was but the light gayety of summer breezes compared with this. The *Zenaphone* seemed to be whipped bodily out of the water and set down again with a thud that made her masts rattle like castanets. The wind was solid, an implacable foe; as Wingleaf bowed to it I saw his beard blown back until the white skin beneath was exposed. A mountainous wave leaped up before our bow and fell, the ship staggered, stopped, cowered away before the attack. If the high bow of the liner had not caught the force of the wind, and

been driven backward, too, we must have been impaled on her forefoot like a flying fish on the horn of a narwhale.

Wingleaf caught up the tube that communicated with the engine room, and asked for more steam. The throbbing of the deck grew; we bit our way into the roaring horror, and the pluck of the inert liner seemed about to tear us apart. She was helpless, sagging behind like a floating mountain, and through driving spindrift it was just possible to make out the waves breaking over her fore-castle head.

As for the *Zenaphone*, she was clean under water—the bridge rose from the seething tumult like the periscope of a submarine. But by some trick of cunning Wingleaf humored her upward. She shook herself a little, and a little more; she started forward—and though the liner plucked her back—crawled ahead again, putting her shoulder down to it. Wingleaf's soul must have been in her then—without his spirit she would have succumbed.

The hours dragged away. It seemed that the gale grew constantly in magnitude. When, about four o'clock, the crew climbed to the bridge in a body, and threatened to cast off the tow without permission if permission were not granted, Wingleaf spoke, and they cowered away from the determination in his eyes.

"The first man who touches that rope I shoot!" he said, and they knew he was in earnest.

Presently the gale abated ever so slightly; the *Zenaphone* leaped upward, and flung tons of water from her bow, and there came from astern a faint cheer. Wingleaf signed to the mate to take the wheel. He was white and twitching as Fargate came up to relieve him.

"She's through the worst of it," he said quietly. "I think the weather's going to be better now—see, there's the sun." He pointed as the sun showed luridly for a moment through the piled cloud banks.

"Liner's signaling, sir," said the second mate, who had come to the bridge.

"Read them off, mister—let's know

what she's got to say." The second mate slipped into the chart house, and returned with the sea-stained flags of the international code of signals. Wingleaf held onto the chattering rails of the bridge.

"There's a fortune in her," he told me. "My share ought to be worth while; I'm glad. Annie'll get the treatment she needs. She deserves it; she's been a good wife to me."

The second mate was writing on a damp slate. "I'd better read it, sir," he said in a queer voice. "The pencil only makes a scratch."

"Yes, mister; read it."

"MR. WINGLEAF TO CAPTAIN WINGLEAF: Not killed in fire, as reported. Returning home safe. Details later."

The impossible had happened; the skipper's monstrous fight had not been in vain. Not only had he brought hope and new life to his wife—he had in all

probability saved the life of his own son. The liner could hardly have fought to safety through the gale, helpless as she was.

"So the fire didn't get him, after all," observed Wingleaf. "He was doing well, too, before that—I expect he's had his lesson. Yes, I think I was right to try my luck. Did you say you'd got a match, mister?"

He groped beneath his oilskin coat in the pocket of his reefer, and consternation spread over his face. His mouth narrowed, and a look of sorrow filled his eyes. Then he brought out his empty hand very slowly.

"I've had it for five years," he said pathetically. "Five years—I've never kept a pipe so long; and now it's broken." He showed me the shining fragments. "It's too bad, too bad—I was uncommonly fond of that pipe. You get attached to them when you've had them as long as that—five years!"

Oysters by the Acre

IN Long Island Sound, Chesapeake Bay, and many of the large open bays and sounds of this country, oyster farming is conducted on a vast scale under from forty to sixty feet of water. These farms are as extensive as some of the vast grain fields for which the West is famous, some of them being over twenty thousand acres in extent. Here the spat, or spawn, is brought from the natural beds and planted, matured, and harvested by steam power, the immense steamers used being capable of catching two hundred bushels of oysters per hour from these grounds.

It takes an oyster about three years to grow up, and some do not reach their full growth before the fifth or sixth year. The spawning season is in May, June, July, and August, during which months the oysters are not as good to eat as at other times; hence the saying that oysters are unwholesome in all months that have not an "r" in their names.

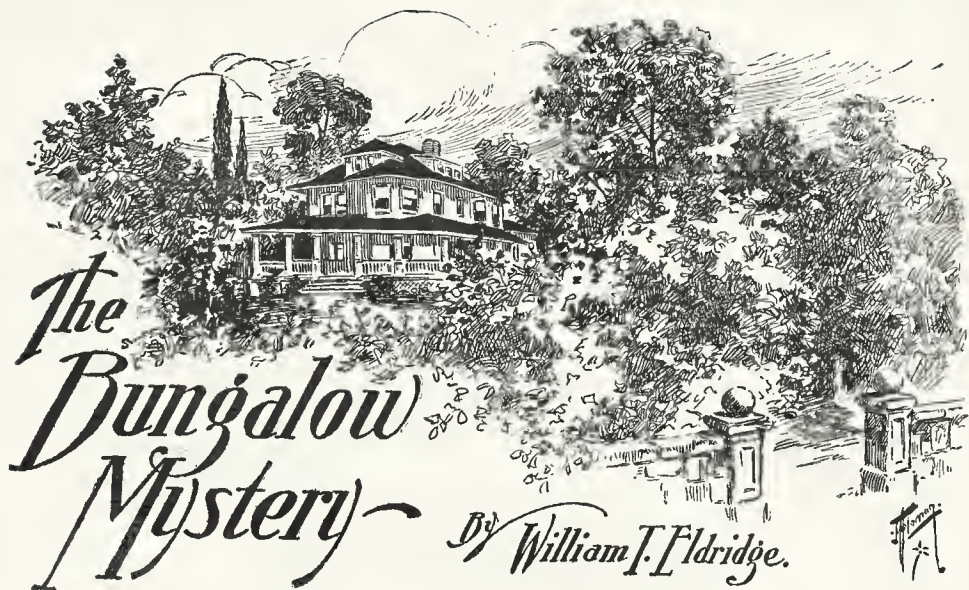
According to Contract

ONE dollar will procure you four pairs of socks which can never be worn out." So ran the advertisement, which caused Jones, bachelor, to spend a dollar on a postal order. When the socks arrived, Jones surveyed them, horror-stricken.

"Socks received," he wrote to the advertiser. "The patterns are vile. I wouldn't be seen out with them on."

No reply reaching Jones to this, he sent a further letter, threatening proceedings, and then came this answer:

"What are you making such a fuss about? Didn't we guarantee that you wouldn't wear the socks out?"



OPENING CHAPTERS.
 If you missed them, read them in this condensed form.

WARREN GALLROY and his niece, Roselyn Trent, are living at the former's country home, "Brierledge," near Cliffboro, New Hampshire, and are annoyed by mysterious men, who follow Gallroy wherever he goes. The elderly man shoots at one of them from a window when he sees him prowling about the grounds at night.

A man who says he represents Gallroy's brother in London calls when Gallroy is out, and when the latter returns he finds his den in disorder and certain papers stolen. Gallroy suspects James Bower, a real-estate man, of Cliffboro, and goes at once to his office. He accuses Bower of entering his house, and they quarrel violently, but Howard Stalling, a young lawyer, interferes, and proves that Bower is innocent of Gallroy's charges. Gallroy is furious, but he tells Stalling to meet him at the mountain cross-roads that evening. When they meet, Gallroy tells Stalling that he likes him for his frankness and spirit, and wishes to retain him as his attorney. Gallroy is attacked on his way home, and Stalling finds him suffering from a blow on the head. He helps him home, and they tell Roselyn that her uncle fell over a wall.

It develops that Stalling is practicing law in Cliffboro as a secret agent of his Boston law firm, Steel, Short & Cummings. A man named Killbeck calls on him, and wishes to employ him to get secret information about Gallroy and his niece. Stalling refuses indignantly, but a little later Mr. Steel, the

senior member of his firm, telephones from Boston and orders him to do whatever Killbeck wishes him to.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE FENCE.

IT was half an hour since Stalling had hung up the receiver after talking with Steel. He was standing by his office window looking down on the muddy street. He had been with Steel, Short & Cummings for some time. While he hadn't liked being sent to Cliffboro, he appreciated that the work was important, and demanded great care. It had been a compliment to him. He was obliged to work for a living, and his profession was the law. Because he was asked to do something he didn't like to think about, was it necessary for him to break with his employers? He realized that it would amount to that if he refused Killbeck's business. The man had been quite right in saying that lawyers often made investigations that were impertinent. He considered the word and nodded.

This case, however, was vastly different. He had quarreled with Gallroy, then shaken hands. When two

men arrive at an understanding by such a course they almost invariably like each other. Then, too, there was Roselyn Trent. But more than all that, he was asked to do what no gentleman could do—to take advantage of his position to play the spy.

Stalling took the problem home with him and slept upon it. Of course, there was no doubt as to how he felt about the matter; it was, however, a question of his future, and he was trying to settle that.

The next morning Killbeck appeared early at Stalling's office. His reception was not cordial, and he was hardly inside the door when he was out again. Stalling did not threaten to kick him downstairs, although he would have been glad to do so. Instead, he told him curtly that he was busy, and would not consider his case until the next day. Killbeck appeared anxious to argue the point, but he left when Stalling turned his shoulder upon him and went about some imaginary business.

It was an hour after this that the telephone rang, and a voice that Stalling failed to recognize suggested that he should walk out to the crossroads. He understood what it meant; he had looked for the summons for some time, wondering why it had not come, and now he dreaded to face it. But he put on his hat, and went out into the country, and at the crossroads was met by Martin, Gallroy's valet, who handed him a note. It was from Gallroy, and suggested that he come to Brierledge, making certain that he was not followed. The back path was indicated as his course, and he was told to come to the writer's sitting room.

Stalling crushed the note into his pocket and leaped the wall across the road. His troubles were cast aside for the moment, as he did his best to fathom the reason for such secrecy. He couldn't understand why it was not possible for him to be known as Gallroy's attorney. He entered from the veranda, and found his hand grasped in Gallroy's big, strong fingers.

"Unusual, eh? Well, I dare say there was no need, but I thought I'd

still let the gossips fancy we were enemies for life. You haven't heard from me these past days, for I was trying to get at things. I haven't—no, I haven't; but I do want to settle one thing with you that I had in mind. Sit down," and Gallroy offered cigars as he chuckled heartily.

Stalling seated himself and looked at Gallroy. He found it hard to speak, but he knew he had to do so.

"Mr. Gallroy," he began slowly, "I am not sure that I can attend to your business. Just a moment, please," as he caught the startled expression on the older man's face; "I am speaking at once, because I do not want you to tell me anything I shouldn't hear if I am not to act as your attorney."

Gallroy was staring, and a flush of color slowly crept along his neck. But he seemed more stunned than angry.

"I don't get you, Stalling; I don't get you. Explain, man!"

"That is it, Mr. Gallroy; I don't think I can. It is a matter of ethics, pure and simple. You know lawyers are sometimes bound hand and foot."

Gallroy slid forward in his chair, his heavy neck shot out. "I know nothing, I told you. What you mean is that you are against me? That's the sum and substance of it?"

Stalling flushed. "I mean, Mr. Gallroy, that I do not know whether I can handle your business or not."

"Well, you don't look like a man that is unable to know his own mind. I want to make a will. Can't you attend to that?"

"It would seem that I might," said Stalling. "But you suggested that there might be something more. You know, as I do—without any facts—that some one is after you for something. I had thought that your business might be in the way of my trying to discover who is annoying you."

"Well, what if it is? I don't say it is, mind you—but if it is? Things have been quiet these past three days."

"I am glad to hear that."

"But I'm not glad to hear you talk as you are doing." The tone was more that of a man slightly offended than

anything else, and Stalling looked at Gallroy in surprise. He had expected the old man to rage at him.

Gallroy got up and began to pace the floor in his nervous, energetic way. His hands were behind his broad back, and his brows drawn together.

"The matter of your will, Mr. Gallroy, is a small affair," said Stalling. "I could attend to that—I think I could. You see I want to be fair."

"But, confound it, man, it's not fair to make me like you and think I could call upon you to help me—me and Roselyn—if we did need you, and then throw me down."

Stalling could not recall when he had felt so uncomfortable. He wished that he had chucked Killbeck down the stairs and got rid of him for all time before the crafty scoundrel had been able to get in touch with Boston and his firm. The situation was not clear to him, but he supposed that Killbeck, or his principal, was a client of Steel, Short & Cummings. In that case he was discussing matters with the man against whom some client of his firm was about to take action. He smiled ruefully. Why didn't he tell Gallroy that he couldn't serve him, and be done with it? It wasn't like him to hedge.

"Look here, Stalling," the older man broke out suddenly, dropping again into his chair; "I was pestered to death before I left Boston with people who wanted to buy this place of mine. I said no, and they kept coming and talking. Persistent devils they were. I came up here to get away from it, and crack out of the box. Bower comes to me and says he wants to buy for some one—and he will buy, he insists. I got mad and told him to get out.

"That night," Gallroy went on, leaning forward. "I poked lead at a man outside my bedroom window. Next day my papers are turned over and my safe rifled. That was what I accused Bower of doing. Well, I met you with the thought of having you, whom no one would suspect, on account of our open quarrel, try to locate the ones who were after my place. I got knocked on the head—no mistake, I fancy, Stall-

ing. Now I've no reason to say that the annoyances to which I have been subjected come from my refusal to sell the——"

"But you have an idea that they do?"

"I've thought so—one came right after my final refusal, delivered to Bower, with the promise to kick the next man out who said 'sell' to me."

"And you were inclined to have me see if I could find the connection?"

"And stop the trouble. But it has stopped. There seems to be no need of looking into it. There is just this will matter."

"But if it began again; if some one tried to rob you or knock you down, you might want me?"

"I dare say I would. Stalling, I'm not a young man; I'm feeling my age suddenly. That rap on the head didn't hurt me, but this worry seems to sap my strength. Worry? Stalling, I never did that before, and I shouldn't now, but for—for Rose."

The lawyer was scowling at the floor. He could not believe that his firm was behind these attacks upon Gallroy, and still there was that list of questions propounded for answer by Killbeck. Assuredly he knew too much of both sides to stay long on the fence. He got up. "Can your will wait until to-morrow?" he asked.

"Eh? Yes, yes; I simply sent for you to-day, as I was not busy. Do you mean that you will take me up—help me?"

There was hope, a quick light of encouragement in Gallroy's eyes. Stalling saw then that the man was worried, and had, in a few days, and in the strangest of ways, come to count upon him.

"I mean that I'll let you know some time to-morrow what I will do."

"Are you in with these people? What do you know, Stalling?" The bull neck shot out, the eyes flashed fire, the man was ready to vent his rage.

"Don't ask me any questions. I'll see you to-morrow, and take your case or throw it down. If I don't take it I will tell you why."

Gallroy got up. He was still holding his anger back, but the fire was not less

in his eyes. "You mean that it is a question of money? Devil take your big-pay people! I'm not buying your help! You needn't come back here. Get out!"

Stalling smiled. He knew he could let the words pass on account of his own actions. "It isn't a question of money, Mr. Gallroy," he said quietly. "I told you first it was a matter of ethics; there you are."

He meant what he said, but he knew that in a broader sense it was a question of money—it might prove disastrous to his whole future.

Gallroy made an impatient gesture. "I don't understand you. Go your way, Stalling, and come back when you can say yes or no. I've quarreled with you once; a bluff that was, but I won't quarrel with you in earnest no matter which way you jump. When I have your answer I may have more to say."

Stalling held out his hand and went out. Just as he buried himself in the woods he heard a call. It was Roselyn Trent, and he could not refuse her summons from the little summerhouse. He lingered with her longer than he intended, for it was pleasant there in the quiet of the woods. But at last he got away, having been told that he had been remiss in not calling, and stubborn in refusing to tell her what he and her uncle had been discussing.

He reached his office and called up Boston, but only got his connection to find that Mr. Steel was not in his office.

"Another night to sleep on it," he said, hanging up the receiver. But he knew he did not need another night. He had made up his mind; he had come down off the fence.

CHAPTER VIII.

STALLING MOVES.

THE conversation which took place over the long-distance telephone, the morning following, between Stalling and Mr. Steel need hardly be set down in full. It was not easy for him to explain his position, for he did not feel that he had the right to tell even the senior member of the firm that Gallroy

had offered to retain him, or that he could not think of securing the information desired by Killbeck, because he had already entered Gallroy's home as a guest. So he simply stated that he would not, for the reason that he did not consider it right, undertake the task of obtaining an answer to Killbeck's list of questions.

He expected Mr. Steel to be considerably surprised, and he was not disappointed. Moreover, when Stalling refused to recede from his stand, he found that Gallroy was not the only man in the world who had a temper.

"You mean you break with us! That's the position you take?" thundered Steel over the wire.

"I think that is best. I will send in my resignation. Perhaps I should have written instead of phoning. Of course, I will be glad to look up any land titles you might wish me to handle for you."

"Do I understand that as a suggestion on your part that we employ you as you see fit to act, not as we might suggest?"

"Not at all," retorted Stalling. "I merely do not wish to inconvenience you by my action. I thought I might still be of service, and thus save you the trouble of——"

"We'll not ask you to save us trouble."

"Very well."

"Stalling, do I gather that you are going to stay in Cliffboro?"

"For the present my plans are not formed."

"Huh!" came the grunt, then a pause. Finally: "I don't comprehend your actions."

"Have you seen Killbeck's list of questions?"

"I know nothing about Killbeck or his questions. He is acting for some one, and our clients want his desires given attention."

"I gathered that much. You see, Mr. Steel, you ask that I look after Killbeck's business, and I can't do it. Get a list of the questions he wanted me to find answers for, and you'll perhaps comprehend the reasons for my resignation. I'll mail you one to-day."

Steel didn't ask for a reconsideration or a delay, but he did express his opinion of Stalling once more, and he called him ungrateful and a fool.

Stalling said good-by when that came over the wire, and hung up the receiver. He was hot and angry. In a way he thought he was a fool; still, he decided that perhaps he wasn't the first man who had tossed a good position aside, being asked to do something he didn't fancy, or the first who had chosen his path because he liked another and—a girl. He confessed to the last charge within his heart.

He was twenty-eight, and human. He would not have been the latter had Roselyn Trent failed to appeal to him very strongly. Still, Stalling would have acted as he had even had there been no Roselyn Trent in the situation. And that fact he made clear when Killbeck came confidently into the office.

"Morning, Stalling," said the little man. "How are you?"

"All right; but I'm not taking your case."

"You are not—what?" Killbeck's small mouth popped open, and his round eyes stared.

"Didn't I make myself clear? I decline your commission, and suggest that you keep out of my office."

"Say, young man," snapped Killbeck, sticking out his bullet head, with its nicely parted and plastered hair, "I'll have you fired. Don't try high-handed effects on me; it won't go."

"Fired! Mr. Killbeck, you won't do that—you don't mean—now really, Mr. Killbeck!" Stalling's voice trailed off as he sank down in his chair in mock consternation.

"Oh, come!" cried Killbeck, with a magnanimous wave of his thin hand. "I was just joking, Stalling. Now, get busy on this——"

"Where were you going to have me fired from?"

"Why—er—— Oh, forget it, Stalling!"

"From Steel, Short & Cummings?" questioned Stalling.

"Well, of course, I—well, yes; that is what I meant," admitted Killbeck.

"Oh!" said the lawyer placidly. "I thought you might have meant off the earth, or out the window, for you couldn't do the other very well; I've resigned." Then, with a snap of his jaws: "Good day, and remember what I said about darkening my door again."

Killbeck stood and stared. Then he recalled the brown eyes that had looked through him the day before, and turned around and went out the door; and the man at the desk looked up and smiled.

Stalling finished his letter, went out, rented another office, moved his personal effects, and called on the sign painter. The other "shingle," bearing his name, had not really been his, so he took it down and left it in the old office.

At any rate, he had a client, which was more than most lawyers could say for their first day of independence. And with that thought he set off by the back way for his client's home.

Gallroy met him in the grounds, and without a word led the way to the sitting room. "Well?" came the question, with a sharp look.

"Give me pen and paper, and I'll fix that will for you," said Stalling, with a smile.

Gallroy held out his hand. "Will you say why you hesitated?"

"I will; in fact, I must. It is only right that you should know, for you may not care to retain me."

"You are the worst puzzle I ever ran up against," growled Gallroy. "Sit down and smoke."

"The facts are simply these," began Stalling. "I was connected with Steel, Short & Cummings. I came from Boston, as I told you, and hung out my name as if I was not connected with that firm. But I was acting under their orders. I was here ostensibly to examine titles to real estate. Some clients of Steel, Short & Cummings are buying extensively in this section, and until the last week I have had plenty of work. Day before yesterday a man came and asked me to get him certain information. I refused, but my firm telephoned me imperatively to take his case. I couldn't do so and serve you at the same time. There you are."

"There I am?" bellowed Gallroy. "Stalling, this means that your firm has a client who wants to buy me out?"

Stalling nodded.

"And it means that the man who called on you wanted you to do something your firm countenanced and you wouldn't stand for?"

Again Stalling nodded.

"Something against me?"

"Mr. Gallroy, I cannot go into that matter with you. What I know I learned while with Steel, Short & Cummings."

Gallroy nodded and sat back. "Right," he agreed; "but does this mean that the annoyances, my stolen papers, the crack I got on the head, came from that firm's client?"

"I hardly think so; I should say not," answered Stalling.

Gallroy sat up. "What are you going to do?"

"I have rented a new office and hung out my shingle. It's better than starting where competition is strong."

"Huh! Where there is no business? You can't do that."

"Mr. Gallroy, I am going to be in Cliffboro for a while. If you have any business I'll handle it if you want me to do so."

The two men looked at each other long and hard. Finally Gallroy nodded: "Let's hope there will be nothing." Then impulsively: "You've changed office; change lodgings, too; come here!"

CHAPTER IX.

RODNEY GALLROY.

AS deeply as Stalling appreciated the compliment conveyed by Gallroy's invitation, and as much as he longed to get away from his Cliffboro boarding house, he did not accept the suggestion that he move to Brierledge without a protest.

When he had thanked Gallroy he explained that while he had given up his connection with Steel, Short & Cummings, he was not to be considered a recipient of charity. He was uncomfortably certain that this sounded un-

grateful, but he had to put his thoughts into words. It was easier with a blunt man like Gallroy than it would have been with another.

His client or host—in whatever class Gallroy might now be placed—looked him over with a frown. Then he smiled. "So that's the hang of it, eh? Come on!" and he led the way to the living room.

Roselyn had just come in from a ride. Her dark riding skirt disclosed black boots; a long gray coat clung closely to her slender figure; her hair, uncovered, was a wind-tossed mass of brown about her flushed face. She made a remarkable picture, and both men realized the fact.

"Roselyn," said Gallroy, "I have met in Cliffboro what I never expected to find in the town—a man I like. I have suggested that he make Brierledge his headquarters for a while, for the summer, if he and I don't get to quarreling. It appears," and Gallroy looked at Stalling, "that my invitation was not couched in proper form. Will the lady of the establishment try her hand?"

Gallroy went out to the veranda almost before the words were out of his mouth.

Roselyn looked at Stalling.

"You have your task cut out for you," he said, smiling.

"Will it be so hard?" she asked seriously.

He laughed. "I accept," he said. "I shall not put you to the necessity of urging me to do what I want to do. For the moment I felt that your uncle considered it his duty to ask me. I believe that he was sincere."

"That is very nice!" she exclaimed. "I am glad that you are to come to us. You must know that uncle never says what he does not mean. But tell me, how does it happen that he no longer wants Cliffboro to think that you and he are enemies?"

Stalling sat down and explained to her certain phases of the situation, but he was careful to say nothing that might cause her alarm.

While they talked, Martin came to show Stalling his rooms, and announced

that the car was ready to take him down to the village to get his effects.

Stalling looked his new quarters over and asked himself if he were dreaming. It seemed, in a way, quite inconceivable. Gallroy was an ideal host, and Roselyn was gracious without being too attentive. He was allowed to go his own way, made to feel that he was a friend of long standing, and thus put at his ease.

He spent his days in the office in the town of Cliffboro—although there was no business—but he breakfasted and dined with Gallroy and Roselyn, and his evenings were with them. He drew Gallroy's will, took charge of the document, and gradually came to assume more the position of secretary than attorney. Gallroy spoke of this side of his duties one night.

"Stalling," said the older man, "I never had any use for lawyers—mere matter of prejudice, or no need—but I begin to see I've been wrong. You do things right to the point; things that I would make work out of. You'd better handle all my affairs."

Stalling nodded. "I shall be glad to for the present. We had better let it rest in that way; a temporary arrangement which can be made permanent or discontinued later as you or I may think best."

Gallroy gave a grunt, and went off, smiling. He saw that it would be necessary for Stalling to feel that his services were actually needed, and that the position was not in any sense an arrangement of mere friendliness.

One day Gallroy astonished both Stalling and Roselyn by announcing at dinner that he had a letter from London. "Sent a man over there a year ago," he explained to Stalling, "trying to find some trace of my brother. Here I get word that my brother went to India, and died. Left a wife; she's dead, too; but there is a son. He's about your age, Rose. He's on his way over here. What do you think about a cousin, Rose?"

The girl smiled. "It will seem odd; but it will be nice, won't it, uncle?"

Gallroy leaned back with a frown.

"Well, now, that's a fine question. I liked Jimmie, but he and I were always quarreling." He would wander around; never cared to settle down and make money as I did. It's years now since he cut out for good, and I haven't heard from him in all that time. I hope his son's the right sort. If he isn't, Stalling, I'll row with him; I know I will."

Both the younger people laughed at this frankness, but they knew that Mr. Gallroy was stating the truth, provided he failed to take a fancy to his new-found nephew.

So each of the three—Stalling with the feeling that his nose might soon be out of joint—awaited the arrival of Rodney Gallroy with curiosity.

Just when he would come no one knew. He did arrive a few days after the letter. Stalling and Roselyn had been out riding. They had gone back into the woods with Gallroy, who was bent on trying to locate a couple of buffaloes which had not been seen with the rest of the herd for some days. His small collection of buffaloes was the pride of his game preserve.

They were all mounted, and a game-keeper accompanied them. After scouting for a greater part of the afternoon, the two animals were discovered in a deep glen, and Gallroy and his keeper headed them down the mountain. Then Roselyn suggested that she and Stalling ride straight back to the house and go down for the afternoon mail. So they pushed off alone, lost their way for a little while, but at last came out upon a country road. They found a gate in the fence, and let themselves out. Then they put their mounts at a wall across the road, and had a glorious race for the house. They came in, pounding over the lawn, their horses anxious for a longer run. Both were flushed in face. The girl's hair was a rebellious tangle half down her back, and the color was deep and flowing beneath her smooth cheeks.

Stalling swung down as she leaped to the gravel. For a second his eyes rested upon her face. He knew what these days of such close intimacy were doing for him. It troubled him in more

ways than one. He had been invited as a guest, taken a position as confidential adviser and secretary, and it did not seem to him that conditions were quite right if he was to fall in love with Gallroy's niece. But his reflections were cut short by the sound of wheels. They both looked up. Along the drive wound the dilapidated depot wagon. Beside the driver was a variegated assortment of baggage, the steamer marks plainly to be seen. Over the driver's shoulder a face was just discernible.

"It's my cousin," whispered Roselyn, stepping to Stalling's side. "You can receive him, or I'll send Martin; I'm a sight," and she fled, leaving Stalling no choice but to stand his ground.

The carriage swung up, the baggage was put down; then a tall, blond man, looking older than Stalling had expected, stepped out. "Mr. Gallroy's place, I fancy?" he said.

"Yes," answered Stalling. "I'm Mr. Gallroy's attorney; Stalling is my name. You are——"

"Oh, yes," cut in the man bluntly; "I expected to find my uncle here."

"He's off in the woods. Will you come in? I'll send a servant for the baggage."

They went into the big living room, and Stalling noted that the man, apparently not in the least ill at ease, was taking everything in with a critical regard.

Mr. Gallroy rode up inside of five minutes, and Stalling got away. He did not see young Gallroy again until dinner time, and directly after that he made excuses and started for the village on foot. It was close onto eleven when he set out for home. His time had been idly spent. During the first part of the evening he had wandered about, talking with different acquaintances; then he had gone down to the lake and smoked five pipefuls of tobacco while sitting upon a big rock against which the water lapped musically.

He took his way slowly toward Brierledge. Now that Mr. Gallroy had another man in the house, Stalling could

not see the need of his presence. He had drawn one will; and possibly, if Gallroy liked his nephew, there might be a codicil to fix up, but beyond that he could think of nothing for him to do. All other matters were dead and buried apparently.

These thoughts had been Stalling's companions as he sat on the rock by the water, and he was still turning them over when he walked up the drive and saw a dark shadow lose itself behind a bush. He stopped instantly. The house was dark, and it was close to twelve. Who was in the grounds? Gallroy's patrol had long ago been discontinued. Stalling sank down to watch. Perhaps fate was going to be kind to him; possibly the work he had cherished hopes of was about to take shape. He hoped he was right, but he knew it was selfish.

He crept ahead as the shadow went around toward the west side of the house. He was certain now that there was no mistake about it; callers, or one with a right to be in the grounds, wouldn't skulk like that. He rounded the house, and saw the man creeping up onto the veranda. Then he saw him standing straight against the French window outside Gallroy's den.

On hands and knees, Stalling got across the drive, and the next instant was upright. He made one leap for the wide veranda, slipped across the tiles, and landed upon the man's shoulders.

There was a muffled cry, and down went the two men, struggling like mad. Stalling had the fellow's arms pinned to his sides, and as he held him for a moment he caught a glimpse of the face. He had never seen him before; he had hoped it might prove to be Killbeck.

Then, just as Stalling's hand felt for the intruder's throat, the French window to the den flew open. Stalling glanced up. He had expected to see Gallroy, or possibly Martin. Instead, he saw a tall, slender figure; he caught a smothered exclamation, and the next instant up shot a hand. Stalling tried to dodge the blow, but it fell true, and he

suddenly went limp and rolled over on the tiled porch.

CHAPTER X.

A NOTE.

STALLING'S efforts to land the burglar resulted in his knowing nothing for two days. Then he had a week of high fever, a week of convalescence, and at the end of that time he got out of bed. In three days more he was free of his room and the doctor, out on the veranda basking in the warm sun, and experiencing a weakness about the knees that was new to him. His injuries had not been discussed except in a brief way. Gallroy and Roselyn had been in and out of his room, one of them with him most of the time, save when Martin was his nurse, and Stalling was appreciative of the deep obligation he was under to them all.

He told his story to Gallroy the afternoon he got outdoors. They were sitting side by side; Roselyn and young Gallroy were off walking.

"He came out of this house?" muttered Gallroy, when Stalling explained matters. "You are sure about that?"

"Quite. I had the fellow down, my hand was almost on his throat; I'd have choked him into submission in another minute, when the glass doors swung back, and that fellow who gave me such a rap on the head came out."

"Who was he?"

Stalling looked squarely at Gallroy. "I don't know," he said, with conviction.

"The deuce you don't! Who was in this house? Myself, Rose, Rodney, and the servants. Was it any of the servants?"

"I have thought about it quite a good deal," answered Stalling, looking away, "and I am certain that I did not recognize the man. Don't you suppose it must have been some one who was working with the other fellow, and had got into the house earlier in the evening?"

"Stalling!" exclaimed Gallroy. "Is it possible that you think I knocked you down?"

"Good heavens, no!" answered Stalling. "I'd know you in the dark."

"Then," and Gallroy leaned over and dropped his voice, as his eyes followed two figures moving through the trees, "why did you keep mentioning my name while you were off your head?"

"Did I?" Stalling looked around as calmly as he could, but he was agitated.

"Stalling," went on Gallroy, "I like that fellow. This game against me is evidently going to be kept going; these people mean no let-up. Would they be capable of sending some one of their gang here in the guise of my nephew?"

"What in the world do you mean?"

"You may have been sick, but you are not as dense as that. Did you think it was that fellow—my nephew we'll call him for a while longer—who knocked you over?"

"No!" Stalling answered, without a second's hesitation.

"Well, it's queer!" and Gallroy sank back in his chair. "You were off your head, of course, but you kept talking about Gallroy, and, at first I thought, and Rose thought, you meant me. Then you would mutter about his thinking—this Gallroy—that he could fake relationship and come over here to butt in. Mark me, you didn't say enough for me to understand what you were driving at until this very minute, when you tell me that the man who nearly cracked your skull came from inside this house."

"I guess I was just wandering," said Stalling. He was, however, for all his calm manner, deeply troubled. He knew that he had thought of young Gallroy as he saw the blow about to fall upon his head. But he knew, too, that he had not recognized the man who struck him. Still, it seemed that in his days of delirium he had said enough to make it appear that such an impression had fastened itself pretty strongly upon his brain. "Did they get in, Mr. Gallroy?" he asked.

His host sank back in his chair with a grunt. "Yes, they got in and got nothing. Turned my papers upside

down again. We found you in the morning—Martin found you.”

“What are they after?”

“Great Scott! I don’t know. Is it this land of mine? How are they going to get my place away from me by robbing my house?”

“Possibly, if it is the land that they want, they are trying to find the deeds in the hope of stealing them and thus making it harder for you to defend some suit based on a cooked-up flaw in the titles.”

“Well, then, I wish them joy. The deeds are in Boston, in my safe-deposit box.”

Stalling laughed. “Better put up a notice to that effect on the front gates,” he suggested.

“Not one bit of it. Stalling, I’ve got gamekeepers and gardeners in the bushes every night. Let ’em come again; “oh, let ’em come again!” roared Gallroy.

“I’d like a chance myself to get back at them,” said Stalling.

“How would it do to try and find out something through that law firm you were with?”

Stalling shook his head. “They wouldn’t tell me anything. Besides, Mr. Gallroy, I can answer for one thing—Steel, Short & Cummings are not behind these attacks. They may be the attorneys for the man that wants to buy, but some other agent for that person—whoever he is—is trying this line of attack to beat you out.”

“Well, you’ve got more faith in Steel, Short & Cummings than I have,” growled Gallroy.

The matter was reverted to on a number of occasions, but no solution was forthcoming. Stalling, when he got out and about, made an effort to see Killbeck, but could find no trace of the man. No one had seen him leave Cliffboro by train, but he certainly was not in town.

Gallroy spoke often of his nephew—whom Stalling came to like as he learned to know him—but the lawyer would not admit that he had even fancied it was Gallroy’s relative who attacked him. In truth, he was hon-

estly beginning to feel that his hazy and indistinct suspicions were quite groundless. The young Englishman was really likable. He was well read, had traveled extensively, and was entertaining. His slow, deliberate manner of speech, with the rising inflection upon his sentences, was agreeable to the ear, and his ideas upon general subjects were just enough un-American to be interesting.

Stalling realized that Roselyn liked her cousin, and he didn’t blame her, although he sometimes found the man a little in the way. But there were few discords between the four. They got along amazingly well, and with Stallings well on his feet, and no more midnight marauders, the household settled down into even ways again.

Still Gallroy kept his guards posted, and no one came or left Brierledge without being watched. Stalling took it upon himself to look up all strangers who came to town, but that, after a while, became a hard task, for the summer people were arriving, and the season was in full swing.

The first dance took Roselyn, young Gallroy, and Stalling down the lake to the clubhouse. They went in Gallroy’s speed launch, and came back late at night. It was after two when the car swung in through the tree-arched drive, and came panting to the door. Martin, the valet, was still up. He came down the steps hurriedly.

“Mr. Gallroy—is he not with you?” questioned the servant.

“What do you mean, Martin?” exclaimed Roselyn.

“Why, Mr. Gallroy went out about ten. He said he should walk down to the clubhouse, and come back with you. Then about eleven a note came from him, for you, Miss Trent.”

“A note for me, Martin?”

They followed the servant into the big living room, and he handed Roselyn the note lying on the table. She tore the envelope open hastily, and Stalling saw that her fingers trembled. Her eyes took in the few lines in one swift, sweeping glance; then, without a word, she passed the sheet of paper to Stalling.

"He said he was going to the clubhouse—you are sure of that, Martin?"

"Quite sure, Miss Trent," answered the servant, as a troubled look clouded his face.

Roselyn sank down in a chair, her eyes lifted to Stalling's face. Then she suddenly seemed conscious of her cousin. "Uncle writes that he has been called out of town suddenly, and will not be back for a few days," she explained.

Young Gallroy tugged at his mustache. "Rum go that," he remarked. "Strange time to be getting away, you know."

Roselyn had taken the note from Stalling, and was studying it again. Suddenly she got up and crossed to the open door, in the middle of which Stalling was standing looking out upon the night. She held the note out, and stepped close to him. "It is not his handwriting," she said, lowering her voice.

He turned his head, and their eyes met. "No," he answered; "it is a forgery—a good one."

The girl's face blanched, and in her eyes he read the terror in her heart.

"It won't take us long," he whispered. "We'll have him back." His voice was cooler than he felt.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE HUNT.

BYOND the table Martin was standing, his face troubled, his glance centered upon his mistress and Stalling. Young Gallroy was still tugging at his mustache, with his lips slightly parted. It was a characteristic attitude on his part, but it showed him at his worst, for his mouth was small and weak.

He looked up and met Roselyn's eyes. "Something wrong?" he questioned, stepping forward.

"Mr. Stalling," Roselyn said, nodding to the lawyer.

Stalling swung about at the appeal in her tone. "Yes? To be sure, I know. We must do something. I was trying to

decide. Martin, what time was it when Mr. Gallroy left the house?"

"I am not sure, sir, but about ten, I think. The note came around eleven."

"Who brought the note, Martin?" demanded the girl. She was breathing quickly; her bosom rose and fell rapidly under the light scarf which covered her shoulders.

"A man, Miss Trent, whom I did not know. He just handed it in as I opened the door, and left at once. I didn't see his face. Now that I think of it, his hat was pulled down across his eyes."

Stalling looked at his watch. He realized that the night and hour had been well chosen. It was the first time they had all been away for some time, and it was now so late that to attempt to follow—if they knew which way to go—was out of the question. Suddenly his suspicions of young Gallroy, which had been slumbering and almost extinguished, came back to him. He glanced at the Englishman.

"Something gone wrong with Uncle Warren?" demanded the nephew, meeting Stalling's eyes.

"Well, Gallroy, this note, supposed to be written by your uncle, is a fake. It looks good, but it isn't his hand. More than that, there is no sane reason why Mr. Gallroy should leave town."

"Fancy that! Do I gather, Stalling, that you mean something has happened to my uncle?"

"No, I don't," answered Stalling, as he saw Roselyn catch her breath. "I mean that some one is playing a joke, or——"

"There is no need of mincing words, Mr. Stalling," said the girl calmly. "Uncle has been carried off!"

Then the Englishman seemed to wake up. "Carried off? Why, I don't quite get you. But if it's that, Stalling, get after them. Call up the police! Can't we do something?"

"I'm trying to think what we can do," replied Stalling. "Gallroy, has your uncle said anything that would lead you to think who might do this thing?"

"To me?" The Englishman's surprise was genuine. "Why, no; I fancied that you had his affairs in hand."

"Has he said anything to you, Miss Trent?"

"No," came the girl's troubled answer. "We know about the man he shot at, and the attack upon you. Could it be those men?"

"It must be," agreed Stalling, biting his lips. "Who else could it be?"

"Really, he hasn't said a blessed word to me, you know," said the nephew. "Why, Stalling, he gave me to understand you were bowled over by an accident. Was it some rough that got you?"

"It was some one trying to get into your uncle's den, although the man who knocked me down came out the window. I do not see that we have anything to go on. I think your uncle must have been as much in the dark as we are. I cannot connect this last outrage with the people who are trying to buy Brierledge."

"Trying to buy Brierledge?" exclaimed Roselyn, coming nearer to Stalling.

"He has had offers for it. Bower, an agent in Cliffboro, was the last one. And there is a thread!" he suddenly exclaimed. "I'll get hold of Bower and make him talk."

"But the hour!" protested the girl, as Stalling clapped on his hat.

"Bower will have to get up. I know where he lives."

"But how would the chap that wanted to buy the place have anything to do with this racket?" protested young Gallroy.

"I don't know that he has," replied Stalling; "but we must do something. We can't stand here forever and talk. It is the only clew to follow now, and I'll see what I can find."

"Get the car, Martin," ordered the girl. "I will go with you, Mr. Stalling."

Stalling halted in the open doors. "I don't think I want the car, and it is best for you to rest."

"Do you think I can go to bed and sleep?" she demanded.

"No; I wish you might. What I mean is, that I am going to look about town. The car will attract attention at

this hour, and I can do more alone. Please wait here."

The car, which Martin had ordered out, swung up to the door. Stalling started across the veranda, and Roselyn was quickly at his side. "I do think that I should go," she urged.

He turned about with a patient smile. "Miss Trent, I do not know what I can do, and so I don't see what you can do. I cannot prevent you from coming if you insist."

"You know something more than you have told me. You are going to take some risk! If those men would carry off my uncle, they——"

"Will not get hold of me. I shall be on the watch for them. I really do not need a protector."

She flushed. "I was not offering to go as a protector. My interest is as deep as any one's; I want to know what has happened."

"And I'll bring you word at once, just as soon as I have any news. I'll be back, or telephone. Possibly your uncle took a team and drove somewhere; I'll find out. I'll take the car, part way, now that it is here."

Stalling leaped in beside the chauffeur, and gave the word. The car shot down the drive, and was lost under the arching trees.

Roselyn turned about with a little sob.

"Oh, I say!" protested her cousin. "You don't want to go on like that, you know. Stalling will find out something and set it all right."

"I hope so," murmured the girl, and went into the living room. It was hard to wait and think; she wished that he had let her go with him; she wondered if he did have some information which he thought might lead to the men who had done this terrible thing. If so, she knew that danger lay ahead for him, and her anxiety was doubled.

But Stalling had no information; he was only going to see what he might pick up. He would have a talk with Bower, he would try to locate Killbeck—though the man hadn't been around for days—he would see if any one had

caught a glimpse of Mr. Gallroy. He might have to arouse the whole of Cliff-boro before he got through. If so, he was prepared to do it.

He left the car some distance outside the village, and told the chauffeur to wait. It suddenly came to him now that an automobile was a handy adjunct if one wanted to move fast. He went down the hill and came into the unlighted main street. The stores looked strange and ghostly. Far out on the lake he caught the dull purr of a motor boat.

Bower's home lay down the street just a little way, and Stalling was hurrying on with long, nervous strides when he brought up with a start. He was directly across the street from where his sign creaked in the wind. The second floor, corner room, of the three-story block, was his office.

Behind the drawn curtains a light burned.

For a moment Stalling considered the situation with a frown. What in the world did he have in his office that any one could want? Then, like a flash, it came to him that he had a few of Mr. Gallroy's papers. They were not important ones, but the men who were responsible for his client's disappearance might think otherwise.

Like a shot Stalling dashed into the open door of the building, and went up the stairs three at a time, but quietly.

He was at the top, and bending low in an instant, with his eye to the old-fashioned keyhole. A man was in plain view, calmly sorting some papers. What made Stalling's heart leap was the discovery that it was the man whom he had tackled on the Brierledge veranda.

There was just one door to the office. He had no doubt that the key was turned, so he made no move to enter. He would wait until——

A figure shot out of the darkness just ahead of him, caught him in his crouching attitude, and swung him off his feet. The next second, as Stalling made one wild effort to save himself, he and his assailant went crashing down the narrow stairs.

CHAPTER XII.

AN UNEQUAL FIGHT.

ONE of the marvels of Stalling's life was that he landed at the bottom of the narrow stairs without injury. He struck and shot out across the sidewalk. When he leaped to his feet, dazed but not hurt, his assailant was making off around the corner.

Stalling just glimpsed the vanishing runner, and dashed for the stairs down which he had come so precipitously. Four steps at a time he went leaping toward the landing. He tried the door, and, to his surprise, found that it gave when he turned the knob. He hesitated no longer, but flung the door open, and stepped inside.

The man straightened like a shot, evidently amazed at seeing Stalling instead of his accomplice, tried to turn, and only succeeded in catching a glimpse of Stalling's face, as the latter seized him from behind. Then he threw every ounce of his strength into an effort to dislodge Stalling, and the two went reeling across the room. They brought up with a crash against the wall, and Stalling swung the fellow about, threw him back, and set his fingers on his throat. The man ceased to struggle instantly.

"Be still!" came the order. "Do you give up?"

The man managed to indicate his willingness to surrender. Stalling dove for the captive's hip pocket, and in a second was master of the situation, for he had the fellow's revolver.

"Now," he commanded, letting go the throat, "sit down in that chair!"

The man walked across the office, and sat down as ordered. Stalling threw open a drawer of his desk, and took out a ball of heavy cord. Keeping the man covered, he backed toward the door, and turned the key.

"Now," he said, "I think you and I can settle this matter." He knelt down, placed the cord close to his hand, and ordered the man to put out his feet. The fellow shoved them back under the chair. Stalling looked up at him, and

the tolerant expression upon his face changed like a flash.

"If you don't put out your feet, I'll be obliged to make you. Your impudence in coming here is amusing, but you won't see the humor in it if you balk."

The man's feet came out like a shot, both together, and they caught Stalling in the chest.

He went over, flat on his back, and missed his hold on the revolver as he fell. Like a shot the other was out of the chair and had the revolver. But as he seized it, Stalling was up and at him.

His fighting blood was up, and he swung right and left as the man straightened. The first blow missed, but the second caught the man in the cheek, and sent him reeling back against the desk. He struck with a crash, a groan escaped his lips, then up came his hand, and the revolver belched fire.

Stalling jumped, caught his wrist, and threw the revolver up as it flashed again. The first bullet had buried itself in the partition, the second sent down a shower of plaster.

At this moment a crash fell upon the door. Stalling threw up his head. Was it help, attracted by the revolver shots, or the man who had tackled him on the stairs? Either way, he had to have the revolver.

With a feint at the man's face with his free hand, he swung him about, snapped him up short, and got a sharp twist on his wrist. The revolver went flying across the room, and both men dove for it as some one struck a heavy blow on the door. As the glass splintered and crashed to the floor, Stalling and his antagonist collided and went down. Stalling landed on his hands and knees, never stopped to rise, but crawled for the revolver. He got it in his hand, and swung about just as the man with whom he had been fighting leaped for him.

As he rolled over and threw one arm about the fellow he saw the door fly back—a hand reached in and turned the key. Two men leaped into the room.

"Get back!" cried the lawyer. "Get back or I'll put a bullet into this fel-

low," and he swung the revolver about and planted the cold steel against his antagonist's neck. "Steady," he whispered. "Now, you two, back across the room, or I'll pull the trigger. Quick!"

The two newcomers hesitated a second; then, both together, charged straight across the room. It was easier for Stalling to fire at them than to shoot a man he held in his arms. He swung the revolver, and the report echoed in the low-ceilinged room with a deafening roar. At the same instant he flung the man on top of him aside, and gained his feet. Then the two men were upon him. He fired again, there was a wild shriek of pain, and one of the men leaped back. But the other was so close that Stalling just managed to side-step in time to avoid his fist.

Stalling got into the corner, swung a chair toward him, and just managed to lift it above his head as the three men came on. It was an utterly unequal fight. Stalling fired his last shot, realized that it had missed, and brought down the chair. The nearest man went flat under the blow, but the other two closed. It was give-and-take, with fists, a short club in one of the men's hands, and Stalling using the revolver butt.

Out from the corner he fought his way, and started for the door, for now he realized that the men were too desperate to be cowed, and that he must get help. As he cleared the corner of his desk, his foot caught in the string he had purposed using upon the first of his assailants. With a crash he went to the floor. The next second a man was upon him. He strove to rise, got a wicked blow from a fist, and went flat again.

Then two men threw themselves across him, and he saw, as he turned his face, that the one he had floored with the chair was on his feet.

"Got him?" came the cry. "Here's string; it will hold."

"I've got him," answered the man who held Stalling's arms. "Quick, Turner, see if any one's coming."

Stalling made one terrific effort to throw his assailants aside, and half suc-

ceeded. The next second he was flung face down and held. A gag was shoved into his mouth, and he felt the heavy cord go about his ankles and arms.

CHAPTER XIII.

HELD CAPTIVE.

STALLING was made secure beyond any chance of his getting free; then the men held council. "He got me in the arm," groaned one.

"Huh!" grunted another, taking a look; "it's nothing but a flesh wound. Tie a handkerchief around it. He got me; that chair nearly laid me out. But say, Turner, what were you doing?"

"Doing! He came in on me; I thought it was Tom."

"I tackled him," came the explanation. "We went down the stairs. Then I bolted for Horner."

"I know, I know," was the impatient reply; "but the papers—what took you so long, Turner?"

"I can't find them; not a thing here. There's a will—Gallroy's will."

"Well, take what you can find and come on. We got to get out of here, and do it quick. It's a wonder some one hasn't heard us. If it wasn't a sleepy, dead town—"

"What are we going to do with him?"

The three men retired to the far corner of the office and consulted. There seemed to be a decided difference of opinion among them, but at last one turned to the desk and gathered up what papers he wanted; then the three went about a hurried setting of things to rights.

The broken chair was cast into a closet, the overturned furniture straightened up, and finally the broken glass in the door tossed after the wrecked chair. Some heavy pieces of wrapping paper were fastened over the opening where the glass had been, and the men surveyed the scene with evident satisfaction.

"But for the broken glass no one would suspect," said one. "Lock the door, Tom."

"Right," came the response, and the

three picked Stalling up. One took his feet, two the upper part of his body, and he was carried into the hall. There they put him down for a moment, locked his office door, and started up the stairs leading to the third floor.

Stalling was surprised at this move until they went along the top floor to the rear, and came to a flight of stairs leading down into the alley at the back of the building. He had never explored the upper part of the place, and had not known until that moment that there were two ways of getting in and out.

In the alley a wagon stood close to the building. They heaved Stalling's body in, tossed a blanket over him, just leaving his face clear, so that he might have air, and two of the men sat down beside him while the third picked up the reins and started the horse. Stalling could just see the top of the building in which his office was situated. Then he lost that as the wagon turned a corner. He had a meager glimpse of buildings, then there was nothing but arching trees within his range of vision. He did his best to make out the direction in which they left Cliffboro, but he realized that the wagon had made too many turns and twists for him to be at all sure. He felt confident that a more direct route could have been chosen had the men not purposed confusing him.

It was at least two hours before the wagon drew up. Stalling believed that they had gone north from Cliffboro, for a good many hills had been encountered, and still, as the town lay in a valley, it was possible that the wagon had been driven in any direction save south, for there lay the lake.

When they stopped, one of the men beside Stalling got up and threw a blanket over him. It fell full across Stalling's face, and he had just time to shut his eyes to avoid the dust from it. One of the men jumped down, and a long wait followed. Stalling fancied that he heard a door open and close, and voices. Then steps drew near, and a voice that seemed familiar spoke up.

"You three are a set of idiots," came the words.

"Well, what else we could have done

I don't know," growled one of the men.

"You could have run for it when he found you—grabbed the papers and run. You must have come deucedly near to killing somebody. I told you to be careful; I'll go so far and no farther."

"Well," said one of the men, "if you think this job can be pulled off without taking the chances of killing somebody, all I've got to say is that you can guess again."

"It will be."

"When a scrapper like this fellow lands you, you've got to come pretty near killing or get killed. He fought like a fiend. Why, if that string hadn't tripped him he'd have reached the hall, and from there he could have held us prisoners."

"I don't care for that," replied the newcomer, who appeared to be in command of the situation. "But you should know that he isn't wanted here. How are we going to carry out matters with him a prisoner?"

Stalling was left no time to consider this new puzzle. Something was said, the wagon started ahead again, then stopped with a jolt. Off came the blanket, some one laid hold of Stalling's feet, and he was dragged, none too gently, across the bottom of the wagon and out at the back. Two men caught him, and he had a hasty glimpse of a white house, and the next minute he was inside a barn.

A lantern gave him what meager sight he had of his surroundings, then the men, carrying him between them, passed into a darker part of the building, a door creaked, and he was dropped down upon the floor. Again the door creaked, he heard a grating sound, and caught the shifting flashes of the lantern as his guards receded.

The instant Stalling was satisfied that he was alone he rolled over on his side. Then began a long, steady, nerve-racking fight with the cords about his wrists. Already they were beginning to cut into the flesh, but when he strove to break them, then to slip one hand free, they went deeper and deeper, and at last the

blood came. He set his teeth, stood the torture, and kept working, tugging, bending, twisting, any move and every move that would help him to liberty.

He rolled over and over three or four times, and came up against a wall. Moving his hands as best he could, and working his body along, he suddenly felt a sharp piece of tin; it cut his wrist as he struck it. But it did for him what he could not have done otherwise. Against the sharp edge he cut the cords on his arms. Then, in another minute, his feet were free, and he stood up.

When he got the blood back into his limbs he moved forward, made out where he was, and found the door—it was a box stall—closed and locked. But he managed to lift the hinged door to the manger. Through this he crawled, and landed in the passage at the head of the row of stalls.

Somewhere to his right a horse stamped. Stalling turned in the opposite direction, found the way to the barn floor, and arrived there just as a light came across the yard.

He could see two men coming toward him from the house. He reached out, touched a straight, built-in ladder, and laid hold. With a leap he went up and up. As the hay brushed his face he swung over and dropped down into its soft fragrance.

CHAPTER XIII.

GREEK MEETS GREEK.

FROM his hiding place in the hay Stalling heard a team being made ready. The horse was led out, harnessed quickly, and then the two men, who were nothing but shadowy, quick-moving forms, so far as Stalling could see, disappeared from his sight. As he listened he heard a sharp cry, and the next instant the two men came running onto the barn floor. They swung into the wagon and the whip snapped. The horse plunged forward, and out through the open doors dashed the wagon.

Stalling swung for the ladder. As he landed on the barn floor he caught the flash of the lantern near the house. He

drew back. He made out three men and the wagon; then, before he could determine his course, the group by the side porch broke up.

A number of heavy bundles were tossed into the wagon, the men swung in over the wheels, and drove off.

It all happened so quickly that Stalling was left in doubt as to what the next move would be until the wagon rumbled out of the yard. Then he was off in pursuit, cutting across the fields, hoping to be able to intercept the wagon, and, if possible, keep it in sight. To his amazement, when he leaped the stone wall, having made his way over a stubble field, the wagon was nowhere in sight. He stood on the road that led past the farmhouse, and the wagon should have passed the spot.

On the run, he turned back, having waited but a moment to listen. He passed three openings into the woods on the farther side of the road. When he had come back to the farmhouse he turned about and attempted to track the men.

In the end, after half an hour of search, he was forced to give up. The road was cut up, many wheels had passed, and he could not distinguish one from another. He was only certain that the wagon must have turned into the woods somewhere between the farmhouse and the spot where he had hoped to intercept it. It was small consolation, and he was provoked that he should have bungled.

Making back to the farmhouse, he spent a full hour in careful search. First he went cautiously about, but finally, satisfied that there was no one left on guard, got into the house by the side door, which he found open.

It was plain that a number of men had made the place their headquarters, but the farther Stalling went, and he examined every room, the more convinced he became that the place was a deserted farm which had been appropriated by the ruffians. There were a few pieces of furniture in the house, but the barn was empty of stock or tools. There was nothing that would warrant him in hazarding a guess as to

whether these men had Mr. Gallroy in their power. He was deeply chagrined, for he had, from the few words he had caught, believed he was on the track of his client. By their quick move he had been balked, but as he recalled the loading of the wagon he did not think that Warren Gallroy had been placed in it. What did it mean? Were the men he had caught rifling his office in no way to blame for Gallroy's disappearance? It was possible that they were simply after certain papers, absolutely in ignorance of Gallroy's absence. And what had the man meant when he stated that his being made a prisoner sadly interfered with their plans?

With these puzzles to think about, he set off down the road. He had no idea where he was, but after walking what he judged to be a matter of two to three miles he found a house, the first he had seen. It was light now, and he arranged for a team to take him to Brierledge. All questions he deferred until he was on his way. Then he learned that the farmhouse up the road was the old Tuttle place, unoccupied, and many years on the market. The farmer added that he had heard that Bower had sold the place some few weeks before, but he could not substantiate the rumor.

The mention of Bower's name set Stalling to thinking. He could not believe that the vacillating real-estate man was a party to such methods as were being employed. He said nothing to his driver, but intimated that he had got lost in the woods, and let it go at that.

It was after eight o'clock when they reached their destination. Stalling swung down into the road, paid his man, and went up the drive on foot. He was about to go around the house, for he wanted to change his clothes and remove the marks of battle, when Roselyn came out onto the veranda.

She caught sight of him, and flew to his side.

"You haven't slept?" he questioned.

"You have no news; I can see that. But you——" She stepped back and looked at him. "Your face, your

wrists! Your coat is torn, and there is a bruise on your forehead!"

Her voice was not raised above an ordinary pitch, but her eyes told him how she felt. Her hand went out, and her fingers gripped his sleeve.

He looked down into her face and smiled. It was a hard smile, though, in which she read resolve, smoldering anger, a determination that boded ill for some one.

"I'm all right," he said, in an even voice. "I have some news, but whether it will lead to anything is a question. I would like some breakfast."

"Come," she said; "you will tell me everything. I have had an awful night, but it has made me see that I must hope for the best. I understood that when the car came back, and Thomas said he had waited an hour, as you directed, and you had not returned. Rodney has been kind; he has just gone to the village to look you up. You should have passed him, but perhaps he went across the fields."

"I didn't see him," he said, and followed her into the breakfast room.

There he sank down, thoroughly fagged. Roselyn drew up a chair, and, with both elbows on the table, her hands clasped, and her chin upon them, leaned forward eagerly. He noticed for the first time that she still wore the dress she had on when he left; she had not slept.

Rodney Gallroy, before he set out for the village, had got into a light tweed suit, square-toed boots, and a soft hat. What he expected to do when he arrived in Cliffboro was not a settled point in his mind. He was spared the trouble of answering the question by meeting a fellow countryman on the road. Young Gallroy had taken to the wood path, then swung across the fields as he saw a carriage in the distance. He hailed it, thinking it might be Stalling. When an Englishman, a little older than himself, put his head out, Gallroy felt as if he had almost set foot upon his native soil. He had been having a good enough time at Brierledge, but America and Americans were not England and fellow countrymen.

"Well, how are you?" he demanded, with a quick smile, in his unmistakable accent.

The man in the carriage looked at him and frowned. "Very well, thank you. How are you?" There was no doubt that he was English, as there was no doubt that he was better bred than young Gallroy.

The man in the carriage swung down, motioned his driver on a short distance, and looked Gallroy over. "It's a bit of a surprise to meet a fellow countryman in this place," he said.

"Same with me. Gallroy's my name."

The man's brows lifted. "Indeed!" he said, after a pause. "That interests me. If you are walking back, I'll go with you."

Gallroy thought this all very odd, but he said nothing. The two men started toward Cliffboro, and the carriage went down over the hill and disappeared.

The man smiled. "I wanted to talk with you when I heard who you were. By the way, is Mr. Warren Gallroy a relation of yours?"

"Yes; he's my uncle."

"Is there a young woman at Mr. Gallroy's place—a Miss Trent?"

"My cousin, yes," answered Gallroy.

Then the older man stopped, and looked at him with a smile. "Don't you know that she isn't Mr. Warren Gallroy's niece?" he asked.

"What?" came the startled response.

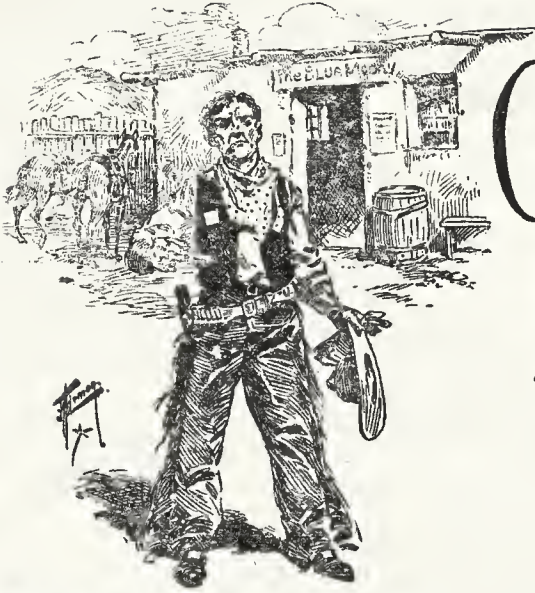
"That Mr. Warren Gallroy had just one brother, that all his property is rightfully his nephew's, he having no other kin?"

"Say," exclaimed young Gallroy, "what are you trying to get at? Who are you now?"

The older man was making marks in the dust with the ferrule of his cane. Suddenly he looked up and met Gallroy's glance. "Why, I'm Mr. Warren Gallroy's nephew!" he said.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The reader has but two weeks to wait for the next installment of this serial, which will appear in the December mid-month TOP-NOTCH, on sale November 15th. Back numbers will be furnished by news dealers or the publishers.



Once in a Blue Moon

By R.K. Thompson

THE new cowboy, late of New York and adjacent cities East, shoved back from the table—his last chip gone. It was no use; everything he tried went against him. He rose, a flush mounting to his weak face as he noticed the grins of onlookers, a little party of men from the Circle Bar Ranch, with whom he had ridden into town that morning on a holiday. Plainly they were pleased at his “trimming.”

Shouldering through the group, he walked without a word past the Blue Moon’s bar and out of the door. Was there ever such luck! Leaning against the adobe front of the saloon, Barker turned out his empty pockets in a search for one last coin, and scowled at the crooked road before him. Shimmering heat waves that hurt his eyes danced above the ankle-deep dust baking in the glare of the midday sun. He hated this country from which he was trying—so far in vain—to get away.

Five weeks earlier, to a day, the wayward young man got himself into a nasty scrape—not his first. This was in Providence, where his only relative, an uncle, had once again exerted his in-

fluence to get him a position which offered every chance of a substantial future if he would but settle down and apply himself diligently to making good. Some funds of the firm were missing, and the finger of suspicion pointed to George Nolan Barker as the culprit. So marked was the circumstantial evidence against him that he had been given the curt ultimatum of replacing the missing money within twenty-four hours or going to jail.

He was guilty. This time his folly had taken the form of backing a race horse with cash “borrowed” from his employers; but no matter. His uncle had always helped him out before. To his uncle he turned again, with confidence unshaken, for the financial assistance necessary to avert the threatened stigma of a prison sentence.

His confidence promptly received an unexpected blow. “Not a penny more,” had been the substance of the hundred-word message from his kinsman which came scorching over the wire, couched in no uncertain terms of exasperated finality. This was the last straw. Flatly, his uncle was through with him.

The old gentleman had a friend out West who owned a ranch, and who

would not object, as a favor, to tackling the thankless job of pounding some sense into the hide of a ne'er-do-well. A ticket to the far-off place of this cattleman was all he would vouchsafe as help out of the present predicament. If George Barker chose to escape prison bars at the expense of banishment, well and good. Otherwise he would have to stay and face the music. Thus it was that the young man found himself, at the end of a four-day train ride, dumped down in this land of desolation, cast off, and disowned.

There was no love lost between the old man and himself. If the former wanted to sever connections, he was satisfied; only, as it happened, he had no intention of staying where he was put. There was still a little matter of business that remained to be settled with his relative. What about the money that had been left George Nolan in the uncle's keeping, until such time as in the latter's own judgment the young man was fit to have its handling?

The tidy little fortune was still in his guardian's charge, and as soon as he reached the barren outpost of civilization called Hamilton, Barker wrote, asking for his legacy. There was no answer, and he wrote again, demanding his money. Still no response. In sullen patience Barker worked through the days that followed at such tasks as were apportioned to him, hoping against hope, until the end of the month arrived, and he was paid off with the rest of the ranch hands.

II.

BARKER took his pay, intending to go home with it and interview his uncle, and hastened eagerly to the ticket window at the station. But there a sad blow fell. It was not enough for the fare back East. His guardian had bought the ticket West, and he had not thought to inquire its price. His plan to go after what belonged to him was deferred, at the best, another month. Yet he couldn't wait. A fever of impatience possessed him. Maybe if he took a chance with what he had he

might make up what he lacked for the ticket, so he entered the unprepossessing temple of chance, and staked his all upon the turning of a few cards.

Now, standing penniless before the Blue Moon's door, he shoved his hands deeper in his empty pockets, he indulged in a bitter tirade against his luck, the universe, and all things in it. Yes, this was always the way. No matter what he tried, he must lose, forever lose! It wasn't his fault; in his opinion nothing that had ever happened to him was his fault. He was simply the victim of circumstances.

He straightened, standing free of the wall of sun-dried clay. Those roisters inside, carefree, with their pay intact, could stay here in town the remainder of that day and night if they chose. He would ride back to the ranch. The cook was there—he would be sure of his dinner, anyway.

He untied the reins of his cow pony, and, swinging into the saddle, jerked his mount's head northward toward the mesa flats outside the town.

"Headin' the wrong way," remarked the foreman of the ranch, who appeared at that moment in the Blue Moon's door.

Barker looked down over his shoulder at the blond, weather-tanned man regarding him from the threshold with a twinkle lurking still in his clear, gray eyes. The foreman held out a fluttering sheet of paper torn from a pocket memorandum book.

"Since the boys are all enjoyin' themselves, and you ain't," he said, "I wish you'd ride over to the station with this here wire. It's a sellin' order on them yearlin's we branded last week. The old man's in somewhat of a hurry fer to get it right off. Just turn her into the telegraph office, collect."

The other hesitated, biting his lip. Then he took the message, removed his hat, put the sheet of paper inside, and covered his head once more. Without a word he wheeled the pony and set off in a cloud of dust.

He would have liked to refuse to carry out the foreman's order, but he

did not dare. His coward's heart quailed before the thought of what the consequences might be for him at the hands of that level-eyed man. An errand boy! That was what they were making of him now. Well, he would have to put up with this further degradation—that is, until he got some money. Then he'd like to hear them giving him their orders! Only, once he had his hands on the coin he wanted, he wouldn't stay around this jerkwater hole long enough to hear anything.

Money! The word repeated itself over and over in his mind in time to the galloping hoofbeats under him as he rode. If only he could get hold of some!

As the sun sank he reined in his horse before the small railroad station that was his destination, and dismounted in the soft dust. Some of it must have adhered to the soles of his boots, for his steps made no sound when, his knees stiff from the long ride, he walked along the boards toward the window of the telegraph office. The station agent was alone inside, his back turned as he sat before the instrument receiving over the wire.

Force of habit, bred in that period of his worthless career when he had once tapped the key in a metropolitan telegraph branch, caused George now, as he leaned idly before the window, to "read" the message that came clicking out on the still evening air. It had something to do with official business of the road. Something—suddenly, his breath held, Barker tiptoed back a cautious step or two along the station wall.

The express messenger—he was all ears now—on the train due in Hamilton a little before eight o'clock that night, had broken his leg while getting out of the car forty-odd miles down the line. He would be off duty for the remainder of the run. Nobody would know that the armed guard was disabled, and so the road was going to take a chance on making the rest of the trip with no one to guard the car. The operator was instructed to inform the injured messenger's sister, who lived near that station, to be ready to take

the invalid off the train when it stopped at Hamilton.

The dots and dashes abruptly ceased. The message was finished. George expelled his pent breath in a guarded gasp. He crept down the platform with wary stealth, turning at its end to tramp noisily back to the window. The agent appeared at the window and took his wire. Then young Barker mounted his horse, and rode thoughtfully away.

III.

HERE was a chance—if only he had the nerve! It was an opportunity made to order for him in his present need of money. To hold up that train when the express car's messenger was off duty was comparatively easy—but it was no use. He knew he dared not attempt it. Inexperienced in any criminal act that required physical boldness, unarmed and single-handed against the train crew and passengers—he felt his scalp prickle. Somebody might shoot him dead while he was trying to pull it off!

Suddenly, rounding a turn in the hillside road, he pulled up short, face to face with a stranger on horseback. Yet at the second look he was aware that this man was not a complete stranger—for his face bore the unmistakable characteristics depicted on a placard with which Nolan had long been familiar, and which offered a reward for "Red" Gleason, head of a notorious band of cattle thieves. He had held up and robbed a train on this very line not six weeks before, and Barker's hand trembled on the reins.

"Got the makin's, friend?" asked the mounted man.

His tone was friendly, where Barker had expected a gruff command to throw up his hands, and as he fumbled in his pockets a daring thought flashed into the Easterner's mind.

"Sure, I've got the makin's," he replied, somewhat shakily, and handed over a limp bag with a depleted book of papers. "I've got the makin's of a lot of easy money, too, for anybody that wants to come in on it."

He essayed a wink, and gathered courage during the brief survey the other man bestowed upon him while rolling a cigarette. The result of his inspection seemed to satisfy the outlaw, for he spoke again in a friendly tone.

"Is that so?" he asked encouragingly.

And, sitting as it were in the jaws of death, Barker found himself repeating excitedly the information conveyed to him over the telegraph wires. And he must have talked to some purpose, for, five minutes later, he was winding his way over a secret trail, with Red Gleason in the lead, on the way to summon reinforcements from the outlaw's gang.

IV.

THROWING the glare of its great yellow eye before it, the west-bound express came snorting and puffing along the last leg of its run past the water-tank station of Hamilton. The track ran between dense thickets on an up grade here, which meant a slow pull.

Suddenly, with a shower of sparks from the rails, the brakes grated, the engine slackened speed, then settled to a full stop. From the dark shadows of the underbrush at either side stepped dim figures, masked and armed.

Watching from the safety of the thicket's edge, Barker fingered his trembling lips. Beads of cold perspiration—the icy sweat of fright—stood on his brow. But it was all ridiculously easy. Not a shot fired, not a blow struck—three minutes later, to a second, the express was rumbling off again. So this was a holdup! No more thrilling than stopping a street car on Broadway! Joining his fellows by the deserted tracks, Barker received his share of the spoils after Gleason's gang had divided them. It amount to one-thirteenth of a package containing ten thousand dollars.

Then, in the general scattering of the outlaws which followed, he, too, took to his horse, and rode galloping through the night back to the adobe building from which the Circle Bar foreman had sent him on his errand.

He found the town in an uproar when he got there. News of the robbery was now on every tongue. At the post office, where the crowd was thickest, Barker found the boys from the ranch assembled. He wormed through the group, his heart in his mouth, wondering whether he would by any possible chance be suspected. But he was perfectly safe, it seemed, so far. Red Gleason had been recognized by the fireman on the train, and the holdup was known to be the work of that desperado's gang.

"Letter for you here, son," said the postmaster, catching sight of him just then. "Came off the express. Here, catch!"

As it fluttered into his hands, Barker saw that the upper left-hand corner of the envelope bore the address of a firm of New York lawyers. Mystified, he drew off to one side to open and read the letter unobserved.

Mr. George Nolan Barker, Hamilton Station.

DEAR SIR: Your uncle, incensed at the insinuations against his integrity contained in a recent letter from you, has decided to turn over the money he has long administered in your behalf—however unworthy he may still consider you to have the handling of it.

He desires to terminate all relations with you, and has instructed us, his attorneys, to notify you to this effect.

You will therefore receive, under separate cover by express, in complete settlement of all claims against him, the sum of ten thousand dollars in cash, which we trust you will find correct. Very truly yours,

BOND, BLACKMAN & BARR.

The hand that held the letter dropped limply to his side. A sudden suspicion, which he dreaded to contemplate, but still could not help facing, was creeping into his mind. He looked around him in a daze, and found his eyes resting upon the remembered face of one of the outlaws—a lesser member of the gang, who had probably ridden into this town by a roundabout route to find out whether the present whereabouts of the party of bad men was suspected.

He winked at Barker. Pulling him by the arm, the latter hastily led the way toward the rear of the post office. "Quick—can you tell me," he blurted

out; "did you happen to see who that package was addressed to that we got the money from?"

The outlaw looked behind him over his shoulder. Then he nodded.

"I saw the name, all right," he replied. "Somethin' like Baxter, Parker —Barker, that's it! Somebody sendin' a cowboy money from home, I reckon. 'Twas addressed to the Circle Bar Ranch, out beyond here a ways——"

But Barker waited for no more. He

was slinking off around the back of the building. His legacy, split up among twelve strangers, who were thieves and rascals every one——

Five minutes later the postmaster returned on tiptoe to the group in front of the place. "Thought the shack was afire round in back, from the cloud of smoke risin' there," he remarked; "but it was only a cloud of dust. Say, that young feller from the East must have gone plumb locoed."

Wild Chase for a Polar Bear

IF there is anything that starts the blood in an Eskimo's heart and gets him wilder than the sight of a polar bear, writes Peary in "The Discovery of the North Pole," I have yet to find it.

It is not the Eskimo only that gets excited at the first sight of Bruin; his dogs get "mad," too.

Describing the pursuit and capture of one of these animals, Peary writes:

Oob-loo-yah's team shot by me with Oob-loo-yah at the upstanders. E-ging-wah came next, and I threw myself on his sledge as it flew past. Behind us came Koo-la-too-wah with the third team.

I think the man who coined the phrase, "greased lightning," must have ridden on an empty sledge behind a team of Eskimo dogs on the scent of a polar bear.

The bear had heard us, and was making for the opposite shore of the fiord with prodigious bounds. When we got to the middle of the fiord the snow was deeper, and the dogs could not go so fast, although they strained ahead with all their might. Suddenly they scented the trail, and then neither deep snow nor anything else could hold them.

Oob-loo-yah, with a crazy team and only himself at the upstanders, distanced the rest of us, and arrived at the farther shore almost as soon as the leaping bear. He loosed the dogs immediately, and we could see the bear

in the distance, followed by minute dots that looked hardly larger than mosquitoes, swarming up the steep slope.

Before our slower teams got to the shore Oob-loo-yah had reached the top of the slope, and he signaled us to go round, as the land was an island.

When we reached the other side we found where the bear had descended to the ice again, and kept on across the remaining width of the fiord to the western shore, followed by Oob-loo-yah and his dogs.

A little farther on we came to a deep cañon, and as we could tell by the sounds, the dogs and the bear were at the bottom. But where we stood the walls were too precipitous for even an Eskimo to descend, and we could not see the bear. He was evidently under some projecting ledge on our side. But I had not gone far along the bay ice before I heard shouting in the distance, and soon an Eskimo appeared on a summit and waved his hand, a signal that they had bagged the game.

Just ahead of me, and abreast of where the Eskimo had disappeared, was the mouth of a ravine, and I stopped the sledge there and waited. In a little while I saw my men slowly working their way down the ravine.

The dogs which had been in at the death were attached to the bear as if it had been a sledge, and they were dragging it after them.



TO those who desire a healthy, inexpensive recreation that keeps one in form, strengthens the muscles and lungs, and develops stamina, cross-country running is recommended. It is an exercise that can be indulged in by old and young alike, because the need for exertion is governed only by the speed of the runner. Moreover, not every runner desires to race. But for those who have a turn of speed and desire to pit themselves against others, there are innumerable scratch and handicap races in which they can compete, and stand a chance to win a trophy.

A winter season of cross-country running is invaluable. It will enable one gradually to develop the running muscles, to throw off surplus weight, and so be ready, when spring comes, to start track work. A season of cross-country work is almost essential to a miler who aspires to championship honors, and the champions in this kind of running are invariably in the front rank of athletes on the track.

The novice who intends becoming a runner should join a well-established club, because by so doing he will be able to profit by the experience of his club-mates; and under the care of the trainer he will make quicker and better progress than would otherwise be possible. His first run will probably have the same effect upon him as the first match

of the season has upon the footballer. For two or three days he will feel very stiff, but a plentiful supply of liniment and gentle rubbing will soon remedy this.

Unlike successes in combination games, such as football and baseball, running victories are won solely by the speed and stamina of the individual performer, and if the novice possesses these in high degree there is no reason why he should not secure the highest honors in the running world during his first season.

A surprise is in store for those who have never participated in a cross-country run with a pack. It is almost impossible to describe the feeling of light-heartedness that the runner enjoys as he bounds over field and fallow, through wood and copse, breathing the sharp, invigorating air. Clad only in the lightest garments, he feels as if he had thrown off the trammels of civilization and were for a brief time living the natural life of primitive man.

And then what a delightful sensation accompanies the return to the dressing room! The runner reënters, mud-bespattered, heated, and tired, his breath coming in quick gasps as the blood flows swiftly through his veins. But the trainer is ready for him, and in a moment his vest and knickers are stripped off and he plunges into a warm bath; then, after being sponged down,

he is gently but thoroughly massaged by deft fingers. In a few minutes the tired sensation has left him, and he is alert and vigorous again, feeling better and stronger for his recent exertions.

One of the most pleasant features of cross-country running is the interclub match. The popularity of this form of racing is evidenced by the many meetings which the prominent clubs and the universities arrange every year.

These contests are invariably followed by an informal "smoker," and as the company is composed entirely of

sportsmen, the affair passes off with a swing and verve that are hard to beat.

Past experiences and races o'er track and country are recounted, and eventually, when the last song has been sung and the last glass emptied, the merry party breaks up. As the years pass on, and time effaces many memories and surroundings, the memories of those happy free and easy evenings, spent in the company of sportsmen, will never be effaced, but will stand out like milestones recording some of the jolliest evenings of one's life.

Playing at Real Life

FINED thirty cents. Next case!" It was a boy judge, sitting in a court, who gave the sentence; an American boy in knickerbockers, and he spoke gravely and sharply. Every one was thoroughly serious.

The second case was more important, and the boy culprit, although defended by a clever juvenile lawyer, got a week's imprisonment. Instantly he was marched out of court by two policemen about his own age, furnished with prison clothes, and was locked up in a cell that was really an iron cage. Presently he would be put to hard work of some kind. It was a real trial and a real punishment, and no mistake.

The George Junior Republic, where this sort of thing constantly takes place, has about one hundred and seventy citizens—a hundred boys and seventy girls. It was founded some seventeen years ago by Mr. William George, at a farm of forty-eight acres at Freeville, New York. Mr. George is the president, and there are other gentlemen interested in it, while a matron is installed at each of the cottage lodging houses.

But these grown-up persons never interfere with the working of the republic unless it is absolutely necessary. The citizens manage everything themselves; they make the rules, and they see that these are carried out. Those who do not conform have the boy policemen after them in no time. If you threw rubbish around the grounds, for exam-

ple, the juvenile street-cleaning department would soon have you arrested.

The boys buy and sell, keep hotels—so called—and restaurants, and work as farm laborers, carpenters, gardeners, and officers of the republic; they have, besides the court of justice, a bank and a post office, all of which they manage themselves.

Both girls and boys vote in the senate for or against any measure proposed. All the workers get well paid, and they in their turn pay for their board and lodging. Idlers are not punished directly, but as these soon find themselves at the "paupers' table," with barely enough to eat, they are led to consider their ways.

The citizens are often drawn from the worst and lowest of surroundings; when they arrive at the "George Junior" they may be regular young hooligans. What surprises them beyond measure is that, directly they begin their wild pranks, all the other boys are against them. Every citizen is ready to help the zealous young policemen hale them off to jail.

When, however, punishment is over, no one throws it in their teeth; they can start working, learning a trade, and earning wages at once. As a matter of fact, some of the boys in the highest positions, who act as judges, managers of the bank, and so forth, began badly.

It is a busy and happy place, the smallest republic in the world!

The Long Throw

By Wallace Watson.



(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.)

CHAPTER I.

WHAT VANCE DIDN'T KNOW.

DOWN in the basement of the town hall in an ill-ventilated, sweltering room, the members of the Monroe basket-ball team were changing their clothes. Without, a swarm of small boys were raising shrill cries of triumph, for the visitors from Goshen had been beaten, beaten badly, and it was the decisive game in the little inter-town tournament that meant so much to those interested.

The people of Monroe would have considered the victory flawless had the team been composed entirely of hometown boys. Four were, but the fifth had played his first game for Monroe that night, and no one knew anything about him except his name was Vance, and that he had been visiting at his uncle's during the Christmas holidays. Moreover—and this was what rankled—it had been Vance's spectacular forward play that had beaten Goshen. The straight-limbed young man seemed able to drop the ball into the basket from any part of the court.

There was among the spectators a man not of the town of Monroe who took as keen an interest as its inhab-

itants in the young fellow's playing. His name was Cowan, and he had come just to see Vance in action. And at the finish of the game his thoughtful, purposeful face—the kind of face that men who fight for "causes" have—showed his pleasure and approbation. For he had seen enough to conclude that Middletown College would do well to have this Vance, both as a man and a basket-ball player. Cowan, who out of sheer college spirit was seeking desirable freshmen, invariably considered first the man, then the man's worth as an athlete. Himself only a sub freshman, he had already absorbed the Middletown tradition of helping the college by recruiting among the preparatory schools. Vance he had heard of as a school star.

But in that hall was King, another recruiter, who used different tactics, and it was chance alone that had brought Vance before his eyes. His father's place was five miles back in the country, and since life there was painfully slow, the young Clayton sophomore had motored in to the basket-ball game. The game itself didn't interest him; the dancing afterward did; for to King, captain-elect of the Clayton College five, and for three years the guard of the team that had won the interstate

championship, games at Monroe were dull.

This night, though, he thanked his luck that he had seen part of the play; had he come as late as usual, he would have missed Vance. He had become suddenly interested in Vance. They needed a star forward up at Clayton next year, and the captain-elect made up his mind that this young man would have to go there.

As he turned to speak to an overdressed little fellow who had come with him, Cowan, who was standing near, walked away. He had once played opposite the Clayton guard in a match game, and Cowan felt that he desired no more of King's society.

"Good idea to have a talk with this Vance," observed King to the overdressed little man as Cowan slipped away. "He's better than any forward we have at college. I overheard some one say he finishes high school this year, and that he's going to take the examinations for Middletown. When I get through talking with him he'll want to go with us."

The overdressed man agreed. He was about to add something, but made a warning gesture instead.

"There was one hundred dollars taken in at the gate," a man near them was saying. "That makes twenty-five dollars for each team. The balance goes to the house. We have to pay the expenses, you know."

"Well, the Monroe boys won't be sore," a gruffer voice replied. "Their share only has to be divided among four. That youngster Vance is an amateur, and we didn't tell him that the others are professionals. If we had we couldn't have dragged him into this game."

The box-office door slammed suddenly, and King, signaling his companion, walked toward the stairs up which the players would come. From an obscure corner Cowan looked on curiously. The first effect of the overheard conversation had been to irritate the Clayton man, then he had smiled—a confident, smirking smile, that caused

those about to glance at him as he passed.

Some one bounded up the stairs, and King, turning, recognized the youngster who had played so brilliantly for Monroe. Vance was often thought older than he really was. King saw at a glance that he was developed as well as any man in college. There was about him, too, an air of dignity and reserve uncommon among high-school boys. Lean of limb, graceful, and supple, his was the ideal build for basket ball. King came toward him with his hand extended.

"Pardon me, Mr. Vance," he said. "But you played awfully well. I must congratulate you." The younger man blushed as they shook hands. "I'm from Clayton," King went on. "This is Wilson, our manager. He's visiting me over the holidays. Could you give us a few minutes? We'd like to talk to you about going to college next year."

As Vance led the way to the gallery, emptied now of the spectators, who had gone to the floor below to dance, he decided that he wasn't impressed favorably by the strangers—why, he did not know. There was something he didn't like about King. Wilson he dismissed as a "sporty undergraduate." Cowan from afar watched the conference with a smile.

When they were alone, King leaned forward and came to the point at once. "We'd like to see you at Clayton next year," he began. "We have the best little college in the State. We have a basket-ball team that, as you know, is unbeatable. From what I saw to-night I know that you could become the best intercollegiate forward. Now, you can't do that unless you get right on some team. If you come to Clayton, I'll guarantee that you'll make the varsity in your freshman year."

Vance's brow contracted. "But I've made plans to go elsewhere. I'm going to Middletown."

"I understand," said King, with a smile Vance did not like. "They're doing something for you up there—scholarship, meals in a training house, something of that sort? All right, forget it.

Just tell me what they've offered, and we'll go them one better."

"I'm sorry," replied Vance; then he paused. "I thank you. But Middletown is doing nothing for me. They don't do that sort of thing up there. My father went there. Many of Middletown's athletes are working their way through college. Why, any man who takes that kind of a scholarship is a professional!"

King, who had been getting angry, laughed aloud. "Professional!" he jeered. "You're one already."

Then, massing the information gained only a few minutes before, he tried to overwhelm the younger man with a storm of argument. He pointed out that he held Vance right in his hand, that unless he would play for Clayton, he could play for no one. He, King, would brand him immediately as a professional.

"But if you enroll with us next fall," he continued, "we'll forget it." He paused significantly. "Monroe? We never heard of the place! Your playing in a game in which men received money? Preposterous! Now, which shall it be—protection at Clayton, or exposure at Middletown?"

Vance indulged in no heroics, but turned on his heel and walked away. At the door he was met by Cowan.

CHAPTER II.

HIS BRIEF REPLY.

LESS than a year later Vance had come to live on the Middletown campus, a place of winding stone walks, where undergraduates strolled, their hands on one another's shoulders, above them drifting clouds of pipe smoke. From his rooms in the dormitory he could see all the college buildings, quaint, old-fashioned piles of brown-stone walls covered with ancient ivy.

He was sitting propped up with sofa pillows, his elbow on a convenient window sill, his eyes gazing out beyond the fast reddening trees. Across the room sat Cowan, now his roommate, looking serious. Cowan generally looked serious; for Cowan was always taking responsibilities. Even in preparatory

school he had taken them. He had gone to one of the most expensive preparatory schools in the country, and he had paid his own way through every year of it. For three years he had risen at six o'clock every morning, tending furnaces in winter and gardens in summer. He had shoveled snow and cut grass. He had done every kind of work there was to be done. Of course, there was no need for this. He could have gone to the high school in his home town. But Cowan wanted the best, and he didn't care how hard he had to work for it.

It was by chance that these two had come to know each other. Vance, whose people had money, had spent the summer in a cottage on the Maine coast. Cowan had spent the summer as clerk in a big hotel near by. It gave him a few months in the open, and it gave him some money that would come in handy in the fall, for he was paying his way through Middletown now.

As Vance watched him, he remembered that he had been attracted to him from the first. Later he had grown fond of him, and profited by the friendship; for instead of putting in a summer of indolence he had spent his time practicing with Cowan at an improvised goal with a ball which the older man had been thoughtful enough to take with him. And he was amazed to find that the big, heavy Cowan was as agile as a cat. Quick on his feet, perfectly muscled so that he could twist his body with all the smooth suppleness of a barbaric dancer, the man proved a revelation. If among others Vance thought himself a player of more than usual ability, beside Cowan, after he had seen him arch the ball into the basket from long throws on six successive tries, he felt utterly inferior. But this did not discourage him in his hope of making the team half as much as King's threat to bring the charge of professionalism. He had never told any one, not even Cowan, of that incident.

At Middletown there was an abundance of material. Never had there been so many promising basket-ball players at college, and now, as he sat

gazing out of the window, he wondered whether he would make the team. Turning abruptly, he called across the room to Cowan.

"I heard this afternoon that they're going to bring out the candidates in another week. I almost wish I'd gone to Clayton," he added uneasily.

"And played with a lot of hired men?" asked Cowan.

"At least I'd have been on the team," replied Vance. "I don't think I have a chance in the world of making it here. There are men here who can play rings around me."

And Cowan, who knew that Vance must be thinking of him as one of those men, felt uncomfortable.

On the day appointed for picking the varsity squad they reported in a long gymnasium, lighted dimly by the level rays of the setting sun, for their first practice. Mats had been hung on the walls and over steam radiators to prevent the men from getting hurt. Cowan and Vance found themselves with about thirty others sitting on long benches at one end of the court. With the exception of those veterans who had been there the year before, there was a great diversity of costume. Vance, like a score of others, wore the uniform he had had at school. In the blending of striped jerseys every color of the spectrum was represented. Most of the men, browned by a summer's sun, looked healthy and capable of standing any amount of fatigue.

Soon a rather commonplace-looking man in faded blue swung back the door, and, switching on the electric lights, flooded the gymnasium with their bright radiance. Carrying a basket ball under each arm, he advanced toward the group, which exchanged suppressed whispers. "That's the new coach—Wells is his name—he played at Yale."

And Cowan, who in his hard summer had been thrown against many men, decided instantly that Wells was of the unassuming, silent kind, who usually can do one thing extremely well. Clearly this man's specialty was basket ball, for Cowan remembered that Mid-

dletown had engaged him as coach at an unusually high salary. Expense had not been spared in the effort to develop a team that would beat Clayton.

The first practice was short. It was prefaced by a brief talk from the new coach, in which he told his plans for the season.

"It's going to be work," he said; "the hardest work you ever did." Cowan, who had spent one summer as a freight hand on a river steamer, smiled. "I don't want any laggards. Clayton will meet you with the strongest team you ever went against. If you're going to beat them you'll have to be stronger than any Middletown team has been before you."

CHAPTER III.

MERELY A BLUFF.

WELLS divided the squad into groups. Cowan found himself separated from Vance. He saw his roommate with a group whom he judged to be the first substitutes.

After a half hour of throwing and catching, they were sent up to the track for a brisk run, and all finished in splendid shape. Cowan knew that the coach must be pleased. He would not need to spend valuable time in the mere building up of the team's physical condition.

For a few weeks the practice was the same, just catching and throwing the ball, long, tedious drills that gave the men thorough familiarity with one another's methods of passing. Then goal shooting began, and here Cowan felt a relief he could not explain. So excellent was Vance's work in this branch of the game that he was put at once on the varsity squad, with whom the older man had been playing almost from the first. If he hadn't been, Cowan would have been disappointed, for Vance's cause had become his own. If his roommate didn't make good Cowan would feel it more keenly than if he failed himself. For he felt, without reason, as though he were keeping Vance off the team; as if only his own

skill had prevented the youngster's winning immediately the place that meant so much to him.

One night after dinner, as they sat talking commonplaces before they buckled down to higher algebra, Cowan noticed that Vance seemed out of sorts. Generally his roommate was talkative, rattling on about a hundred things at once. To Cowan this was refreshing. It amused him. He marveled at the other's ability to keep half a dozen different subjects going at the same time in the same conversation. Of late, though, Vance had been dropping into long periods of silence, periods of depression during which he said nothing, but sat looking at a book, although Cowan guessed that he was not reading.

"Come across, Vance! What's the matter?" he asked cheerily.

Vance looked uneasy. He hesitated before replying. "Oh, it's nothing," he said. "Let's get to work." But he made no move to carry out his suggestion, and finally began to talk.

"I'm disappointed," he said. "I've failed. I came up here thinking I was going to make this team. Maybe in high school they gave me a swelled head. I thought it would be easy, and now I haven't a chance. I know I can't make it. To me, the varsity in my freshman year meant everything. I came here because I thought I could win a place, and eventually make the captaincy in my senior year. Now I know I haven't a chance. If I don't make good this year I'll never get to be captain. Oh, the more I think of it, the more I wish I'd gone to Clayton! There I'd have had a place on the team now. King promised it to me."

"That night at Monroe?" Cowan asked sharply.

Vance suddenly grew uneasy, and began to chatter volubly. Cowan listened with a smile to the story of King's offer, of his guarantee of a position—everything but the charge of professionalism; for Vance had almost come to believe that it was merely a bluff to try to force him to go to Clayton. It occurred to him, though, that Cowan, once he heard of it, would insist upon

his going immediately to the coach and telling him all about it. Vance didn't want to do that. He felt that he was all right, but still he was afraid there might be a possibility that the technicality could be made to loom large enough to disqualify him. He didn't want to run any risk of being deprived of playing if he ever got the chance.

The earlier games of the schedule were played and won. Cowan shone in all of them. His big form swept down the court like a whirlwind. He caged the ball from impossible angles. As the time for the Clayton game approached it went abroad that Cowan was the "find" of the season. This should have pleased him, but it didn't. He was always thinking of his roommate, of the good-natured freshman to whom a post on the varsity meant so much. Cowan, who had been out in the world, knew that there was something in life beyond honors on a basket-ball court. He knew that making the team was but an incident. But because he had always played his part well in every incident, so he was playing it well now. To Vance, though, the team was the beginning and the end. And as he thought of these things, a plan formed in Cowan's mind—a plan that could come only into the mind of one who is big-hearted. He thought about it a long time, weighed both sides of it, and came to a decision.

"Vance is almost as good as I am," thought Cowan. "Our team is so strong that if I drop out it won't make much difference."

The next day the coach was surprised to find that Cowan seemed off in his playing. The big fellow missed a good many passes; he even missed signals, and confused the team play. That evening Wells took him aside.

"You'd better lay off a day, Cowan," he said. "I think you're a little over-trained. Take a rest. We've got to have you on edge for Clayton. The game is set for Friday night, you know."

The next afternoon Vance was at right forward on the varsity instead of Cowan. Also, he played so brilliantly

that Cowan, who was watching from the running track, smiled; but in the smile lurked just a trace of wistfulness.

When the big fellow reported the next afternoon he did no better. If anything, his playing was worse. He bungled badly. After five minutes of it the coach, who had been watching him in despair, resigned himself to what he believed was inevitable. Thinking that Cowan was overtrained, and that he would be of no use against Clayton, he took him from the line-up. There was but another day now, and there was no use wasting time on a backsliding player, no matter how good that player might be. The coach saw that he must put in Vance at once; and the coach wasn't as concerned about it as he would have been some weeks before—for, encouraged by his chance with the varsity, Vance was playing a little beyond himself.

"It's too bad, Cowan," said Wells that night, "but I'm afraid you're out of it. We've worked you too hard. Try to get in shape for some of the later games."

And, as he watched the freshman, to see how he would take the blow, he was surprised to see just a flicker of a smile play around his mouth.

"All right, Mr. Wells," replied Cowan. "I guess Vance will do just as well."

At dinner that night it amused him to see the sympathetic glances that the other fellows sent him. Vance felt genuinely distressed. Knowing that Vance was sincere, Cowan was heartily glad that he had stepped down and made the sacrifice; and it seemed a big sacrifice now, on the eve of the game, for he was human. He liked the satisfaction that comes from doing a thing well, and he knew that he played well. He knew, too, that the newspapers had spoken of him as eligible for the all-America team. He knew that it would be hard to step out of the biggest game. But then it meant so much to Vance, and Vance had thrown down Clayton for Middletown. The more Cowan thought of his friend's

stand against King at Monroe the more he admired him.

Before going about his studies that night there was a job Cowan had to do at one of the professors' houses. Little as he was paid for these jobs, he couldn't afford to miss any of them. It was late when he got back to the dormitory, and to his surprise an automobile stood before the steps. He failed to recognize the car, and judged from the dirt on the wheels and body that it had come a long distance. On the door of the tonneau he saw the initials C. K.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE SAME DEGREE.

PAYING scant attention to this incident, Cowan ascended the stairs, and was about to open the door of his room when from within there issued the sound of loud talking. Stopping in surprise, he heard Vance speaking excitedly. Two voices too low to recognize chimed in at intervals, and these were level and calm. Not wishing to eavesdrop, the listener turned away, and went down the stairs. Dropping in on a junior whose room was on the ground floor, he glanced out of the window at intervals so as to know when the car had gone, for the fact that Vance's visitors were strangers led him to believe that they were the ones who had come in the motor.

It wasn't long before he heard the dormitory door slam shut; then two figures appeared beside the machine. One of them was tall and the other was short. The tall one walked through the glare of the headlight, and Cowan promptly recognized him as King. Why had the Clayton basket-ball captain taken the trouble to visit Vance at night? Puzzled, the freshman watched the motor chug and moan away into the darkness. Then he went upstairs.

"What did King want?" he asked abruptly.

Vance, who was making a pretense of writing a letter, looked up in confusion.

"You met him? He told you?"

Cowan threw himself into a chair. "No, but you're going to tell me."

Vance wondered whether Cowan was angry. After a moment of hesitation, he thought it best to reply. "They came here," said Vance slowly, "to say that if I did not resign immediately from the Middletown basket-ball team they would expose me as a professional."

"Professional!" exclaimed Cowan.

"Yes—on account of that game I played at Monroe last winter. I didn't believe it at the time, but everybody except myself received money for it."

Cowan whistled. "That's bad!" he said.

"I guess it is," admitted Vance. "I guess I'm weak. Whether I believed what King said to me at Monroe or not, I should have held back nothing. It never occurred to me that it wasn't square to go out for the varsity under those conditions. Why, I never took a cent for playing in my life. It isn't fair to call me a professional. It's just King's trick to finish crippling us. You've gone to pieces, and now they'll rule me out. They're a lot of muckers up at Clayton."

"I know it isn't square to disqualify you," said Cowan, "but there's the rule—playing with pros makes one a pro! Technically you're a pro; ethically you're not."

It was late before they got to bed. Cowan tried to imagine himself in Vance's position; he could see how unjust it all was, and that the man was not a professional. He decided that even if he had violated the wording of the rule, he had not violated its spirit. It was manifestly unfair that Vance should be barred when he had done no wrong. For an instant it occurred to Cowan that, with Vance out of it, he would get back his old place—but it only occurred to him for an instant. Then he made up his mind that Vance should play, and to that end resolved to have a talk with King. So the big freshman took a late train that same night for the rival college, and did not return until the following afternoon, when he came down with the Clayton

team, for it was the day of the match game. He rode all the way with King, who blustered and threatened until Cowan began to doubt his ability to straighten matters. Then suddenly an idea came to him, and his face cleared.

"Say, King, didn't you once live in New York State, in a village called Onteka?" he inquired.

King nodded. "Born there," he said.

Cowan slapped his knee with enthusiasm. "Then, by George, if Vance is disqualified for this game you're disqualified, too, and it's all bets off!" he exclaimed.

"I don't see what being born in Onteka has got to do with that," observed King dryly.

"Do you remember," continued the Middletown man, ignoring this remark, "running the hundred-yard dash at a barbecue up there four years ago? You got a gold watch as prize."

The other nodded, puzzled. "Well, that's all right, isn't it? I've got it yet," and he produced the watch.

"Yes," replied Cowan impressively; "but the other fellows haven't got theirs. I was at that country fair, taking care of Mr. Shea's horses, and I happen to know that most of the Onteka boys who got prizes sold them, and that constitutes professionalism just as if they had accepted money. You played on the baseball team with them later, and playing with pros makes you a pro yourself."

"I thought I had seen you somewhere before we played opposite at prep, and it just came back to me when it was. You were something of a hero to me as I watched from the side lines in those days," he added, smiling.

"How does it affect me—what the other fellows did with their watches?" demanded the Clayton player. "I didn't know they sold 'em."

"No, of course that's true," replied Cowan thoughtfully, but watching King keenly from the corners of his eyes. "The offense is only technical, and would be overlooked anywhere—but I'm afraid I can't let it go, because

you see you're guilty in *just the same degree that Vance is.*"

CHAPTER V.

A SHOT FOR MIDDLETOWN.

KING opened his mouth to protest, but realized that it would be useless. He sat silent, looking out of the window, for some time, and then spoke sullenly.

"Well, I suppose you've got me," he said. "I don't know whether you can prove what you say or not, but there's no time to go into that. I—I'll agree not to make the charge against Vance."

"I think you're very wise," observed the Middletown freshman dryly. "You can understand now, I suppose, how easy it is to get into this sort of trouble quite innocently—and you must realize, too, how easy it would be for a malicious and mean-souled person to take advantage of it, and make things pretty hard for you!"

With this parting shot Cowan rose, as the train neared his station, and left the discomfited basket-ball player sitting alone. Ten minutes later he was telling Vance that everything had been fixed, and that he need worry no more.

Night found them in the gymnasium. The long, glass-roofed hall was decorated with the colors of the two colleges. From the suspended oval of the running track the blue of Middletown was draped with the dark green of Clayton. Behind the masses of bunting and through the wire screen that rimmed the course were visible innumerable forms, packed closely on little camp chairs; and behind them, rising even up to the rafters of the building, stood dark rows of people, their faces white and vague. Below, on the floor, there was no one. It looked very clean and new. The lines of the court had been marked afresh, and from the black hoops of the baskets hung new nets, long and white. Above, clusters of electric lights had been protected with close-woven wire, so that no wild balls would smash against them, and bring down a shower of glass on the players.

The confused talking and laughing of the spectators gathered and broke into a prolonged cheer as, the locker-room door opening, the teams of Middletown and Clayton burst through and trotted to opposite ends of the court. The substitutes running to the side lines, the varsity fives in preliminary practice began a bombardment of the back boards behind their goals. As he took his place with those who were not going to play, Cowan felt a momentary pang of disappointment. Then, as he saw Vance cage the ball from a difficult angle, and heard a rattle of applause break from the side of the hall where Middletown's sympathizers were massed, he didn't feel so badly. Yes, Vance would do. Cowan watched his light but supple body glide, wraithlike, across the court, and reflected that King would have a lot of trouble. From the line-up he saw that King was the guard who would play against Vance.

Simultaneously with the call to play the Middletown center, outjumping his opponent, tapped the ball deftly, driving it across court into Vance's hands. Starting like a flash, the latter had caught King napping. In a rage the burly Clayton man rushed toward him. Sliding under his arm, Vance drew back his hand and thrust the ball forward, sent it spinning through the air, and arching down toward the basket. As Cowan heard it swish through the ropes he smiled. It promised to be easy for Middletown.

But this was the only goal scored in that entire half. Three times Vance had chances to make extra points on fouls, and three times he overstepped the line, and the try was disallowed. Cowan wondered whether King's style of play was worrying Vance. It was soon obvious that the big fellow was paying not the slightest attention to the ball. All he did was to tear around the court after the whirling, dodging Vance. Try as Vance might, there was no eluding him.

Also, Cowan saw King begin to use rough tactics. Always he was careful to keep within the rules—only three fouls did he commit. But each time

their swiftly running bodies collided, it was the lighter Vance who rebounded and reeled off. Sometimes he crashed into the wall; again he would lose his footing and sprawl on the hard court. Once, when they were down near the goal, Cowan saw King deliberately extend his foot, and Vance, tripping, brought up against the iron post with a nasty jar. All through that half, especially toward the end of it, Cowan, watching intently, saw King using his elbows, his shoulders, his hips, and his knees—using them in a way so cleverly concealed that Vance's body was being subjected to a most grueling pounding and no one was the wiser—only Cowan, and as he watched his face grew grim.

When the teams left the floor it was to the loud cheering of their supporters. Only one goal had been made; Middletown led by only 2 to 0. As the varsity, breathing heavily, walked into their little dressing room, Cowan slipped into a seat beside Vance. A glance at close range showed him that his roommate could never last the second half. King had done his work well. By sheer weight and cleverly hidden dirty playing, he had worn down the best goal maker of the Middletown team. Cowan could imagine him now, chuckling over it. He could almost hear him saying: "Cowan checkmated me by keeping Vance in the game—so I'm going to put him out."

As the team returned to the floor, the freshman noticed that the coach looked nervous. His usually calm, expressionless face was shadowed frequently by a frown. As he dropped into a seat at the end of the bench he whispered to the manager:

"I'm afraid Vance won't last; then what'll we do? The way Cowan has been playing he'd be worse than nothing."

Cowan strained his ears to catch the manager's reply. He couldn't hear it, but he saw the coach shake his head dubiously and walk away.

No sooner had play reopened than King bumped into Vance savagely. Cowan half rose from his seat in anger as he saw his roommate go sprawling

across the floor and into the wall. The referee came running toward them; his whistle shrilled, the players gathered in a circle where Vance had fallen. Then Cowan saw the circle split, and through it came Vance. His arms rested on the shoulders of two men; one of his legs dragged helplessly.

"Sprained ankle," said some one.

The gallery heard it, and a murmur of anger ran down the line of the Middletown seats. Cowan heard some hisses that were drowned in applause. He heard King's name spoken abusively. But the Clayton men, used to an overaggressive game, were not offended by the tactics of their big guard. So, while Vance was carried from the floor, they kept up a continuous cheering.

During the pause that followed, Cowan felt the coach looking at him more than once. It was a hard quarter of an hour for Cowan. He was wondering whether the coach would, after all, let him play. He became fearful that perhaps he had overdone the falling off in his game; perhaps he had shown himself up in such a hopeless light that Wells would be afraid to use him.

The ball, kicked carelessly by one of the waiting players, came rolling across the court, came almost to Cowan's feet. It seemed an invitation, and, picking it up, Cowan shot high down the court. It was a long shot, almost the length of the playing field; and when it swept cleanly into the basket, the young man turned to the coach and smiled. For a moment Wells regarded him in hesitation. Then, with a jerk of his thumb, he said:

"Take Vance's place!"

CHAPTER VI.

IN HIS PLACE.

COWAN felt a queer thrill of happiness as he ran down and took his old position. He knew that no one expected anything from him, and he could no longer keep back a smile. At that moment he felt he was better fitted to play than ever before. In his long shot of the minute before there was no luck,

only the skill that had terrorized opposing teams weeks ago. As he crouched waiting for play to reopen he saw King regard him with a sneer, a sneer that seemed to say: "I got Vance; now I'll get you!"

Cowan hoped he would try. A lining up of the centers, a piping of the whistle, a brown ball tossed into the air—and the poised forms of ten men broke into action. Zigzagging up and down the court they passed the ball with bewildering rapidity. First a combination of Clayton players, catching and tossing one to another, would work the ball down to the goal. Then Cowan would leap high, stretch his tall form in the air, and, intercepting a pass, carry the fight back into the enemy's territory.

It seemed as though the removal of Vance gave Clayton new confidence. Coming up like the wind, they fairly forced the tired Middletown men off their feet; forced all but Cowan, and he alone was not enough to check their rush. Before any one knew it, so suddenly did it happen, a goal had slipped into the basket, and a moment later an overanxious Middleton guard committing a slight foul, Clayton jumped into the lead. The score was 2 to 3.

The rush began again, and with it King's old tactics. Apparently he had been saving them until every one was absorbed in the excitement of the game. Then Cowan felt an elbow jammed suddenly against his ribs. He turned to see King grinning. The referee's back was turned. After that the guard, who seemed tireless, clung to him like a leech. Try as they might, Clayton could gain no more points, so they were contenting themselves in these last five minutes of play by holding back Middletown's attack. If they could prevent the blue from scoring again they would win. Also, knowing that Cowan was the only one to fear, King was keeping him right within reach.

The minutes slipped away. Cowan was playing like a man beside himself. His fierce rushes brought the ball down the court again and again. He

missed many difficult goals by the smallest margin. He started one rally after another. He broke up every Clayton combination. He was like a tower in the center of the court around which everything revolved.

Never had such basket ball been seen at Middletown. As the coach watched him in growing amazement, he said aloud: "On this half game alone, Cowan will make the all-America."

Still Clayton was ahead, and time was almost up. The ball had gone out of bounds, and in the scramble for it the referee had blown his whistle. It was in Middletown's territory, and as Cowan faced King on the jump-off he saw that the goal was fully sixty feet away. Also, glancing at the side lines, he caught the anxious expression in the coach's face. Time was almost up.

There was a pause; the referee held the ball, to toss it into the air. To Cowan it seemed an age. He saw King, his muscles tense, ready to leap up and take the ball from him; he saw him bring his left knee forward in an odd position, and he knew what he would try to do. Out of sheer malice King was going to try to do him up. A chirp of the whistle, and, as he leaped aside and up, Cowan felt King's out-thrust knee brush past his thigh. Straining his arm to the utmost, he tapped the ball gently to one side; then he darted forward with incredible swiftness, and caught it as it came down.

The field was clear. Every one was guarded. King was sprawling on the floor. Carefully aiming, Cowan lifted the ball and threw it away from him. Mounting in a high arc, it swooped on toward the basket amid the silence of all the spectators. Sharp against the back board it struck with a report like a pistol shot, bounded off, caught on the inner rim of the basket, spun round and round, teetering as if possessed to jump out, then, with slackening speed, flopped in and went swishing through the net.

Before they could mark up on the scoreboard, Clayton 3, Middletown 4, the timekeeper's whistle blew.

A few minutes later, as they were coming out of the dressing room, Vance gripped his roommate's hand and turned to the coach.

"Isn't it splendid the way Cowan played?" said he. "I can't understand it, when he was in the middle of that slump."

The coach looked amused. Cowan

tried to signal him to be silent. "There isn't half so much the matter with your ankle," said Wells, "as there is with your eyes. Never mind; I was blind, too."

And Cowan, who hated a scene, and especially hated being thanked for anything by any one he liked, slipped away.

The Pity of It

WHEN King Louis the Sixteenth appeared in the assembly and took the oath of allegiance to the constitution of France, one hundred and twenty years ago, everybody was happy. The inviolability of the king had been voted, the constitution had been completed, and now that supremely important instrument was duly indorsed by the king himself, says the Reverend Thomas B. Gregory, in the *New York American*. Why should not everybody feel good? Two years of hell had passed, and the fabric of society was still safe, with the brightest prospect for its speedy transformation along the lines of constitutional government. A new era seemed to be dawning. The heart of the nation beat to the music of a deep joy.

But alas! for the foolishness of the king and the perversity of his queen. When Louis and Marie Antoinette reached the seclusion of their chamber they acted like a couple of babies. They wept over the loss of that power which they had always abused, and which they never knew how to exercise. Instead of loving the people and trusting them, and working together with them for the reform of the state, the royal pair at once began plotting with the crowned heads of Europe against the very constitution which they had just pledged themselves to support.

Never was there such a call for a real man—a man of sincerity, sense, and stamina. The hour had arrived, and had the man come along with it all would have been well. The monarchy might have been saved and the horrors of the revolution forestalled. It was all up to Louis, and Louis fell down. Catherine of Russia hit the nail squarely on the head when, with characteristic common sense, she said: "The king is a fair sort of man, and I would like to help him; but one cannot help a man who will not be helped."

And so the royal simpleton and his high-headed consort marched on to chaos and death. The rank and file of the French people were willing to forget and forgive, and every opportunity was given the king to save his crown and his kingdom. It was only required of him that he should be a constitutional king, instead of the irresponsible despot that he had formerly been; but with the madness of a fool he persisted in hugging the delusion of his omnipotency, and at last the people made him pay the penalty of his foolishness with his life.

Such a Change

POLITICIAN (sternly): "When I was your age, my boy, I was making an honest living."

The Boy: "And now look at you!"

In Relays

SHE: "Jack, when we are married, I must have three servants."

He: "You shall have twenty, dear—but not all at the same time."

The Big Bet Snapshot

By
Bertram Lebbhar



WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

Those who did not get the opening chapters of this tale can read them in this abridged form, then enjoy the rest of the story.

RUFUS P. WINGER, the "Copper King," has never been photographed for the newspapers, although his meteoric rise in Wall Street and his marriage to a prominent society woman have made him talked about. His friend, "Bet-a-million" Williams, lays him a wager of two hundred thousand dollars at their club that within three months his picture will appear in one of the papers.

Winger succeeds in eluding the newspaper men at every turn, but is forced to resort to the most elaborate devices, and the situation ends by getting on his nerves. According to the terms of the wager, he is not permitted to leave the United States, so he retires secretly to the country estate of a millionaire friend, who has his place well guarded because he has been so annoyed by cranks. Some one informs the *Daily News* office of Winger's retreat in Bellingham, and Gale, a *News* reporter, with Moriarty, the staff photographer, start for the little town. They are seen at the railway station in New York, just as they are buying their tickets, by the Camera Chap and Johnstone, both of the *Sentinel*, who decide to follow them.

The Camera Chap disguises himself as a laborer, and succeeds in getting a snapshot of Winger as he is swimming in a small lake. He and his companions are captured by servants, and Hawley's camera is destroyed, but he saves the film. Gale gets a

film away from him by a trick, and returns to New York to report to his editor that he and Moriarty have the only snapshot. He finds, however, that Hawley has checkmated him, and that the stolen film is blank.

Gale sends anonymous messages to Winger, advising him to prevent the *Sentinel* from publishing the snapshot, and suggests that he try persuasion on Mrs. Laurette Stanhope, the owner of the *Sentinel*, who is a socially ambitious young widow. Winger's wife invites Mrs. Stanhope to a garden party in Newport, and induces her to forbid the publication of the picture and have Hawley dismissed from the *Sentinel* staff.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN AT THE FINISH.



WITH his customary cheerful expression, the Camera Chap entered the sanctum of the *Sentinel's* managing editor. "Looking for me, Tom?" he said, as he drew up a chair.

"Yes, old man," the editor replied. "I want you to do me a favor."

"Sure! What is it?"

"I want you to write out your resignation—to take effect immediately."

Hawley smiled. "What's the answer?" he inquired, taking the request as a joke.

"It's to save me the painful necessity

of having to fire you," explained Paxton.

The Camera Chap stared at him in amazement, realizing from the other's tone that he was in dead earnest. "What's the answer, Tom?" he repeated.

"We're in the hands of the Philistines," announced Paxton grimly. "Your friend Winger has got control of the paper."

"Winger! You don't mean that he's bought the *Sentinel*? That can't be possible."

"Not exactly. But he's managed to get control of Mrs. Stanhope—which is pretty near as bad. To oblige her dear friend, Mrs. Rufus P. Winger, our fair boss has just called me up from Newport and given me two orders. One of them is to fire you at once. I suppose you can guess the other?"

"The big-bet snapshot!" exclaimed Hawley, much more perturbed than he had been by the announcement of his impending dismissal.

Paxton nodded glumly. "Yes; the big-bet snapshot. We're not to run it because it would hurt dear Mrs. Winger's feelings. Wouldn't that make you feel like going out and drinking up all the lemon soda there is in town?"

The Camera Chap was silent for a while. "Are you quite sure that it was Mrs. Stanhope you had on the wire, Tom?" he asked presently.

The expression of Paxton's face changed at the question. "By Jove, that's an idea!" he exclaimed excitedly. "I must admit I never gave it a thought. The voice certainly sounded like hers, but a clever impersonator could easily have managed that, of course; and it would be just like Winger to attempt such a trick."

"Either Winger or the *Daily News*," said Hawley. "Our friend Gale knows that we have the snapshot. I wouldn't be surprised—"

He didn't finish the sentence, for Paxton had grabbed the desk telephone, and was instructing the switchboard operator. "Get Mrs. Stanhope's residence, at Newport—quick as you can." He chuckled as he waited for the con-

nection to be made. "The more I think of it the more convinced I feel that I've been hoaxed," he said to Hawley. "Whoever the woman was, though, I must give her credit for being a mighty good actress. Her voice—Hello! is that you, Mrs. Stanhope? Yes, this is Paxton. Just called up to make sure of something. Have you been talking to me on the wire this evening? I've just had some orders supposed to be from you, and I want to verify them."

The Camera Chap could read her answer from the expression which came over the managing editor's face.

"So it was on the level, after all?" he said, as Paxton turned from the instrument. "Gee, that's tough luck!"

"You'll get another job easily enough, of course, old man," said Paxton. "There isn't an editor in New York who won't fall all over himself trying to get you when it's known that you've quit the *Sentinel*."

Hawley smiled faintly. Modest though he was, he knew that these were not mere idle words of consolation, for in his pocket at that very moment he carried a letter from the managing editor of a rival newspaper offering him big inducements if he cared to "make a change," and in the past he had received many other offers equally flattering.

"I guess I'll get along all right," he said. "I'm not worrying about myself. But the picture, Tom! To think that after our luck in landing Winger we've got to throw away this chance to scoop the whole country!"

"It's a shame!" said Paxton mournfully.

"I was talking with Leonard, of the circulation department, a few minutes ago," said Hawley. "He was telling me that they're preparing to play up our scoop in great shape. They're printing posters announcing that Winger's picture will appear exclusively in the *Sentinel* to-morrow, and they're going to put them on all our wagons and on the news stands in the morning. That is, they *were* going to do that," he corrected. "It's all off, now, of course."

"It's a confounded shame!" Paxton

repeated. He got up from his chair, and began to pace the room nervously. Suddenly he stopped, and there was a determined expression on his face as he turned to the Camera Chap. "We're going to run Winger's picture," he declared. "I'm not going to let a woman's whims rob us of the glory that should be ours—even if she does happen to own the paper."

"Bully for you!" cried the Camera Chap joyously. Then his face became grave. "But the consequences, Tom? Won't it cost you your job?"

"My job!" Paxton laughed grimly. "Here—read this!"

He handed Hawley the letter which he had written before sending for him. It was addressed to Mrs. Paul Leicester Stanhope, and it announced his resignation from the managing editorship of the *Sentinel*.

"I made up my mind to quit as soon as I got those orders from her over the telephone," said Paxton. "Do you suppose I'd stay here after you've been given such a rough deal? This is the finish for both of us, old man. But it's going to be a rattling good finish!" he added, with a chuckle. "We'll print the big-bet snapshot, and walk out of here with colors flying."

Hawley smiled grimly at the managing editor's melancholy enthusiasm, and fell to musing silently.

"Anything brewing in the back of your head?" inquired Paxton, observing the Camera Chap's thoughtfulness, and ready to grasp at a straw.

"I was just thinking," answered Hawley, his gaze wandering out the window, and far away beyond the lights of Park Row.

Paxton waited expectantly, for he had often known results to come from the Camera Chap's periods of thoughtfulness. "Well," he said presently, growing impatient, "have you got it doped out?"

A certain characteristic gleam was gradually creeping into Hawley's eyes, and a whimsical smile just touched the corners of his mouth. "Let me use the phone a few minutes, Tom," he said mysteriously. Then, as Paxton bright-

ened perceptibly: "Oh, this is no brilliant inspiration; it's just a last gasp. There might be a chance, and I don't believe in neglecting even the slimmest chances. You know, Tom, I don't make a practice of 'using' my friends, but when a man insists on being very decent to me, I ought at least to show my appreciation.

"Long distance, please," he called into the phone before Paxton could ask another question. Then, after a minute's wait: "Will you please call Newport? Yes, thank you; I want to get the Newport Casino."

Paxton laughed delightedly. "Into the enemy's camp!" he exclaimed, and Hawley nodded and smiled as he waited with the receiver at ear.

CHAPTER XIV.

"ALL IN A GARDEN FAIR."

THE evening garden party at the Newport villa of Rufus P. Winger was typical of the lavish entertainments given by the ambitious wife of the Copper King. Decorators, florists, and electricians had invaded the beautiful Italian garden, and avenues of colored electric lights, with wonderful miniature jungles of exotic palms and flowers, and splashing fountains erected and piped for the occasion, transformed the place into a fairylike picture of old Versailles at the period of its brightest glory.

Gayly colored tents were pitched in odd corners among the foliage and in the open spaces, and under them were tables glittering with silver and crystal; while under the largest one a splendidly uniformed Hungarian band played the wild, barbaric music of its country, and the seductive, dreamy waltzes of Vienna nights. In the "Court of the Fairies," at the center of the great garden, a dancing floor was built, and there Newport's summer society tangoed and trotted the latest steps devised by the wizards of the dance.

Among the first of the guests came the youthful and attractive widow, Mrs. Paul Leicester Stanhope, intent on

making the best of every minute of the evening of social benefit so providentially placed in her way. There were people there who bowed to her unreservedly, being in no position socially to patronize her. They were the good-natured parasites, the innocuous fillers-in who could be depended on to appear well and help to make up an impressive number. Most of those, however, whose acquaintanceship Mrs. Stanhope coveted, moved strictly within their own orbits, and looked over or through her.

The hostess was graciously pleased to give her a limp hand, still mindful of the coup she had made for the sake of her husband and the family by means of the invitation. The guests were arriving slowly, and there were still few about, so Mrs. Winger regarded the time as auspicious for the more or less necessary amenities. She drew the young widow to a cozy seat under a marquee, and affected an air of positive friendliness.

"So good of you to come, dear Mrs. Stanhope," she purred. "You know the season is really so short, and so full for me. I scarcely knew you were in Newport. I met Mr. Stanhope—before you were married, my dear—but he was such a busy man, was he not? He and Mr. Winger were great friends. I think I've heard Mr. Winger say so."

"Mr. Stanhope knew almost everybody; he was very popular," said the younger woman naively, with unaffected pride. She had been her husband's junior by some twenty years, but a devoted and affectionate companion to the man who elevated her from a comparatively humble and impecunious position.

"You must have found it rather dull and stupid here in Newport," continued Mrs. Winger abstractedly, beginning to gaze somewhat anxiously through the vistas of lights and shrubbery at the new arrivals. "You have the charming Burlingham cottage, haven't you? How fortunate! The agent charges exorbitantly for it, I hear. Before Edward Burlingham's death, you know, it was possible to get it rather reasonably, but

he would only permit people of our set to occupy it."

Laurette Stanhope flushed more than she intended to. "It's a very old house," she said dully, unable to think of a suitable retort at the moment. "It lacks many conveniences. I don't think I'd care to have it another summer."

"Oh, I dare say," agreed the hostess. "No doubt you'd find Bar Harbor or Narragansett far more pleasant—younger people, you know, Mrs. Stanhope. They tell me there are some rather nice people at Bar Harbor, and so much easier to know. Oh, I do admit we're a bit stiff here. Some of us have been here so long, you know."

"I suppose you've been coming here since you were quite a young woman, Mrs. Winger?" observed Laurette, knowing that the sally was weak and rather cheap, but taking advantage of the first weapon at hand.

The hostess, who had been about the age of forty for more than ten summers, winced at the crude blow in spite of her experience, and took refuge in a sudden commanding gesture to a passing footman. "Jenkins," she said, as the servant stood at statuesque attention, "let me know instantly when Lord and Lady Bereston and Mr. Somerset arrive."

The footman bowed low, and retired down a lane of colored lights, and Mrs. Winger turned again to her guest, coldly ignoring the recent attack. "The Berestons," she said familiarly, "are here for such a short time—he's some sort of an equerry, you know, to King George—and I feared they couldn't get here to-night; but Driscoll Somerset sent me word this evening that they would drop in with him for a little while. Mr. Somerset is a cousin of Lady Bereston, and he's quite the most charming man in Newport this summer, I think. He's the most popular cotillion leader in years."

"He dined with us in New York just a little while before Mr. Stanhope's death. I liked him very much," said Laurette quickly, scoring a point mentally on her side of the board.

"Oh, he's very democratic!" fired

back Mrs. Winger, without pausing to load. "His 'mixing,' as they call it, is a positive terror to his aunt, Mrs. Kingsdon. When he was younger he got well-nigh impossible, in spite of his popularity, but he's getting to be quite a well-ordered bachelor now."

"It's harder not to be human when one is young," remarked Laurette, lapsing more and more, as she grew angrier, into the simple social code of her earlier days, when she was nothing more than the belle of her little Connecticut birthplace.

Further hostilities were averted by the timely return of the liveried Jenkins from his outpost at the entrance to the garden. "Lord and Lady Bereston and Mr. Somerset, madam," he said impressively.

Mrs. Winger betrayed as much pleasurable emotion as her mood would permit, and gathered herself together for a quick departure from the scene of the late skirmish. "I must go to them at once," she said, not addressing Mrs. Stanhope more in particular than the footman or the garden statuary. "Dear Lady Bereston was such a pet of mine when she was little Beryl Kingsdon!"

"Hello, Mrs. Winger!" came in a cheery, robust voice, which made the hostess and her guest start in surprise; and a tall, athletic young man of about thirty strode briskly toward them along the grassy lane, followed at a slightly more dignified pace by a handsome man and lovely woman of uncommonly distinguished bearing.

"Ah, quite like you, you harum-scarum!" cried Mrs. Winger, almost coquettishly. "You must, of course, dash in here to find me before I could get out to meet you and your dear cousins. Lady Bereston, I'm so glad you could come to my little fête!" She swept forward, and gave eager hands to the man and woman standing behind Driscoll Somerset, but the lady of the great British estate of Bereston showed little emotion for one who had been a "pet" of former times.

"Here's Mrs. Stanhope!" cried Somerset suddenly, and proceeded to lead that astonished lady from her place un-

der the marquee. "By Jove, you must remember me, Mrs. Stanhope," he continued boyishly. "I'll never forget how you entertained me at your house. I didn't know you were in Newport until to-day; I've been knocking about on the yacht all summer, shirking my social duties. And now I want you to know my two best cousins, Beryl and Harry Bereston."

"How do you do, Mrs. Stanhope?" said Lady Bereston, with a friendly, girlish laugh, coming more than halfway to shake hands with the amazed young widow. "Driscoll promised us that we'd meet you here; really, he said some of the pleasantest things about you as we were coming over in his car."

"Ha, ha! Quite so!" exclaimed his lordship, with gruff good humor. "We quite looked forward to the meeting, Mrs. Stanhope. I don't believe you half know what an attraction you are for Mrs. Winger's garden affair, you know."

The hostess, a veteran of many social battlefields, accepted the momentary defeat with the best possible grace, hoping against hope that her artistically applied rouge would conceal the alternate waves of pallor and crimson flush. "Driscoll Somerset, you awful boy!" she cried roguishly. "You fairly take my guests out of my hands, and deprive me of my cleverest little plans. Now, you see, I was saving my dear little Mrs. Stanhope for a surprise for you. You know I always try to surround myself with youth and beauty. Now, you'll be enchanted to stay here and talk to Mrs. Stanhope. Driscoll, while I show Lord and Lady Bereston my fairy garden."

CHAPTER XV.

THE BITTER CUP.

THE brilliant cotillion leader, Driscoll Somerset, seated himself beside Laurette Stanhope under the marquee, and as newly arrived guests began congregating about them he lowered his voice to a tone of intimacy

which the young widow found agreeable and flattering.

"Some of us have to appear like awful cads and bounders, Mrs. Stanhope," he said presently, "but I can't help confiding to you that poor Mrs. Winger amuses me to a painful degree—she's such an incorrigible old climber!"

"Mrs. Winger—a climber?" exclaimed Laurette, in her most girlishly unsophisticated manner, taken utterly by surprise.

"Didn't you know it?" queried Somerset, raising his brows. "She doesn't know me half well enough to affect that light and airy 'my-boy' attitude toward me. My aunt and uncle, the Kingsdons, you know, have never received her. Between you and me, I had fairly to drag the Berestons here to-night; but I thought it would be something of a lark—her entertainments are certainly all that Rufus Winger's copper mines can pay for. And, as a matter of fact, I did want to meet you again—I was awfully fond of your husband—and I simply made the Berestons come along. Poor old lady Winger will plume herself on it for two seasons."

Mrs. Stanhope was undeniably flattered by the confidence, but she could not repress a provincial feeling that Mr. Somerset was a bit lacking in gallantry toward his hostess, according to old-fashioned standards. Her emotions quickly gave way, however, to another feeling—a paroxysm of remorse assailed her; she felt it borne in upon her that she had that night sold herself for a mess of pottage.

"You must be quite a bit of a business woman, Mrs. Stanhope," the man was saying, as she realized suddenly that he was still chatting. "I know well enough that you have mighty clever men to manage things for you, but it's no small responsibility to own a great paper like the *Sentinel*."

"Why, I deserve no credit for it," the widow protested modestly. "I have the greatest confidence in Mr. Paxton, the managing editor, and I leave everything to him, just as Mr. Stanhope did."

"That's wise," said Somerset approv-

ingly. "Paxton's a brainy man; he's one of the bulliest fellows I know."

"You know him personally?" queried the widow, betraying some astonishment.

"Proud to say I do," answered the society favorite. "You know, Tom Paxton comes of one of the best old families in America. He's welcome in any house in New York, but he's too everlastingly bound up in his precious newspaper. I dare say he knows too much to be lured by our society tinsel. Oh, I'll wager I know more about the actual inside of the *Sentinel* than you do, Mrs. Stanhope. When I was passing through New York the other day I had a *Sentinel* man to lunch with me at my club—Hawley, his name is. He's another clever one; they call him 'The Camera Chap.'"

"Yes, I know," murmured the widow, striving to conceal a peculiar confusion of manner and a rising flush.

"Hawley's a queer case," the man rattled on. "He has the breeding and education to place him in almost anything he might choose, but he's wedded to a picture-taking machine. A camera slung on his shoulder and an exciting case to run down, and he's satisfied with life. Why, I took that man to a dinner dance in New York last winter that some men would have bartered their reputations for an invitation to, and what do you suppose he did? Well, he gave me the slip before midnight, and was off, in his evening clothes, to get his old camera and go after a picture of a certain grafting politician that was reported to be making a get-away from the city that night. He's a corker! The public doesn't stop to inquire who takes all the wonderful pictures that enliven the pages of the *Sentinel*, but in my humble opinion, Mrs. Stanhope, Tom Paxton and Frank Hawley just about make your excellent paper what it is."

"I never happened to meet Mr. Hawley," said the widow, in an altered tone, with a certain constraint.

"You really ought to," Somerset assured her. "I got to know him down at my aunt's place, Kingsdon Manor, in

New Jersey. The jolly rascal impersonated—mighty cleverly, I assure you—a certain Englishman, Lord Lambaer, in order to get into my irascible old uncle's house to make some pictures of the persons involved in a little matter interesting to the public. I don't mind saying that I was one of the persons he sought. By his cleverness he unmasked a prince of swindlers who was there masquerading as my present respected cousin-in-law, Lord Harry Sedgwick Bereston. He had another newspaper man with him named Johnstone, and together they about saved us all from being fleeced by that scoundrel. My uncle incidentally made a lot of trouble for Hawley, but when matters were made clear, he couldn't do enough for him, and the old chap swears by anything connected with the *Sentinel* now. As you know, my Cousin Beryl afterward married the real Lord Bereston, and we all have a certain feeling that Hawley more than half brought it about by saving us from the bogus lord. Whenever the Berestons are in this country we have Hawley down to Kingsdon Manor for a visit; he rarely gives us more than a day of his precious time, however."

Somerset's recital was calculated to be entertaining, but Laurette Stanhope seemed to find it anything but that. Her manner changed from constraint to something like annoyance. "I'd love to see Lord and Lady Bereston again, Mr. Somerset," she said suddenly; "but I really have to go. If you don't mind asking one of the servants to call my car——"

"By Jove, I was stupid!" exclaimed Somerset. "You're not feeling well, Mrs. Stanhope; you don't look at all fit. Let me fetch you a glass of punch."

"No, no!" she protested. "I think I'll be getting home."

"I'm afraid you're ill," the man insisted. "Won't you tell me what's the matter? I'm afraid I've talked you almost to death."

His solicitude was little more than gallantly polite, but it happened that Laurette was badly in need of some one to tell her troubles to. A certain mat-

ter weighed heavily on her conscience, and at home she had only a retinue of servants to appeal to. She was still little more than a girl, and for a woman of independent wealth and some ambition she was very unworldly. On sudden impulse she turned to the man who was offering her his sympathy and assistance. "Mr. Somerset," she said plaintively, "at this moment I'm about as miserable as I ever was in my life; I've made—oh, I've made such a fool of myself!"

A flashing gleam of amusement was quickly suppressed in Driscoll Somerset's eye. "My dear lady!" he exclaimed, "if there's any possible way in which I can be of service——"

"I don't know what to do!" she moaned pathetically. "I feel as though I just ought to tell somebody about it. I—I guess, Mr. Somerset, that I've just about ruined the *Sentinel*!"

"Ruined the New York *Sentinel*!" gasped the man. "Oh, Mrs. Stanhope, I can scarcely credit that, you know. I can't quite believe that you could or would do anything as desperate and terrible as that."

Mrs. Stanhope was at that moment painfully near making a scene in the marquee of the fairy garden. Her eyes were alarmingly moist, and her chin quivered ominously. Somerset did not like scenes, and he hastened to reassure her. "Now, please calm yourself, my dear Mrs. Stanhope," he said soothingly. "I'll do anything in the world that I can to help you. I wish you'd feel free to tell me all about it."

She started to speak, but choked with a rising sob. After a minute she mastered her voice, and said tragically:

"I have had your friend Mr. Hawley dismissed from the *Sentinel*, and I know that I have offended Mr. Paxton mortally."

"Dear me; that is bad!" murmured Somerset, in the tone of a strong man greatly perturbed.

"And—and I did it," almost sobbed the young woman, "like a perfect little fool—just to please that old woman that has done nothing but insult me

here this evening!" A dainty bit of lace was of necessity brought into play at that point to absorb the tears that were not to be denied.

Somerset patted her hand tenderly. "Pray don't agitate yourself, Mrs. Stanhope," he begged. "Presently I'll get my cousin, Lady Bereston, to go home with you in your car."

The prospect of a departure from the camp of the enemy in such glory acted as a strong stimulant upon the young woman. Furthermore, it made Driscoll Somerset her friend for life. In a sudden frenzy of gratitude and confidence, she poured out to him the whole wretched story of her intrigue with the palpably designing Mrs. Winger. Weakly believing in what seemed to her the social preëminence of the crafty matron, she had bartered her conscience for a mere matter of an invitation to a garden party. To save that old rascal, Rufus P. Winger, from having his unlovely features spread upon the front page of the *Sentinel*, at a cost to him of a wager of a king's ransom, she had betrayed her revered husband's cherished paper, only in return to be snubbed and insulted by that "unspeakable old woman!"

Somerset lighted a cigarette in a manner calculated to show his unruffled calm, and smiled in a way to quiet the most shattered feminine nerves. "Suppose we fix it all up?" he suggested simply. "By Jove! I think you've been literally flimflammed. Now, if a fellow got money from me under false pretenses, and I gave him my check, why, as soon as I discovered the hoax I would stop payment on that check, if he hadn't cashed it. Do I make myself plain? Well, now, let's do the same thing, as it were. It's now not more than eleven o'clock. Let's call your car, or mine, and we'll take the Berestons over to your house—say, for a bit of supper. Then I'll get Tom Paxton on the wire and insist that he forget everything that has been said, and make Hawley do the same. Don't let your conscience trouble you at all. I think that if the Copper King's picture appears in to-morrow's *Sentinel*,

you and—er—our charming hostess will be no more than quits."

He did not wait to hear the young widow's gurgling protestations of delight and gratitude, but hastened away to find his titled cousins.

A few minutes later, Laurette Stanhope, as nonchalant and fresh in appearance as women know how to be even after an emotional storm, approached her hostess across a stretch of velvety sward. "I must say good night, Mrs. Winger," she murmured sweetly. "Your garden fête has been simply enchanting. This is so like fairyland, you know, that I positively hate to leave it; but Lord and Lady Bereston are coming with Mr. Somerset to my house for a bit of supper. Oh, I know it's quite too selfish of me, but you see I haven't had a chance to talk with the Berestons really at all, and they're leaving Newport to-morrow. Good night, Mrs. Winger."

And no ruthless conqueror ever left a battlefield with more imperious stride, or left a stricken enemy more pitifully demoralized.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MORNING AFTER.

WHEN Gale went into the office of Managing Editor Stephens, of the *Daily News*, and told him sadly that the snapshot of Rufus P. Winger which he and Moriarty had taken at Bellingham was a flat failure because there had been something wrong with the shutter of Moriarty's camera. Stephens was very kind about it. He was bitterly disappointed, of course, but Gale seemed so genuinely distressed about the matter that the editor actually tried to comfort him.

"It's hard luck, my boy, that all your good work should have resulted in nothing," he said. "But accidents will happen. You fellows will have to go back to Bellingham and try again. So long as none of the other papers has Winger's picture there's no great harm done."

In spite of this satisfactory interview, Gale remained extremely ill at

ease. "We'd be all right now if it wasn't for Hawley," he said to Moriarty. "If the *Sentinel* publishes his snapshot of Winger to-morrow, our goose is cooked. The boss'll know then that we've been stringing him."

"If the *Sentinel* publishes the snapshot?" echoed the photographer. "We can be quite sure that they're going to. What's to prevent them?"

"Winger himself is our only hope," said Gale. "He may be able to prevent the picture from being published. I've already sent him a telegram suggesting how it might be done. It remains to be seen whether he'll succeed."

Gossip travels fast on Park Row. A few hours later word reached the *News* office that the Camera Chap had resigned from the *Sentinel's* staff. Gale received these tidings with great elation. He was shrewd enough to guess the cause of the trouble. "It can mean only one thing," he told Moriarty. "Winger has got busy, and has won out. Hawley is resigning because he's peeved that they're not going to use his snapshot—either that, or else Winger's pull was strong enough to have him fired. At all events, we don't have to worry now. I'm satisfied that the picture won't be used."

But the next morning on his way to the office Gale received a great shock. As he neared a news stand on a corner near his boarding house, these lines on a flaring poster caught his eye:

RUFUS P. WINGER LOSES BIG WAGER.

See To-Day's "*Sentinel*" for Exclusive Snapshot of the Great Camera Dodger Caught at-Last by "*Sentinel's*" Staff Photographer.

Greatly agitated, the *News* man stepped up to the stand, and grabbed a copy of the *Sentinel*. The face of the Copper King, distorted with rage, scowled at him from the front page. Meanwhile, as Gale stood on the street corner staring dazedly at the picture, Mr. Rufus P. Winger, at Bellingham, was talking in a choked voice over the long-distance wire to his wife at New-

port. "I thought you told me yesterday that you had fixed things with that woman!" he snarled. "Have you seen this morning's *Sentinel*?"

"Yes, I have, Rufe," replied Mrs. Winger. "I've got one before me now. Isn't it awful? I can't understand how it happened. Mrs. Stanhope assured me positively that the picture wouldn't be used, and that the man who took it would be discharged. I'm going to call on her to-day and ask for an explanation."

"A lot of good an explanation'll do me!" growled the Copper King.

In pleasing contrast to the scowling countenances of Winger and Gale was the expression on the face of a stout, florid man who called at the *Sentinel* office that day, and sent in his card to the managing editor. Paxton smiled as he read the name on the card which the office boy handed him. "Ben Williams, eh? I rather expected we'd get a call from him. Show him in, Sammy."

"I've come to congratulate the *Sentinel* on its magnificent scoop," began the sugar magnate; "also to express to you, sir, my appreciation of the good turn you've done me. I'm two hundred thousand dollars richer by your enterprise in publishing that picture, and—nobody has ever with justice accused me of being a tightwad. I've brought a blank check along."

Paxton smilingly shook his head. "Not a cent, Mr. Williams. We published Winger's picture because it was a big newspaper feat—sensation; and you're not under any obligation to me."

After a time Williams gave up trying to persuade him. "Well, where's that clever photographer of yours?" he inquired at length. "I'm certainly under obligation to him, all right."

"He hasn't got down yet," answered Paxton.

"Taking a little rest after his brilliant achievement? Well, he's entitled to it. You tell him for me, please, that he can have anything I've got."

"All right; I'll tell him," said Paxton, laughing. "But I've an idea that you'll have a hard job persuading him to take anything."

Shortly after Williams' departure, an office boy handed the managing editor a telegraph message as bulky as a letter. A smile which lighted up his face as he read the first line broadened as he continued and broke into a ringing laugh at the last line, and as Frank Hawley walked suddenly into the office.

"Still in good humor," remarked the Camera Chap, and smiled cheerily himself at certain recollections of the events of the past night.

"I have here a long letter in the form of a telegram—I hate to think what it cost our lady boss," said Paxton gleefully. "It politely confirms certain matters brought up by our excellent friend Somerset over the phone at midnight. I'll let you read it presently; you'll hardly believe it's from the owner of

the paper to the poor, cringing managing editor. It's the most abject and pathetic sort of a 'crawl,' Frank, and it makes me feel sorry for the poor girl. Incidentally, she begs to know at once if you have accepted her apology offered by Mr. Somerset; and she insists—just like that—upon your agreeing to remain with the paper, only upon condition that you accept a matter of two thousand dollars more per year for your distinguished and invaluable services."

"It's hard!" exclaimed Hawley, with mock reluctance. "And really, Tom, I don't by any means deserve so much money. But—well, anything to oblige the lady. Please assure her that all apologies are accepted as read, and that the Camera Chap is still on the job."

THE END.

Even the Pens of Genius Slip

SHAKESPEARE was repeatedly guilty of glaring errors in his plays, one of the best known being that in "Julius Cæsar." *Brutus* says to *Cassius*: "Peace, count the clock," to which *Cassius* replies, "The clock hath stricken three." As a matter of fact, clocks were not known to the Romans, and striking clocks were not invented until fourteen hundred years after the death of Cæsar.

The work of up-to-date novelists, however, is by no means free from some ludicrous blunders. One can find some excuse for "Ouida," who once wrote of a man sitting up all night drinking whisky punch, and next morning stroking the Oxford eight to victory; but it is difficult in the case of Miss Marie Corelli, who makes one of the characters say in the "Treasure of Heaven": "After school hours I got an evening job of a shilling a week for bringing home eight Highland bull heifers from pasture."

Baroness Orczy, in "Petticoat Government," draws a beautiful picture of a crescent moon rising over the treetops in the far eastern sky at eleven o'clock on a June evening. The picture is so nice that it is a pity to destroy it, but the invention is preposterous.

There are also one or two blunders in the works of Charles Dickens. In "Nicholas Nickleby" Squeers is represented as setting his boys to "hoe turnips" in midwinter, while Tattaycoram, in "Little Dorrit," is made to enter a room with an iron box two feet square under her arm.

Lord Beaconsfield was very careless in regard to the characters in his works. In "Lothair" he gives Lady Montairy three different Christian names. In the first volume she is called Georgina, later in the book she answers to Augusta, while in the second volume we meet her as Victoria.

Good Case for the Chicken

WON'T you try some chicken soup?" inquired Mrs. Small, of her boarder, a young lawyer.

"I have tried it, madam," he returned sadly, "and the chicken could easily prove an alibi."

At the Gates of Oakland

Mexican Romance of California

By
Jennie F. Ross.



(A COMPLETE NOVELETTE)

CHAPTER I.

BY SIDE-DOOR PULLMAN.

THE home of Pedro Blanco was mounted upon eight wheels, and accompanied him wherever he went. Rather, it was Pedro who followed the migrations of his home, for the latter was nothing else but a commodious box car which furnished ample accommodations for him and his family, to say nothing of the boarders that his good wife took to eke out their meager income. The car was the property of the Southern Pacific Railroad, and Pedro was merely one of the thousands of Mexican laborers in its employ.

Blanco had come north to the States in the days when Porfirio Diaz was still all powerful in the southern republic. He had had an enemy, and, among the peons, to have an enemy means a knife encounter sooner or later. He had not killed, only disabled, his antagonist, but he had deemed it wise to put an international boundary line between him and the dreaded rurales.

It is something of a marvel that Pedro Blanco, who could neither read

nor write, and who was always in debt, could have transported himself and family by rail for several hundred miles and eluded the examinations of customs and immigration inspectors. But in some manner he accomplished the seemingly impossible task, and, on his arrival in the States, found employment awaiting him. Since then his travels had been many. From El Paso on the east to Los Angeles on the west, from the Mexican border north to the Oregon line, he had journeyed, industriously wielding pick and shovel wherever those in authority willed it. And Pedro was a faithful worker, and in favor with the bosses over him.

Blanco and his good wife had three children, all that remained of a numerous brood. A nomadic life in a box car, stationed alternately in burning deserts and high, snowy mountains, is ill adapted to the conservation of child life. Hence, the migrations of the Blancos had been marked by graves; such graves as are to be seen everywhere throughout the Southwest—little sandy mounds with a rude wooden cross at each end. Of the three who remained, Carmelita was the oldest.

Save for their glorious eyes, Mexican women and girls of the peon class are seldom good to look upon. Squat and swarthy, with unintelligent features, it is only in early youth that they possess any degree of comeliness. But Carmelita was pretty, even to critical American eyes, while her compatriots, solemnly crossing themselves lest their words be held blasphemous, likened her to the Queen of Heaven.

The girl was sixteen, and it was high time she was married, for the peona quickly fades and the bloom of youth passes before she is twenty, while at thirty she is old and wrinkled or else stout and shapeless. But, somehow, Carmelita's beauty gave promise of being less fleeting than that of her sisters. Blanco was rather above the average peon in intelligence, for he was of the lower artisan class in old Mexico; from him the girl had inherited a fair amount of brains, and her nomadic life had sharpened her wits. This, in addition to her natural endowments, lent her a charm seldom to be found among her people.

So it was not for lack of opportunities that she remained unwedded. East, West, South, and North, wherever the Blanco car had journeyed, it had left behind a trail of broken hearts. In the womanless desert lands, more than one stalwart Americano had gazed in admiration at the pretty peona—but in vain. Unmindful of the pleadings of her lovers, or the scoldings of her mother, she had laughed and danced and flirted with all the careless gayety of her race. Some day, perhaps, but now—she was too happy, and she dismissed the subject with a careless gesture.

But if Señora Blanco stormed and raged at the girl's reluctance, Pedro was more reconciled; for Carmelita's slim brown hands were nimble ones, and added much to the family income. She worked, wherever there was opportunity, at fruit packing, which was her specialty. She had sorted oranges in the southern country and apples in the Pájaro Valley. She had picked grapes in the vineyards around Fresno,

and hops in the north; peaches, plums, cherries, and tomatoes had passed through her deft hands in the great canneries. But the fruit season does not last forever, even in California, and there were many idle months when there was no harvest, or when the Blanco car was stationed far from the productive lands. At such times, Maria Blanco's tongue became sharper than ever, and Pedro likewise agreed that it was time that Carmelita took unto herself a husband.

In the course of their wanderings, the Blancos came to the great Cygnus Sink on the Sacramento short line, where a treacherous quicksand is ever undermining the roadbed, and renders frequent mending imperative. Here their car, with others, was shunted onto a sidetrack, and Pedro forthwith became a member of the repair gang. And here it was that Maria ceased to scold her heartless daughter, and began to view the world with a smile of satisfaction.

The Blanco car was the only one that contained women; the others were bachelors' halls, and all the tenants thereof, regardless of looks, age, or matrimonial entanglements, promptly fell in love with Carmelita. But it was Juan Lopez who caused the good mother to smile, for her child was viewing the young man with evident favor. So interested was she that she quite forgot to flirt with the other men and to stir up their jealousy.

Pedro nodded approvingly at his wife's praises of Juan. He did not drink—that is, only a little wine or beer now and then. He worked hard, and stood well with Murphy, the Irish boss. He did not steal—that is, nothing but fruit and vegetables, and, perhaps, once in a while, a chicken from the rancheros who were rich and possessed so many that they would never mind the loss. Besides, this but served to show he was a brave caballero, for the so niggardly pigs of Americanos often shot at trespassers—not bullets which kill, but the fine shot which is so painful and makes one most sore. And Juan was not quarrelsome and never

drew his knife save in defense of his most sacred honor, and then he sought not to kill, but to disable his antagonist. This showed he possessed great cunning, for murder is punished by death or long imprisonment, while the police rarely know of simple knife thrusts, and the doctor-man is no Judas and speaks not to the magistrate.

It would take long to recount all the virtues with which Maria endowed the youth who, she prayed, might become her son-in-law. To American eyes, he was swarthy handsome, with a sinewy, rather undersized figure. Like Blanco he had been of the artisan class in old Mexico, and consequently above the average peon in looks and intelligence. Murphy, the Irish boss, classified him in a few words. "Begorra, thot Juan, there, is as dacint a grayser as iver I see. He looks as though he really did wash his face occasionally."

CHAPTER II.

THE CONQUEST OF CARMELITA.

PEDRO BLANCO had, for the most part, adopted American clothing. It was too cold for the thin cotton garments which the peon in his native land wears about his daily labors, and his treasured fiesta costume with its gayly embroidered coat and tight trousers, flaring wide below the knee, had soon worn out. Blue overalls and jumper became his workday attire, with a cheap suit of black for holiday wear, and all that remained of his native costume was the enormous straw sombrero with its lofty crown. Likewise Carmelita and the younger children had adopted semi-American garments, but Maria still clung to her black shawl which she wrapped about her face and figure whenever she sallied forth from her car home.

But, despite the glamour that surrounds new fashions and new garments, the Blancos, one and all, remembered with a sigh the gaudy magnificence of their former attire. So when after work hours, Juan arrayed himself in the gayly embroidered suit that had

been his costume on fiesta days in Mexico, a crimson sash about his waist, his silver-spangled sombrero tilted rakishly over one ear, it is no wonder that Carmelita's heart began to flutter. How handsome he was, with his mustache tightly curled at each corner, and his languishing black eyes fixed adoringly upon her!

Not that the girl was an easy conquest—far from it! The belle of a thousand miles of railway was not to be won without effort. So each evening while Juan strutted to and fro before the door of the Blanco car, Carmelita drew back into the shadows within, and only glanced out when her woman's curiosity impelled her to peep out to see if he was still on guard.

Maria was always present, for, like a good Mexican mother, she believed in a strict chaperonage. Carmelita, from her association with girls of other races, had picked up some emancipated ideas, ideas that horrified the decorous Señora Blanco. To talk to a man, or go for a stroll without a duenna, was impossible to think of! Long and fiercely had the girl and her mother wrangled over such minor points of etiquette in the past two years.

But with the advent of Juan Lopez the strife ceased. It was as though the girl's ideas had gone back to the old standards in keeping with her lover's costume. She yielded to the strict surveillance without demur. She would not have him think her an ill-bred girl who knew not true decorum. Besides, she had never been at ease on the few occasions when she had flirted in American fashion, and a Mexican courtship, though conducted at long range, is as replete with means of tantalizing a young man's soul as the most heartless coquette can desire.

So when Carmelita's curiosity overcome reserve and he approached in the hope that at last his adored one would be gracious, not once did she condescend to notice his presence. Instead, she gazed out over the tule lands as though watching the sun set or the fog rolling up the Sacramento River. Or else her eyes were fixed on the high

heavens—all quite as though it was merely interest in the weather that had brought her to the door.

Sometimes of an evening, she walked along the railroad tracks, closely attended by her watchful mother, or one of the younger children, never entirely without escort. So in her native country, the señoritas walk each evening in the plaza, and, as is the custom in the southern land, her lover followed her at a respectful distance. But the girl never looked back nor evinced the slightest interest in her follower, even though at times he softly sang a love song. His passion for Luisa and a half-score others he had met was nothing in comparison with the love that now filled his heart. Such loves were but as the faintest flicker of the tiniest candle beside the midday sun—no, they were less than that—even the extravagant tongue of Spain failed to provide a fitting metaphor.

One of the laborers possessed a battered guitar, and Lopez borrowed it. Music is the natural heritage of the Latin peoples, and Juan, who could neither read nor write a word of English, and barely a word of Spanish, carried in his brain many of the greatest love songs of the famous operas. And these he played to Carmelita, interspersed with the age-old serenades of the Spanish countries. And as the days went by, little by little the girl came more often to the door, and once in a while her eyes rested kindly upon him. Then a timid smile followed, later more dazzling ones, till at last she drew the box, which was her seat, close to the doorway, and vouchsafed him a low word or two, while her mother dozed in the one armchair they possessed, and, theoretically at least, kept strict watch over all.

The rest of the camp also kept watch with unconcealed interest. Even Murphy, the Irish boss, took interest in the unfolding romance, though he snorted disgustedly at the greaser methods of procedure. "Just a lot of prancing up and down and smirking, and divil a bit av kissin' to hlp it along. Sure, if I was a single man, and as young as I

once was, I'd show that grayser how to court a colleen!" was his comment.

But Juan was making fairly good progress on his road to the maiden's heart. Little by little the box upon which she sat was edged closer to the doorway, and one night, when Maria slumbered even sounder than usual, he slyly caught the girl's hand, and there had been an answering squeeze before she jerked herself free and retreated beyond reach. But that was of small moment in comparison with the ecstasy that swept over him a few nights later, when again Señora Blanco's tired eyes closed sleepily, and he not only caught but kissed the girl's hand. And this time she did not pull away. She let it lie there in his clasp until Maria stirred in her slumbers, and he retired to a more discreet distance.

So it was all arranged. Carmelita might pretend to frown and pout, but Juan knew he had won. No longer did he parade before her car each evening; he joined the family circle and was made welcome. And then followed serious talks with the girl's parents—plans for the marriage that would shortly take place. An American would have thought that Lopez had little to offer in the shape of a home, but the Blancos thought otherwise. Peones, as a rule, are thriftless, with strong gambling propensities, but Juan had saved fifty dollars—an unparalleled sum for a Mexican laborer. If only a box car, or a small section of one, could be secured for his exclusive use, he could outfit it in regal style and would install Carmelita therein, as queen of his heart and home. Golden were the dreams of Lopez in the wide-spreading tule lands beneath the starry California sky.

CHAPTER III.

THE GREASERS GO.

THE wonderful plans of Lopez were destined to be rudely shattered. Repairs on the railway were nearing completion, and if the lovers had not been so absorbed in their own affairs, they would have realized that the laborers, or some part of them, were soon to

be transported elsewhere. It was a shock to them both when one morning a freight train halted beside the camp, and the engineer shouted for all to hear: "Hey, you greasers that belong in the front car! Get a move on, and pack your traps! We're going to yank her out in about a minute!"

All the gang had picked up enough English to understand orders of that nature, so there was no need of interpretation by Murphy. And then it was that the blackness of unfathomable despair seized upon the soul of the honest Juan, for the car indicated was the Blanco home, and he and his adored one must part! She would be whisked away, Heaven alone knew whither, while he remained behind. Would they ever meet again? His heart grew desolate at the memory of those from whom he had thus parted, never to see them again.

As for Pedro Blanco, had he been starting on a lifelong exile, apart from home and kindred, he could not have been more vociferous in his sorrow and anger. It was monstrous, it was scandalous, nothing short of criminal, thus to be torn asunder from those he loved! When one parted from friends, there should be time for embracings, for vows of eternal amity, and for the shedding of tears; time also for making peace with those with whom one has quarreled. Here he fell upon the shoulder of Miguel Perez, with whom he had lately been at enmity, and once would have knifed had not Murphy interfered.

Fortunately, Señora Blanco was less overcome with grief. There were no woman friends to leave behind, and though Juan had been accepted as a member of the family, she had no doubts of his ability to follow them. So, with the assistance of the younger children, she got together what few possessions were outside the car—the clothesline with the family wash, the buckets and cooking utensils about the fire, which was pleasanter for cooking than the rusty stove inside—and piled all on board.

Juan, wiping away his tears with

one hand, rendered what assistance he could with the other, even though by so doing he speeded the moment of departure. But amid the darkness of the tragedy that overwhelmed him gleamed one bright ray. Carmelita no longer held aloof. She clung to his arm; she sobbed incessantly. No more did he cherish doubts as to her sentiments. She was his, and if only a padre had been present he would never have permitted her to leave him, though he had had to make the train wait till the ceremony was completed. Gladly would he perish under those iron wheels if only his sweetheart might journey with him to paradise! Death with her would be far sweeter than to part, even for a little while!

And when the engineer backed into the siding and coupled onto the Blanco home with a bump fatal to chinawarc, the girl was forced to tear herself away, and she impulsively clasped her lover about the neck and kissed him fervidly. Then, climbing aboard, she sank upon her box and sobbed broken-heartedly. To have won so much only to lose it all! Juan leaned against the car and wept in unison with her.

"Get aboard, you cackling greaser, unless you want to get left!" the engineer yelled to Pedro, whose tirade against the railroad had but begun. Thus admonished, Blanco ceased to berate the railway directors and turned the full battery of his remarks upon the engineer. He prayed that, once he and his family were conveyed to a place of safety, the engine might leap from the tracks and crush its master to death; or more fitting, let him be scalded with steam from his own boilers; or be thrust by bandits into his own fire box. Or let him but be thrown from his cab and be impaled upon the barbed wire fences beside the track, entangled so that he might never get free, doomed to linger thus in torment for seven days and nights.

The Blanco car, which was moving before he began his tirade, had quite finished getting up speed, and it was with difficulty that he scrambled aboard.

Juan ran beside the car till it reached the main track and was coupled onto the rest of the freight train, and followed it till he could keep pace no longer. He lifted his hat and bowed repeatedly, throwing innumerable kisses after the retreating car, as long as he could see Carmelita's scarf waving to him from the tiny window.

Pedro had exhausted his breath, if not his vocabulary, before he had journeyed far to the southwest. The mercurial Latin temperament does not long retain the memory of a petty grievance, especially when the author thereof is invisible. He was still deeply pained at being rudely torn from his so dear friends, but there are other friends in the world, and besides—those he had left behind had their faults. He said it with all sorrow, but it was, alas! too true. One could not trust them in all things. There was Miguel, who had lied about him to the boss. And Felipe Ramón, if one only knew, he could tell a pretty tale. The gold pin which he wore on his coat on Sundays and holidays, he had never seen it since he and Felipe had once gone to town together.

The others, they had their faults, too—perhaps it was well to leave them ere he suffered more from their treacherous hands. What was past was past, and who knew what wondrous fortune might be awaiting him at his unknown destination? Pedro was still young enough to dream and see visions, so for him the journey was speedily transformed into a quest for the lands of gold. His late anger at the engineer faded away, for was not that burly individual taking him to the place where his dreams might come true?

Señora Blanco's few tears were soon dried. Her chief sorrow had been over the parting of her daughter from Juan, but even here her grief was largely due to the failure of her matchmaking. To be abruptly separated from the only man upon whom her daughter had looked with interest was disappointing, to say the least. But after all, why worry? Carmelita was pretty, and

there were other men in the world—men who had seventy-five dollars or even a hundred dollars. And once get a girl to thinking of marriage, what mattered it who the man was? If she forgot Juan there would be another to take his place; of that Maria was sure.

Carmelita's grief was more enduring; at last she had wept beyond all further tears. Gradually she began to take interest in the outside world. After a while the train made a brief stop at a station, and a Mexican on the platform looked at her admiringly. He had an ugly face and a shrunken, bow-legged figure, but at his glance her natural coquetry asserted itself. Hastily she wiped her eyes and tidied her hair. Why make a fright of oneself? She loved and would always love Juan, but why weep over what could not be helped? He would come to her some day, and when the train reached Benicia and was run aboard the great ferryboat to be transported across the Sacramento to Port Costa on the southern side, she almost forgot her misery in wonder at it all.

With the rest of the family, she climbed down from her car and walked about the great boat—the boat that carried whole trains of cars. Often had the Blancos heard other laborers speak of this great wonder, but they had never quite believed in it. Now they saw with their own eyes, and in their hearts they prayed the saints to forgive them for their disbelief in their countrymen's veracity.

CHAPTER IV.

A SPANISH CAVALIER.

IT fell out that, instead of a desert of despair, the Blanco home became a garden of budding hopes. One great wonder had they seen; there would be more. At Port Costa, while the train was being made up again for its further journey to the south, Pedro gained speech with a fellow countryman. From him he learned that their route lay along the shores of San Pablo Bay and after a while they would reach a city—a big city by the strange gringo name

of Oakland. And this same Oakland was where one took the ferries for San Francisco, the great city of Alta California, "The Lost Province," as it is styled by all Mexicans, high or low.

And then they rounded the hills, and caught sight of the blue waters of the bay, mantled here and there with fog banks, the Blancos, one and all, thrilled with anticipation; for, after many switchings, the car had come to a halt in the Southern Pacific railroad yards, close to the shore of Oakland harbor.

Pedro had joined the gang at his accustomed labors, Maria had hung up her clothesline in a convenient place, and the Blancos were as much at home as though they had always lived in that particular spot. In a little while Carmelita found work in a cannery, for the fruit season was just commencing, and thus became a wage earner once more. There were several box cars stationed in the yards, inhabited by Mexicans for the most part, though there were a few Greeks and Italians; and, as usual, Carmelita came in for a large share of admiration.

Now that his eldest daughter was bringing money into the family, Pedro was in no haste to see her married, and as for Señora Blanco, she looked at all suitors with a discriminating eye. She remembered Juan and his treasured fifty dollars, and, with the worldliness of all mothers, was determined that no one less well supplied with the world's goods should become a member of the family, not as long as there was a possibility of Lopez following them. So the girl was spared the customary nagging from her matchmaking mother, and spent her moments of leisure in thinking about her beloved Juan.

It was but a few evenings after they reached there, that an old shed near the car caught fire. Then, for the first time, the Blancos were permitted to see a fire company at work. It was magnificent, the shining engine dashing up with the big horses on the gallop, the long ladder truck following in its wake, and, a few minutes later, the streams of water playing over the burning build-

ing! But sparks were being blown by the high trade wind toward the Blanco car, and setting fire to the dry weeds close by. It looked, for a time, as though Pedro would be burned out of his home; but, fortunately, there was plenty of water at hand, and the occupants of the other cars came, to his assistance. Among those who hastened to be of service was a dapper youth who gave out orders like a commander in chief, but who raised not a finger of his own—not that his lack of personal effort caused him to suffer in the estimation of the Blancos; for so zealously did he put himself in the foreground that the crowd gained the impression that but for his generalship everything would have been reduced to ashes. Profusely did the Blancos pour out their thanks, and, now that all danger was past, took account of their gallant rescuer.

They saw a slim, rather tall, young man whose light skin told of an indoor occupation. His features were comely, his manners suave; but what impressed the Blancos was the elegance of his well-fitting American clothes. Having associated almost entirely with railroad laborers, they had never seen one of their own race attired in the height of gringo fashion, and so to them, the youth seemed the last word in elegance, from the crown of his derby hat to the soles of his highly polished tan shoes. An American might have considered his necktie and variegated socks a trifle gaudy, but the Blancos had no fault to find. Carlos Garcia, who lived in a car at the upper end of the yard, introduced him as José Garcia, a cousin or a nephew—the Blancos were too flustered to notice which.

Pedro regarded the dandy with approving eyes. There were possibilities in costuming that had not occurred to him before. He wondered how a like outfit would become him. Carmelita's thoughts followed a parallel channel. She wondered how Juan would look attired in such splendor. But Maria saw other possibilities in the situation. Garcia was casting admiring glances at her daughter, into whose olive cheeks

the late excitement had brought a warm tinge of color and made her prettier than ever. Already Maria was entertaining the pleasing thought that this gorgeous youth, resplendent in shining collar and cuffs and diamond scarfpin, might, in the course of events, become her son-in-law. The elegance of his attire suggested plutocratic wealth that made poor Juan's hoarded savings appear but a trifle in comparison. Carmelita would be a grand lady and have clothes and jewels befitting her rank. Already he was quite smitten, and if only she would be a sensible girl and not make a fool of herself over that penniless Juan Lopez, all would be well.

After a brief survey of the newcomer, Pedro continued his speech of thanks to the friends who had come to his assistance. But for them, all he possessed would be in ashes, and who knew but what his beloved family might also have perished. Gladly would he lay down his life to repay so great a favor! He was their debtor, and he and all that was his would be at their service for all time. His home—the home that had been saved to him by their efforts—was theirs and at their disposal as long as life should last.

José, in the foreground once more, took upon himself the rôle of spokesman. What they had done was nothing, a mere trifle. They were ashamed that they could not render a more fitting service. Their bitterest enemy would have expected no less of them—it was a poor, a very poor service to perform for a friend. Some day, perhaps, it would be permitted them to do a favor more in proportion to their heartfelt esteem.

Thus José Garcia burst upon the Blancos in a blaze of heroic glory. He was a hero, a modest hero, who regarded noble deeds as trifles too petty to talk about. And such was his stage presence that they overlooked the fact that the other men had fought the flames, while he had stood aside and given orders that were entirely superfluous.

One by one the others drifted away, some to watch the firemen reeling up

their hose and making ready to return to the engine house, others to their respective cars where the evening meal awaited them, but José lingered. Carmelita was pretty, by far the prettiest Mexican girl he had ever seen, and, if dressed in the latest fashion, would be unrivaled among his acquaintances. Already, he fancied the girl in picture hat and narrow skirt, parading the streets with him before the envious eyes of all the other young Mexicans. So he lingered and talked to Pedro until Maria, as hospitality demanded, invited him to share the evening meal which had been prepared before the fire broke out.

CHAPTER V.

THE BLANCOS SEE LIFE.

JOSE accepted with alacrity, and proved an entertaining guest, with his knowledge of the city and the life of its people. He talked also of himself, but not too much. He was a waiter—a waiter in a Mexican restaurant. It was an agreeable occupation and the pay was—he did not mention the sum, but he implied that it was quite fabulous. This was his day off; yes, he had many days of leisure in the course of a month. He would have another holiday soon, and would be coming to the railroad yards to see his cousin. He paused, and Pedro, with ready courtesy, invited him to call whenever he came that way again.

Garcia promised with many expressions of delight, followed by a question: "The pictures that move, have you seen them?"

"Not yet," was Blanco's reply. "We have heard others speak of them often, but never before have we lived in a city, so we have not seen. Much have we talked of going, but there were other things to see. You have seen them often? Tell us about them."

Garcia threw out his hand. "To tell of them—it is an impossibility! One must see to understand. If you would condescend to accept my so unworthy escort, it would make me the happiest of mortals to conduct you and your family—yes, even the little ones—to

the theater, when next I come to visit my cousin. I should deem it an honor, an unparalleled honor, if you would permit me."

There was no refusing such a humble request, so it was all arranged. On the following Wednesday José was to escort the Blanco clan to the nearest moving-picture show, and with many bows and adoring glances at the daughter of the household, the young dandy took his leave.

A blaze of light from a half dozen flaming arc lamps, an archway outlined by a semicircle of incandescents, flanked on each side with gaudy posters depicting men and women in poses suggestive of the strenuous life—this was how the entrance to the Far West Theater appeared to the dazzled eyes of the Blancos, young and old, as José Garcia, with cavalier grace, marshaled them into the lobby. Before a girl seated inside a glass cage he stopped, and, with a lordly air, flicked a silver dollar through a tiny window, receiving in exchange some colored bits of cardboard, and a few small coins, which he carelessly scooped up as if dollars were of little consequence to him. The Blancos gasped in unison at such a display of opulence, and meekly followed their conductor through a doorway, where he surrendered the tickets, into a darkened hall.

It was early and few seats were occupied. "These in the rear, they are the best." Garcia spoke in the sophisticated tone of one who knew, and the Blancos, without a murmur, filed into the row of seats he indicated. José was crafty. He had lined up the Blancos so that when they took their places in the row, Carmelita would be next to him. But the girl was quick-witted, and already she had conceived a dislike for this smooth, oily-tongued dandy.

On their way to the theater he had walked beside her at the head of the little procession. Under other conditions, Maria would have protested against such a break of decorum, but, in some way, the youth's self-assurance and American manners quite routed

her prejudices. Just as Juan Lopez's Mexican garb had inspired the rebellious Carmelita with deference for the old-style wooing, so José's Americanism brought more liberal ideas into Maria's none too clever brain. They were his guest, and she would not remonstrate, and so, perchance, unwittingly insult him. They had strange ways, these northern people; very likely he was conscious of no infringement of etiquette, but she shook her head disapprovingly at the new order of things.

As for Carmelita, her resentment of the dandy's forwardness increased at every step. For all his fine clothes and gringo airs, this conceited youth need not for a moment think that she—the belle of a thousand miles of railway—was his for the taking. So when her ready wit told her that he was planning to seat her beside him, she slipped from her place in the line, and, when they filed into the row of chairs, Maria's ample figure was a barrier between them.

But Carmelita's innate courtesy defeated the purpose of her cleverness. She was his guest, so she made the change slyly without letting him suspect it was by design rather than chance, and José can hardly be blamed for all that came to pass thereafter. Had she slighted him openly and wounded his vanity, it is doubtful whether he would have paid further court to the proud beauty. His natural conceit would have forbidden him thus to waste attentions—attentions that other girls sought after and roused them to a fury of jealousy when offered to a rival. But José remained in ignorance of the girl's state of mind, and grew more and more infatuated with the haughty maiden who deigned him neither look nor smile.

They had entered the hall during an intermission, but they were barely in their places when the lights went out and on the screen in front appeared words of explanation—words which the Blancos could not read, but which José, who had considerable education, speedily translated. A momentary flicker, and there was a picture before

them—an automobile passing along a street in a whirlwind of dust. It passed from sight, and in its track lay an injured child. The Blancos had not seen the accident, everything had moved so swiftly, but there was the child being picked up by the other people. Five pairs of beady black eyes watched with intense interest as the drama unrolled. And when it was finished, and the lights flared up for another short intermission, they had no fitting words with which to express their wonder and delight.

Other scenes followed—a society picture of gorgeously gowned and jeweled ladies which appealed to Carmelita and her mother, but roused little interest in the others—a comedy whose gringo humor they did not entirely grasp—and then—a wild-West drama that nearly brought the Blancos to their feet in their fervid interest. Cowboys, Indians, soldiers, there was little need for José to translate the explanations; they could understand it all, the whole story unrolled before their eyes.

It was a happy and voluble group that sauntered back home in the soft moonlight. Carmelita's resolution to treat José with cool reserve slipped from her mind as she chatted; so a little later, after all the profuse thanks and adieus had been said, Garcia went on his way, confident that his conquest of the fair one's heart was more than half accomplished. He twirled his mustache with a self-satisfied air. She was so pretty, and, when arrayed in fitting fashion, would be one of whom even an accomplished caballero like himself might be proud. That she might not fall in love with him was a possibility that never troubled his being.

CHAPTER VI.

SUBMITTED TO ST. WASHINGTON.

CARMELITA had a letter, and her heart was filled with mingled joy and woe. It must be from Juan—hence the joy, for it proved he was still faithful and thinking of her. Furthermore, in some way he must have found out where she was, and that gave promise

that he some day might follow. But not a word of it could she read, for she had never spent a day in school; nor could any of her family read it to her, and as yet the Blancos had made no friends among their compatriots to whom she would have intrusted the reading of the precious letter.

Helplessly, the girl caressed the white sheets of paper, and kissed the scraggy handwriting. What did it mean? Was he sick? Would he come soon, or was he being sent still farther away? Tears streamed from her eyes, completely drowning the smiles which the receipt of the letter had kindled.

At this juncture, who should appear but José Garcia! Señora Blanco beamed upon him. Here was one who could read English as well as Spanish. But Carmelita shrank at the suggestion, and would have hidden the letter in her bosom had there been time. Maria was not without tact in her matchmaking, and it is doubtful if, on second thought, she would have suggested that one whom she had picked to be her son-in-law be requested to read a letter from her daughter's former suitor. But she had a woman's curiosity, and it overcame her usual caution. She wanted to know what was in that letter, and, now that opportunity offered, was determined to find out.

"A letter, Carmelita has a letter!" she explained after the usual greetings had been exchanged, "if you would read it to us—"

"I should be most happy to be of service," José was on his feet and bowing; "the señorita is so beautiful, doubtless she receives many letters. It would be an honor to be permitted to read them to her."

There was no way of escape without discourtesy, so the girl reluctantly surrendered the letter to José, who again bowed. Had he sneered or smiled derisively, she would have snatched it away in hot anger, but his manner showed only polite indifference as he unfolded the missive and began to read. It was a miserable scrawl, ill written and misspelled, for poor Juan had had little schooling, and the composition of

a letter had been a stupendous task. He had been able to put into it but a tiny fraction of the love and devotion that filled his soul; but could Carmelita have read it herself or had it read to her, slowly and haltingly, by some half illiterate peon, she would have sensed much that was unwritten. Under José's fluent rendering it seemed hopelessly lifeless and inadequate. Purposely, Garcia used a level, expressionless tone that robbed the few lines of all sweetness and intimacy.

MOST BELOVED ONE: I have been most sad and desolate since you went away. I think of thee by day and dream of thee by night. At sunset I weep with many tears as I remember the happy hours we spent together each evening, *querida mia*. I pray thee send me a few words that I may know I am not forgotten. Make haste, for soon we are to go far, far away. Daily I pray the saints to bring us near to each other again. At all times, on the humblest of knees, I pray the Blessed Virgin to keep thee safe, O best beloved.

THINE OWN JUAN.

It was a creditable letter for one so lacking in scholarly attainments, but, on the reader's glib tongue, woefully brief and colorless. He handed it back to Carmelita with another low bow.

"Yes, it is short," he said, voicing her unspoken thought, "but who could write to one so charming and put on paper all his heart? It would fill a book, a large book, yes, several books, each larger than the Holy Bible. Doubtless, if he were present, he would speak at greater length, and even so be unable to express his great devotion," and José raised his adoring eyes to the girl's face as though what was in his own heart was likewise beyond expression.

Carmelita was burning with resentment, though just at what or whom she could not have told. Surely not at Garcia, who had acted so kindly. Nor was her wrath directed at the faithful Juan, though secretly she thought he might have written a longer letter. Howbeit, she felt that she had been treated shabbily, and her eyes, under their down-cast lids, grew hard and black with hidden rage.

When it came to plots, Garcia had all the cunning wiliness of his race, and while he had been reading the letter his

mind had formulated a plan for unceremoniously ending this other romance of Carmelita's. So again he bowed and spoke. "The caballero desires a reply," he said, "a quick reply, that may reach him before he goes elsewhere. If the señorita would so honor me, my hands are at her service."

The girl's smoldering wrath turned upon the too officious petitioner, through her voice was as courteous as ever as she answered: "I could not presume on one so kind."

But Maria had been thinking with what for her was lightninglike rapidity. Though possessing little intelligence in most matters, she, too, could plot when occasion demanded it. No sooner had she enlisted José's services than she regretted it, but happily he had seemed unoffended at finding the girl had another lover. Rather, he had taken it as a matter of course that one so pretty should be admired, and the letter had contained nothing indicative of a betrothal. And his offer to write looked good to Maria. If he knew what was written he could take no offense, while if another wrote, he might suspect all manners of things, and retire from the field in anger.

So when in answer to the girl's protest, he assured her that for him writing was an easy task and would be doubly pleasant as a service for one so charming, Maria accepted his services. José then hurried away, returning in a few minutes with the necessary ink and stationery.

Politely he waited for Carmelita to speak, but she could think of no appropriate message which she cared to impart in this youth's hearing. Could she have written herself, her letter would have been a marvel of passionate love-making; but to dictate her sentiments to José, whom she suspected of covertly sneering at the whole episode, was a different matter. Had the rest of the family been absent, she might have wreaked a cruel vengeance upon him for his officiousness by pouring out a torrent of fervid language that would have left no doubt in his mind as to the place Juan held in her regard. But

with her mother near, that was not to be thought of, and she had no desire to incur a rebuke for unmaidenliness in Garcia's presence.

Maria spoke hurriedly, for she saw rebellion in the girl's face. "Tell him you are well, and that you are working in a cannery. Say, too, that you have been to San Francisco, and have seen the pictures that move. Surely, there are many things of which to speak."

Thus encouraged, Carmelita dictated a little note that was more a chronicle of household events than a love letter. In fact, all sentiment would have been omitted had not José himself suggested it. "A few kind words of—regard, would you care to send them? To one who is deprived of so much, they would be thrice welcome." His tone implied that were he in the luckless Juan's place even the least of kind words would be like a breath of fresh air to a soul in torment.

So a coldly polite wish that she might soon see her disconsolate lover closed the letter, which José folded and inclosed in an envelope. He scribbled an address, and under his direction Carmelita placed a stamp in the proper corner—a pretty little red stamp, bearing the picture of St. Washington, the good saint honored by all Americans, and to whose care they intrusted their so precious letters. She would pray to him that he might carry this one safely to its destination.

The letter finished, José invited the Blancos to accompany him to the picture show. All, with the possible exception of Carmelita, accepted with alacrity, and the girl was in no mood to refuse one who had done her so great a favor as writing to her beloved Juan, even though at the time she had resented his forwardness. So once more they sat enthralled as scene after scene unrolled in swift procession. José would have preferred to escort Carmelita unattended, in the gringo fashion, but he deemed it unwise to suggest such an innovation at this stage of the game. True, it was expensive, this taking the whole family, but then most of the theaters sell family tickets—

thirty tickets for one dollar—and what is a dollar to a young man in love?

Carmelita again frustrated his attempts to seat her beside him, and this time he understood that the slight was intentional, but the knowledge caused him no chagrin. In the long run, he had no fear lest he could not outwit and outdistance any illiterate railroad peon, and he could well afford to bide his time; for the letter that Carmelita, on the way to the theater, had dropped into a mail box had not borne the correct address; and while Juan lived and worked in the north, the name of the envelope was that of a far distant southern city.

CHAPTER VII.

WHY THEY STUDIED.

PATIENTLY Carmelita awaited a reply to the letter she had sent to Juan. A week passed, and another, and still no word came. A vague uneasiness and distrust of José's honesty began to formulate in her mind. Who knew what he had written? She was clever enough to realize the opportunity he had had for deceiving, had he been so disposed. Another thing tended to confirm her suspicions. Miguel Perez, lately employed at Cygnus, appeared at the yards. Eagerly Carmelita questioned him about Juan.

Now Miguel had been one of the admirers who had been quite ignored while Lopez was in the field. But with the successful rival out of the way, who knew but that he—Miguel—might win? So he sought to please her, and what, he reasoned, pleases a woman more than to hear that her lover is constant and sad because of enforced separation? So he drew a sorrowful picture of Juan, his young life clouded with deepest despair, sitting each evening with his head bowed upon his hands, gazing with unseeing eyes out over the tule lands, the tears streaming down his cheeks, because his sweetheart, whom he had thought so faithful, had sent no reply to the letter he had written.

But alas, for Miguel's craftiness!

She quite forgot his existence in her grief at Juan's woe, and her rage at the startling revelation of Garcia's duplicity; and soon Perez strode away in wrathful disgust. Who could forecast the ways of a woman? It would have been wiser if he had merely told her that Juan was, to all appearances, constant, and that he spoke of her often—not quite as often as at first, but still often. He was true in spite of all the glances of Emilia Castro; yes, another car with a señorita had come to Cygnus. No, no, Juan had not once looked at her; it was she who had made all the advances. Bold she was, bold as a gringo girl, but Juan had paid no heed. She was very persistent, but Carmelita need have no jealousy. Pretty? Yes, some might call her that, but for him—Miguel—she possessed no charm. Yes, that would have been a more tactful story, and women ever fed on lies. Then instead of sobbing her eyes out over a worthless fellow, she might have given a thought to a more worthy caballero. But only Heaven and the saints knew the mind of a woman!

Carmelita's placid dislike for José was changed into bitterest hatred. It was so plain to her, his eagerness to write her correspondence! The letter had been sent, for she herself had dropped it into the mail box; but José had contrived so that it had gone astray, in spite of all her prayers to St. Washington. There was but one course open for her—she must find some one else to write for her, but whom could she trust?

It was at this juncture that she fortunately made friends with Giuseppa Carnotti, the Italian girl who worked beside her in the cannery. On their way to and from work they traveled the same route for part of the distance, and so they walked together each day. And though Giuseppa's Italian-English was none of the best, and Carmelita's Mexican-Spanish far from lucid, with the aid of a few expressive gestures they were able to converse with a fair degree of understanding. The Italian was betrothed, and at this news the Mexican's interest in her new-found

friend was doubled. But Italian marriage customs were puzzling, as puzzling as those of the gringos. Giuseppa volubly explained in her broken English.

"It is like this: My father and my mother, they look long among the young men to find me a husband. One is rich, but he is too old. Another is lazy and spends all he earns. There is Guido, who is honest and good, but he has no money; his wife would have to work hard, with little to eat. Then they choose Giovanni. He is a good man and his father has much money—he has a restaurant on North Beach in San Francisco. He loves me very much, but his father say, 'No.' Giovanni must have a wife with—with—education, one who can write the bill of fare, in English if need be, and who can keep the—the—accounts—look after the money and put it down on the books. Giovanni and me, we are very sad, and we weep much.

"So his father say to my father: 'If the girl goes to school and learns these things, I no stand in the way.' My father he think hard, and my mother she think, too. So they send me to school—the night school—where I study. Now I can read the newspaper and write a letter. But the figures—the arithmetic—it is hard, but I do him soon, and then I marry Giovanni, and work no more in the cannery."

To Carmelita, it was as though Giuseppa had lifted a curtain before a window, revealing a marvelous vista of things unknown. This girl had learned the wonderful lore of letter writing! Could she herself do likewise? Eagerly she questioned Giuseppa. Yes, any one could go, and it was free. Yes, she would take her friend, take her that night, if her parents were willing.

The girls parted at the usual corner, and the Mexican hurried to her car home. Anxiously she made her request—might she go to the night school with Giuseppa? The Blancos were astounded. Such a thing was not to be thought of! What need for a woman to read or write! If she could cook and keep house, that was quite suffi-

ent. But Carmelita was persistent. Just for one night! Giuseppa would come for her and show her the way. And one of Giuseppa's parents, usually her mother, always went to the school to bring her home, for Italian girls, too, were always well chaperoned.

It was the last statement that turned the scale in the girl's favor. Just for one night, to see what it was like. So the matter rested, but only for a day. The teacher, regarding Carmelita as a new pupil, assigned her a seat near her friend, and began to teach her the alphabet. The girl, with the thought of Juan evermost in her mind, strove diligently to concentrate her wandering wits with such good results that, by the time Giuseppa's mother appeared, she had mastered the printed letter and begun on the script. Painstakingly, she followed the curved lines. If it was as easy as that! Visions rose before her in which she daily penned a lengthy epistle to the despairing Juan.

The next day there was another battle with her parents, but again Carmelita was victorious, and little by little the opposition died away till it became a matter of course that she should accompany her friend each evening. Letters, words, spelling—you must learn to spell before you can write—Carmelita broke all records in the rapidity with which she mastered them, for her soul was in the task. But not a single other subject could the teacher induce her to touch, a fact that accounted for her rapid progress. Numbers, figures, of what use were they to her? Geography? She neither knew nor cared what the name meant. Ability to write a letter to Juan was the summit of her ambition, and the teacher let her devote her time to that alone.

But before a week was past, the girl realized that the task would be a lengthy one. One could not learn to read and write in a minute, and she must get a letter to Juan. So she enlisted Giuseppa in the cause. The Italian accepted with alacrity, and between them a creditable letter was composed. One thing troubled Carmelita. It was in English, a tongue which he could

not read. Then she remembered that Murphy, the boss, could read English and was friendly to Juan, and her fears passed away.

A few days later a letter came in reply. Maria, fearful lest her cherished plans should go astray, did not suggest that José be requested to read it, for which the girl was thankful. Strange to say, the letter was in English, as Carmelita discovered when she had deciphered one or two monosyllables. Juan had got Murphy to read the girl's letter, and, mindful of the labor expended on his previous attempt at writing, had asked the good-natured Irishman to answer it for him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHEERING OF CARMELITA.

JOYFULLY Carmelita sought Giuseppa's assistance. She had no compunctions about showing the letter to this girl friend, for did not the Italian maid have a lover of her own? Easily and fluently Giuseppa deciphered the writing, all but a few words, of which she could make no meaning. And Carmelita, too, was puzzled at the queer phrases that interspersed the letter. Murphy had had his own Celtic ideas as to what constituted a proper love letter, and to Juan's dictated sentiments had added certain words and phrases of purely Hibernian origin.

Fortunately, there were a few sentences which Murphy had allowed to pass uncensored, and these brought comfort to the soul of Carmelita. Serenely, she attributed the things she could not understand to the bad writing of Murphy and the deficient education of Giuseppa, who pretended to a greater knowledge than she possessed. A means of communication with the so faithful Juan had been established, and that was all that mattered.

So thereafter, at intervals, letters were exchanged till Juan was sent far away to the southward to an unheard-of station whose gringo name none could pronounce, not even Enrique Gomez, who had been born in the States and had attended American schools for

a few terms. After that, his letters came less frequently, for his new boss was not so accommodating as the good-natured Murphy; but they came often enough to keep bright in the girl's memory the image of her beloved.

Maria offered no objections to the correspondence, only stipulating that José be kept in ignorance of it, a condition to which the girl gladly acceded. Though from the first she had marked out the elegant youth for her son-in-law, Señora Blanco had had doubts as to the likelihood of her dreams coming true. It was almost too much to expect that one so high and wealthy would stoop to the level of a poor peona, even though the girl was the prettiest of her race. In case José's attentions should not continue, it would be well for Carmelita to have Juan to fall back upon, so the lovers exchanged letters without fear of maternal reproof.

José still made frequent visits, and gazed at the girl with adoring eyes, though he made no further advances. He was biding his time, waiting till her grief over the faithlessness of her former lover—here he smiled as he thought of the cleverly misdirected letter—had had time to abate. Then would be his chance, but in the meantime he must be patient. So, for the most part, he kept to the society of the other men in the camp and gazed longingly from a distance. He was a welcome visitor to all, for in their native land was war and revolution, and he could read—both Spanish and English. And he brought papers from the restaurant, where he was employed, and read to all the news of old Mexico.

And when he had finished, he sat and talked with them of events in the southern land. Ah! It would be glorious to be at home now; there would be a chance for all who were brave and daring. They might be generals or bandit chieftains, and wear gorgeous uniforms, and diamonds unnumbered. Who knew, perhaps they could be governors or presidents! But alas! Mexico was far away, and the States were good to live in. The work was hard, but the pay was good. Some day, perhaps,

they would go back to the old country, but not now. Then one would pick up a battered guitar and sing, or else try their skill throwing stones at a mark—a variation of quoits—and great achievements would be forgotten.

Maria always welcomed Garcia with exceptional warmth, but Pedro was beginning to look askance at the young dandy. Tales had come to his ears from various sources—tales which did not speak well of the swaggering youth. He had frequently been discharged from various situations—there were rumors that money had been missing at the same time—and once he had been arrested. He had been released, but it was said that the police looked upon him with suspicious eyes. True, one who wore better clothes and had more money than his fellows was always slandered, but the stories troubled Pedro, and he frowned upon the young man's too evident attentions to Carmelita.

José had awaited his time, and it now seemed that his patience was to be rewarded. No longer did Carmelita sit disconsolate, with a tragic stare in her dark eyes. She was alive, her smiles came readily, and her face glowed with happiness. To Garcia, who knew naught of the letter writing that had brought about this transformation, there could be but one explanation—Lopez had been forgotten and cast aside. She had been pretty before, but now she was beautiful. And, too, she had some new clothes, stylish American clothes, that would compare favorably with his own magnificence. She wore a hat, a pretty hat, for she had been fortunate in falling into the hands of a saleswoman with pride in her profession who took a sincere interest in even the poorest customer.

And the other Blancos were improving. Even Maria had discarded her shawl in favor of a more fashionable wrap. And Pedro had caught the fever. His bell-crowned sombrero had been exchanged for warmer headgear upon his arrival, and lately he had purchased a complete outfit, including

white collar and cuffs. And when, on the following Sunday, Señora Blanco decreed that, attired in their new splendor, they must all go to early mass, Pedro in his frantic struggles with the stiff collar forgot to slip his knife into his garments, he was proven as nearly Americanized as he ever would be. True, on discovering the omission, he sat in a state of nervous dread till the service was over, and went doubly armed for a week after; but somehow a knife never seemed quite such an indispensable article of equipment as it had been hitherto.

The Blancos were progressing in other lines. No longer did they wait for José to take them to the picture show. They went alone, and sat spell-bound, while presidents and pontiffs, kings and queens, and lesser folk, passed before them in gorgeous array to make a peon's holiday. And when Carmelita, with her newly learned lore, began to spell out the easier words of the explanations, Pedro's delight knew no bounds. Learning was of some use, after all, and so a few days later, when an officer appeared at the yards, and said the younger children must go to school, he did not demur. And once even when Giuseppa's parents had visitors and could not go after the girls, Pedro had gone to the school to bring them home. He had looked around and noted the other students—some old and gray-haired—much older than he. Why could not he go there, too, and learn to read what was on the picture screen? Yes, some day when he had more time, when the children were grown, and he had made much money, he would go, but now—he was too busy, and too tired at night. And that was as far as he ever got on the weary road to learning.

Garcia viewed all this progress with an approving eye. The Blancos were a family of whom no one need be ashamed, and if he won the daughter of the household, he would have the prettiest wife in all the Mexican colony. His attentions became more marked. He did not serenade her; that was too old-fashioned and foreign. In-

stead he brought her candy and flowers, which she reluctantly accepted. Somewhere she had learned that American girls took such gifts from men who were almost strangers. She wished she knew more of gringo etiquette. But she avoided him as much as possible, and never spoke to him if she could help it.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SCORN OF CARMELITA.

ONE Sunday morning Carmelita was at home alone. The others had gone to mass, but she had had a headache and stayed behind. She was not expecting José when he appeared bearing a bouquet of flowers much larger than usual. He found her sitting in the doorway, trying to spell out the words of a stray sheet of newspaper, and so absorbed in her task that she failed to see him till it was too late to retreat. With his most elegant bow, he offered her the flowers, which she took and laid carelessly aside upon a box. She gave a slight nod in reply to his flattering greeting, but spoke no word. But José was a conceited individual, and saw in the girl's indifferent reception of his gift only a woman's perversity, and no slight to himself.

"You care not for them, the beautiful flowers, for which I paid two bits? Ah! There are señoritas in Oakland who would weep till they were blind to get such flowers!"

"Then it would be well for you to give them to those señoritas, for I would not have them lose their sight for so slight a cause."

Again Garcia ascribed her coldness to perversity. "I have made a most grievous error. A box of candy, that would be more acceptable, perhaps? You like it much?"

"I like it when it comes from the hand of—a friend." There was no mistaking the inflection of the last word, and José's dark face flushed.

"But I am your friend," he protested. "No, you are right; it is your lover, not your friend, that I am. And

I love you as I never before loved a woman, most adorable one!"

"Then you have loved others?" The question was upon her lips, but she stifled it. She would not bandy words with this man. It was nothing to her if he had loved a thousand others.

José took her silence for a favorable omen. "Smile upon me, beloved; smile and say thou wilt marry me. On the humblest of knees, I implore thee to grant me this happiness."

Carmelita regarded him coldly. "You have no right to speak thus to me, the betrothed of another."

"Betrothed? But I knew it not."

"You might have known, had you used your wits. You read his letter to me, and wrote one in reply, even though it went not to him."

"You accuse me of sending it astray?" he demanded indignantly.

She dropped her eyes that he might not see the sudden light of understanding that intensified their slumbrous anger. At last she was fully convinced of Garcia's duplicity. Though she had suspected it before, she had been willing to attribute at least a portion of the blame to St. Washington, who had paid no heed to the prayers of a poor peona. There was a dangerous calmness to her voice as she answered:

"I have accused no one. It must be your own heart that calls you a cheat."

José had given himself away, and at the realization his anger burst forth. Hastily he changed the subject.

"And who is it that you are going to marry? A poor railroad peon! A fine life he will lead you, roving all over the land like a beggar Indian, with scarce enough to eat and rags to wear! Gladly would I send a thousand letters astray, even though by so doing I imperiled my soul, if only I might save you from so terrible a fate!"

This last was an afterthought. Seeing that she had guessed the truth, he might as well make his action appear as magnanimous and self-sacrificing as possible.

"Better an Indian life of roving than a life in a prisonlike city flat with a thief," retorted Carmelita.

Carmelita had not intended to be as insulting as her words indicated, in view of José's alleged propensities for tampering with his employer's cash box. So absorbed had she been in her school and her dreams of Juan that she had paid little heed to the gossip about Garcia's shortcomings. The latter part of her remark had merely been a chance seeking after a fitting antithesis.

"You call me a thief?"

"I have called no one a thief. Your own heart must be the accuser." The girl's voice was innocently serene.

José had been insulted; just how or by whom it would be difficult to explain, but his temper now reached the boiling point.

"You scorn me and the love I have offered you?" he snarled at her, his customary mask of suave politeness replaced by a look of cruelty and hatred. "José Garcia is not one to be lightly scorned, nor insulted with impunity. I shall have vengeance—vengeance that will not be long forthcoming. You laugh at my threats? José Garcia's threats are not idle ones, so beware! I can cause things to happen, and they shall happen! Misfortunes without number shall be your lot, and the lot of your family! And you shall not marry that worthless peon, for not even he will look upon you with favor when my vengeance is accomplished! He shall turn away with loathing, and all the other peons likewise shall turn away, and you will be glad to hide your face within convent walls, if the good sisters will receive you! And in that hour, you need not come to me for mercy! You laugh now, but then it will be I who will laugh, and you will weep—weep in vain, for I shall not hear!"

In his contemplation of the scornful one's future misery, he was beginning to forget his anger, but the girl's mocking inquiry: "And when comes that day?" once more roused him to fever heat.

"You shall know if you live but a short while," he retorted, and, with a final shake of his fist, he turned and

strode away, followed by a taunting laugh from Carmelita.

An American girl might have been somewhat alarmed if a discarded lover had poured out such threats, but the Mexican was undismayed. She was accustomed to hear rejected suitors rage and threaten, and had he merely bowed in quiet submissiveness, like a gringo admirer, she would have been perplexed at the strange behavior and branded him as cold and unfeeling. Only last week Miguel Perez, who had admired her so long and had received a final dismissal, had sworn to throw himself from a San Francisco ferry-boat to drown in the blue waters of the bay. He had boarded a steamer for that purpose, but there was an icy trade wind blowing from the northeast, and kicking up tiny whitecaps on the usually calm waters. And Miguel had drawn his coat closer about him and reconsidered. It was so cold, and the water looked cold! Life without Carmelita might be cold and desolate, but death, via those chill waters, presented an even more frigid prospect—so shivering much, Miguel sought the lower deck and the close proximity of the warm engine room.

Then, too, there had been Flores Grajeda, the fat, elderly innkeeper in a Mexican settlement far to the south. He had threatened to kill her, but he would not stain his good knife with the blood of one so ignoble. He would go home at once and get his gun, and dispatch her with all speed. But on the way, he had met the Widow Calvo and had stopped to recount his grievances. And under the spell of her warm sympathy, he had fallen a victim to the widow's buxom charms, and Carmelita had danced at their wedding a few weeks later.

And Pablo Dominguez had threatened to jump from the edge of a high cliff that overhung the railroad track—at that time, the Blancos were stationed in the Sierras—dash himself to death before her eyes. But it was a long, hard climb to the top of the cliff, and the sun was very hot. He had lain down to rest a moment, and had fallen

asleep, and when he awoke it was night-fall and too late for a spectacular suicide. And there were ghosts in the mountains. So, crossing himself, he hurried home, determined to return on the morrow. But long ere morning dawned, he had decided that to waste so valuable a life as his for the sake of a cruel slip of a girl would be a shame—a crime in the sight of Heaven—and Pablo lived on.

Half a score of others had threatened violence of some sort, either to themselves or to the girl; so it is not strange that she dismissed José's vows of vengeance without serious alarm. But had she known it, Garcia was of a more vindictive spirit than all who had preceded him, and capable of holding a grudge much longer.

CHAPTER X.

A PLAN FOR CARMELITA.

JOSE GARCIA came no more to the camp of the laborers, but the elder Blancos thought little of it in view of the fact that he had left Oakland and found new employment in San Francisco. As on previous occasions when he had lost situations, there were rumors of dishonesty. Money had been missing, but there had been no proof, and the police had not been notified.

Pedro shook his head sagely when the gossip reached him. "It is well that he comes no more. We would not have a thief for a son-in-law. Soon he would be in prison, and who would take care of his wife then?"

Maria agreed, but without enthusiasm. José had captivated her heart, and it was hard to believe him a rascal. It must be jealousy on the part of less fortunate acquaintances; he must have been the victim of some plot laid by envious fellow employees. Still, perhaps it was just as well that Carmelita should see him no more. Juan was still faithful, and sent letters at intervals. The job he was on promised to be a long one; he might stay a year at the station with the unpronounceable gringo name. He was making his plans, and Maria, as she heard Car-

melita spell out the brief letters, gave a sigh of resignation. José had been a beautiful dream, but to annex him to the family was too much to ask of the saints.

Carmelita, fearful of a scolding, had not told her parents of her quarrel with García, and she was very thankful that he had happened to go away at this time so that they need not find out about it. His threats of vengeance slipped from her memory till a series of misfortunes, which all her prayers seemed powerless to avert, recalled them. Twice in rapid succession tools were missing from the railroad yards and afterward found in Pedro's possession. In vain he protested his innocence. But Blanco was a steady worker, and greasers were all light-fingered, and would steal whatever they could lay their hands on—so the boss reasoned—and as the tools had been recovered, the matter was passed over, with a threat of discharge in case the offense was repeated. Fortunate it was, however, that José García was many miles away—for the Mexicans, who had gathered in sympathy about their friend, soon settled on him as the author of this outrage, and each man strove to outdo his neighbor in fiendish cruelty as he pictured the vengeance he would inflict upon the betrayer at the earliest opportunity. Then, still pouring threats upon him, they gradually dispersed.

The new year brought joy to Carmelita. Juan had written. Good fortune was attending him, and he had added twenty-five dollars to his treasured hoard. He would come soon, and she must make ready for the wedding. The grading and construction work on which he was engaged would last a long time—a year, perhaps, and they would go back there. He had found a whitewashed cottage near by which he could secure for a small rental. They could live there till the job was finished, and then, if she cared not to journey away in a box car, perhaps he could find work among the rancheros. Let the future take care of that! The house

was small, no larger than a car, but there were two rooms. Already he had bought some furniture. Soon he would come for her, so let her make ready.

Maria rejoiced fully as much as her daughter. Though she had championed the cause of José, he had turned traitor—probably in the hope of procuring immunity for his own thefts by informing the police on others—and she was now ready to believe that she had never for a moment considered him in the light of a son-in-law. Juan was a better man, and Carmelita would be no pauper. The mother's heart swelled with pride in anticipation of the future glory of Carmelita Lopez.

The fruit season had long since passed, and though the girl had found work in a garment-making shop, she now gave it up and spent her time like other prospective brides in planning and selecting the necessary outfit. She must have a white dress—such as gringo brides wore—in which to be married, and as money was far from plentiful in the Blanco household, it took much contriving and scheming to get together a suitable wardrobe. But she accomplished the task, and serenely awaited her lover, who would come on the following week.

José García heard of the wedding preparations, for the girl had many friends among the Mexican colony, and all the women were discussing the approaching event. He had not been seen at the railroad yards since the thefts, for it had come to his knowledge that every peon therein counted him a personal enemy. But the news of the coming marriage incensed him, for he felt that his vengeance was not complete. The misfortunes which had come to the Blancos had not touched the girl except indirectly.

Carmelita, anxious to keep in touch with Giuseppa, who read and wrote her letters, still attended the night school, though she had lost all interest in the pursuit of learning. Of what use would it be to her once she was married to her lover, and so beyond the necessity of writing to him? And José, who had strange ways of finding out

all that went on in the railway camp, knew that she still kept up her attendance. He also learned that the Italian girl seldom went all the way home with her. They parted at a corner near the yards, and from there the Mexican walked alone. The street she traversed had few houses, and in one place there was a high board fence that cast a dark shadow.

Cunningly he laid the trap. He would crouch in the shadow till she was within reach. Then he would spring out with his knife. He went carefully over the route by daylight, choosing an hour when all the laborers who knew him would be at work, and mapped out a line of retreat. Only he must wait till there was a full moon, for the street was but dimly lighted, and he must make no mistake, and in the darkness attack some unknown woman. On the following Wednesday evening there would be a bright moon, and he would be off duty.

On the appointed evening, then, the jealous Mexican took his place in the shadow of the board fence. Earlier in the evening, from a distant point of vantage, he had seen the girl leave her home and join her friend at the usual corner, and was at his post a half hour before the school closed that he might run no risks of her leaving early and so escaping him. Several people passed, but none spied him, for he had removed his cuffs and covered his collar and shirt front with a dark handkerchief, and tied another over the lower part of his face. Clad in a black suit, with a black hat pulled low over his brows, he was invisible to all but the keenest eyes.

After what seemed a long time he cautiously struck a match, making sure no one was in sight, and consulted his watch. School was out; she would be coming soon. Hastily he blew out the light and drew out his knife. A woman was approaching, timorously walking in the middle of the street. He braced himself for a spring; but no, the woman was tall and gray-haired—a gringo lady taking a short cut on her way to the passenger station. He must be careful.

Five minutes passed. Another woman was approaching. Yes, it was Carmelita; just her height, dark-haired, and walking with her springy step. She, too, was keeping to the middle of the street, and as far away as possible from the dark shadows. Stealthily he crept forward, almost to the edge of the shadow. When she had passed, he would leap. Thus she would not see him till he was upon her, and would have no time to give an alarm. He timed his leap carefully, but his pains went for naught, for suddenly Carmelita stopped short in her tracks. A man had turned into the street, and she had halted, undecided whether to go ahead or turn and flee. At the same instant José sprang into the light. Panic-stricken, she screamed and started to run, but the high heel of her fashionable shoe turned, and she fell forward on her face.

CHAPTER XI.

A RUSH FROM THE DARK.

IN a single bound José was at her side, his knife held ready, not to kill, but to disfigure the girl for life so that no one else should have the pleasure of gazing upon the beauty which he was forbidden to enjoy. But suddenly a hand shot out of the shadows and an iron grip descended on his wrist. Unseen and unheard by Garcia in the confusion, the other man had covered the short distance between them. In vain Garcia strove to free himself from the sinewy arms that gripped him. He was taller and heavier than his opponent, but the latter's muscles were hard, and, try as he might, José could not shake off that relentless grip.

Carmelita scrambled to her feet and fled to her car home. Breathlessly, she burst into the group about the door.

"A man, he try to kill me," she gasped, "and another man come, and they fight. In the street around the corner."

As one man, the peons rushed across the yards and found José struggling feebly in the grasp of Juan Lopez.

"Bring him to the yards, let him ex-

plain this if he can," said Pedro decisively. Crestfallen, with all his suave politeness knocked out of him, José was dragged along to where Carmelita was sobbing on her mother's shoulder. Hysterically, she cast herself into Juan's arms as soon as it was made plain to her that he had been her rescuer. He had arrived from the south that evening, and, since he had not written the exact date, had found his sweetheart gone to the evening school. He would have started in search of her, but Maria prevailed upon him to wait. The girl could not leave till the others left without making much disturbance, and he must have a bit to eat and a glass of wine, and tell them all his plans. So reluctantly he sat down and ate and drank, describing between morsels the home he had prepared for his bride.

At last Pedro had looked at his battered watch. Yes, it was almost time the girl came home. Juan was on his feet in an instant; he would go and meet her. Once Maria would have objected, but this time she had merely nodded and told him which street to take. He was faithful and could be trusted; the two were to be married in a few days, and it would give them much joy to be alone for ten minutes. So he had hastened on his way toward the dark corner, where in the shadow of the high fence, José Garcia, knife in hand, crouched in wait for the girl who had scorned him.

"It is not for us to judge this man," said her father; "gladly would I knife him, but should I do so, I would be sent to prison for many years. We must call the police and they will deal with him."

At mention of the police, José completely wilted. Perhaps the tale that he had other troubles with the police had been true, and he knew it would go hard with him in the present case. At any rate, he knew that to lay violent hands on a young girl was a crime severely punished by gringo laws, and before his cowering vision loomed the gray wall of San Quentin.

Abjectly he cast himself at Pedro's

feet. "Spare me, spare me!" he begged. "Have mercy! I will confess all. Spare me, and I will leave you in peace, you and all your household! I swear it! Have mercy! On my knees I implore you!"

Blanco hesitated. He had heard that, in murder trials, the witnesses who are poor and cannot furnish heavy bail bonds for their appearance at court are often imprisoned. He had known of men who had been so confined. This was not a murder, but it was akin to it, and not only he but Carmelita would be witnesses. He dreaded to think of her in jail, or, if she escaped that fate, she would surely have to testify in court, and he shrank at the very thought.

"Confess all that you have done, with these men as witnesses, and we will not call the police, nor will we kill you."

Had José not been frightened out of his wits he would have tried to drive a sharp bargain with his captors, but such was his perturbation that he accepted Pedro's offer, without questioning what lay beneath it. Humbly he poured out his confession. He had hired another laborer to steal tools and hide them where the blame would fall upon Blanco. He had not meant to kill the girl, only to scratch her a little. But José retained sufficient vanity to conceal the real reason for his enmity. Not for worlds would he have the report go abroad that the daughter of a poor railroad peon had laughed him to scorn. So, in answer to Pedro's indignant demand to know the cause of so much persecution, he lied.

"It was because I hated you, all of you. You listened to those who slandered me, and repeated their tales. I vowed to be revenged."

Blanco was too incensed to question the probability of the explanation. He glared at the captive with threatening eyes, while a cruel smile played about his lips.

"You have had your revenge," he said, with menacing politeness; "now I shall have mine."

"But you promised that I should go free," José gasped in sudden terror.

"I promised not to call the police, and not to kill you, and that promise shall be kept. Furthermore, you shall go free—after a time." He turned to the other men, who had murmured at his seeming mercy. "Get whips, clubs, sticks! We will give this dog a beating, a terrible beating, one that he will remember long. Yes, a dog he is—no, he is beneath a dog, for a dog bites not the hand that feeds and pets him."

The group, with the exception of two brawny peons who held José securely in their grasp, dispersed and went in search of weapons, returning in a few minutes with a varied collection of clubs and pieces of railroad iron. Pedro gave his instructions. José was not to be struck on the head—such a blow might kill him—but his back and shoulders were fair targets. All would have a chance at the culprit, but the honor of striking the first blow belonged to him. So speaking, he selected a flexible rod that would strike a fearful blow, and stepped forward with his arm upraised.

But Juan caught his hand. As the promised husband of the girl, it was for him to avenge her wrongs. Therefore the first blow should be his. Pedro was in no mood to surrender the position he had taken, and a spirited debate followed. José, cowering in the center of the circle of peons, felt the grip of his guards relax as they listened to the wrangling between the two contestants. With a sudden twist he freed himself from their clutches, and darted toward a narrow gap in the ring. Pedro, his right hand still grasping the rod, saw the move, and with terrific force he brought the weapon down upon Garcia's unprotected back. Though Pedro got in the first blow, Juan Lopez delivered an able second. The laborers were all too stupefied to stop the fugitive, but they delayed his progress for a few seconds as he pushed his way through them, and Lopez was able to plant the toe of his heavy shoe where long usage has determined it to have a maximum effectiveness. The kick nearly upset Garcia, but he recovered his balance and fled across the tracks toward the lighted streets.

CHAPTER XII.

NOT ON HIS PROGRAM.

THE laborers followed swiftly in the path of the traitor, each intent on administering at least one blow, and the majority succeeded. But he was a swift runner, and his pursuers, in their eagerness to strike, impeded each other's progress, so that by the time he reached the lighted streets he was several rods ahead. He raced around a corner and swung over a high board fence into a garden. A bulldog, aroused from his slumbers, rushed at the intruder, but he gained the opposite fence, and, swinging over, dropped exhausted behind a sheltering hedge of geraniums.

The laborers, turning the corner behind him, halted in confusion at sight of the empty street, then the growls of the enraged bulldog indicated the way he had gone. But they hardly cared to follow. People in the neighboring houses were being aroused by the commotion. While they were debating what further course to pursue, one of the men hissed a warning. Crossing the street less than a block away was a policeman. He was approaching rapidly and eyed them suspiciously. Abruptly ceasing their chatter, they turned and retraced their steps back to the railroad yards. The arm of the law watched them out of sight and then resumed his beat. There was nothing suspicious about a gang of greasers jabbering together.

Half an hour later José Garcia, bruised and aching in every limb and muscle, crept painfully from his hiding place and, with a wary eye for his late pursuers, stealthily made his way to a trolley line. Getting on a car that connected with the San Francisco ferry trains, he passed forever out of the life of Carmelita.

The Blancos talked long with Juan that night, but at last Pedro called a halt. It was late, and there would be ample time for the discussion of wedding plans on the morrow. But in the morning, there was an interruption. A

freight engine backed into the siding where stood the laborers' box cars, and once more Blanco received a gruff order to pile his goods on board.

On this occasion, Pedro did not display his usual anger at the summons; for, to tell the truth, he was secretly pleased to go elsewhere. Though Garcia had solemnly sworn to leave him in peace, Pedro had little faith in his promises, and it would be a relief to be transported far beyond the reach of this vindictive enemy. And he could not be accused of running away, for as things stood, did he not go as a victor? Then, too, he gathered that their destination was southward, and Juan lived to the south. Perhaps they might be stationed within a day's journey of each other.

Since they were traveling in the direction of his home, Juan elected to ride with them, and as the train sped southward through mile after mile of fair orchard lands now bare and leafless for the most part, he and Carmelita stood at the tiny window in an ecstasy of happiness. This was their bridal trip, at the end of which was the new home awaiting them. And when there burst upon their vision an almond grove in all its marvelous rose-pink beauty, the girl cried aloud in sheer delight.

"It is an omen," she whispered to her lover. "See, the other trees are bare, but this blooms for us alone. Such will our happiness be, fairer and sweeter than all else."

All day they rode, and the following night, but when morning dawned, Juan, gazing from a car window, gave a glad cry of recognition. He had identified certain landmarks by which he knew that he was nearing the vicinity of his home. Yes, the stream they were crossing was the same, and the hills in the distance were familiar objects. If only the car might halt near by! Then he and his sweetheart could be married on Sunday by the good padre of the little church that fronted the plaza in the hamlet with the gringo name he had never learned to speak, though he had been there many weeks.

And the wish came true, for, after long delays and tiresome switchings, the car was shunted into the very sidetrack where stood the car which had been Juan's home before he secured the tiny cottage. In a frenzy of joy he clasped his sweetheart in his arms, and not even Maria had a word of censure for the happy pair.

Pedro was inclined to give the credit of this miracle to the directors of the railroad—the good, kind, beneficent, noble-hearted men in authority over him. They were all caballeros, and worthy of all honor. Never again would he be envious of the grand private car in which they rode to and fro over the line. They were worthy of such gifts of Heaven! Nay, if they but had their just deserts, they would be riding in cars of solid gold, studded with diamonds and rubies as large as oranges! What if at times they did separate friends and lovers? It was only to test them and to make more sweet their reunion. And though they were sometimes impolite, should they be censured because their parents had been negligent in their duty and failed to train them in courtesy? He craved pardon for all the evil things he had spoken against the railroad and its directors.

Hardly had the car come to a stop before they alighted, all eager to see the home which Juan had prepared for his bride. Lopez proudly led the way to a tiny cottage not far from the railroad tracks. It was a mean little shack with a stovepipe protruding from the roof, but to the Blancos it was almost a mansion, and they all gave a gasp of astonishment when Juan unlocked the door and bade them enter. For the house contained furniture—grand gringo furniture. There had been an auction of secondhand household furnishings in the village, and Juan had been able to secure a varied assortment for a small sum. In awe his guests gazed upon the polished stove, the armchair—its cushions a little faded, but still beautiful—the scarred but unbroken table.

But the climax of their wonder came

when Lopez threw open the door which led to the tiny bedroom. Almost filling it was a white enamel bedstead, and crowded into the remaining space was a bureau with a mirror. What if the enamel was flecked off in a few spots, and there were a few scratches on the varnish of the bureau? The Blancos heeded not such trifling imperfections! And there were curtains at the two windows of the shack—filmy muslin curtains such as the gringos had in their houses. They caught their breaths at the magnificence of it all, while Maria's heart swelled with maternal pride at the grandeur of the house that was to be her daughter's home.

The children soon tired of household glories, and ran away seeking fresh scenes and playmates, but the others tarried; and Juan, mindful of the demands of hospitality, invited them to partake of a meal, and brought forth

the provisions with which he had stocked his larder. Maria, anxious to try the shining stove, promptly rolled up her sleeves and set to work, and in a short time food was on the table. There were not enough chairs, but Juan found some boxes, so all sat down and ate.

It was after sunset before Maria marshaled her forces to return to her car home. At peace with all the world, she and Pedro plodded homeward, while behind them the lovers walked hand in hand. Only once did they speak—when Juan pointed out the little church with the gilded cross where the good padre, to whom he confessed his sins and who knew all about his romance, would marry them on Sunday morning. Silently they walked beneath the stars of the glorious California heavens along the fairest of all pathways—the road home.

A Monkey Coat of Arms

MOST of the wild animals have a place in heraldry, and many strange and impossible creatures, such as griffins, dragons, and unicorns, have been invented as emblems of daring and valor. But the donkey and the monkey have not been so used, except in one instance where the monkey has been admitted to the ranks of titled nobility.

On the Leinster coat of arms are three monkeys standing, with plain collars, and chained: motto, "Crom-a-boo"—"To Victory." This is the only coat of arms on record that has ever borne a monkey in the design. It was adopted by John Fitzthomas Fitzgerald in 1316 for romantic reasons.

While this Earl of Leinster was an infant he was in the castle of Woodstock. The castle caught fire. In the confusion the child was forgotten, and when the family and servants remembered him, and started a search, they found the nursery in ruins. But on one of the towers was a large ape, a pet of the family, carefully holding the young earl in its arms. The animal, with extraordinary intelligence, had crawled through the smoke, rescued the baby, and carried it to the top of the tower.

When the earl had grown to manhood, he discarded the family coat of arms and adopted the monkeys for his crest, and they have been retained to this day. Wherever you find the tomb of a Fitzgerald you will see the monkeys at the feet of the effigy or under the inscription.

Plenty of It

THE father of a Denver bride presented his son-in-law with eighty thousand head of cattle.

"Papa, dear," exclaimed his daughter, fresh from an Eastern college, when she heard of it, "that was so kind of you. Charley's awfully fond of ox-tail soup."

A Tango

By
Blair Jaekel.

Eclipse



FOR ten years Orlando McCloskey had held forth as the county's only master in the art of Terpsichore in a "suite of sumptuous apartments"—the exact phrasing of his own weekly reader in the *Pamona Bugle*—above the Golden Eagle Clothing Hall at the corner of Fourth Street and Railroad Avenue. In those ten years he had popularized the waltz, the two-step, and the polka among the Pamonans, and his life work had not been without recompense. In part payment for his weekly board he had seen Katy Shuster, daughter of the house, develop under his tutelage from an ungainly wallflower into a graceful and popular county-seat *débutante*, hopelessly stage-struck.

When the Boston and the barn dance swooped upon Pamona, Professor McCloskey held out defiantly for a number of days, but the public demanded initiation into the mystic mazes of the newfangled steps, and Orlando was not altogether impervious—not in those remote days, at least—to the law of supply and demand. The death knell of the old-fashioned waltz was sounded, and Orlando turned from its champion to its executioner. But now a grotesque hybrid termed the turkey trot had filtered through its confines in Frisco. Some frivolous person af-

flicted with what Orlando called a "diseased conception of grace" brought the turkey trot to Pamona upon her return from a visit to the State capital. Almost immediately Pamona became obsessed with the idea that it ought to turkey trot, and whereas Orlando's business had fallen off somewhat owing to the gentle demise of the Boston and the barn dance, the stairs that led to his apartments suddenly became congested with the youth, and what beauty there was, of Pamona beseeching the master to ameliorate their sufferings.

"But where is my art?" Professor Orlando McCloskey would exclaim, ranting up and down the room until he rattled the change out of the noisy cash carriers in the Clothing Hall below. "Where is my art? Do you think I am going to sacrifice my art for a lot of tom-fool contortions that mean nothing? No—multiplied by ten thousand! I'll go to the city first and get a job as a cigar sign."

With this declaration fresh from his lips, he would don a clean dickey and seek the sheltered seclusion of the Shuster boarding-house porch. It was here one evening after supper that Katy Shuster caught Orlando alone, using a rocking-chair furiously. She planted herself on the step at his feet.

"What's the matter lately, profes-

sor?" she said. "You seem all cut up about something."

"I am," Orlando admitted, in a burst of confidence. "It's this infernal turkey-trot and tango business."

"Can't you do it?" queried Katy. "It's awfully simple."

"It's simply awful, that's what it is," Orlando asserted; "and I'll be joe-jiggered if I'll teach it. The whole town has gone plumb crazy. Never saw the folks take up a thing so. I'll bet if there was one there were fifteen females up in my place this afternoon begging me to teach them the tango."

"That's encouraging. Business is picking up."

"It's picking up if I wanted to pick it, but the turkey trot and the tango are not art," declared the professor, "and I don't propose to waste my time teaching them. It's nothing but a prolonged hopping around the room accompanied by music and clinched to a female. It'll die out in two months, same as the Boston and the barn dance; now, you see if it doesn't."

"But if it makes money for you," Katy argued, "what do you care what it looks like? What's your best excuse for not teaching it?"

"Because I'm Irish," Orlando replied curtly.

"Nobody would suspect it." Katy could be as sarcastic as the next one when she wanted to.

"And when I set my foot down on something," Orlando continued, "all the money to John D.'s credit couldn't make me raise it."

Katy changed her position on the step for fear of having her fingers tramped on.

"Well," she said vehemently, "besides being Irish, you're foolish. You're an out-and-out idiot; that's *my* opinion."

"Be that as it may," said the professor.

Silence for six seconds, which seemed six hours. The evening had progressed into the last stages of twilight.

Orlando broke the spell. "And as if this tango business wasn't enough to make a fellow blue, I heard to-day

that the sweetest little girl in seven States was going to leave town to go on the stage."

It was well that darkness had enveloped the sole occupants of the Shuster porch. "I'd just like to know who told you," said Katy, blushing, as she acknowledged her charms.

"A little bird," replied Orlando. "You know they're awful gossipy sometimes, those birds. They tell all they know—to their friends. Anything personal in my remark? Guilty or not guilty?"

Katy pleaded guilty in the first degree.

Then sly Cupid marked out a ring on the Shuster front porch. Each evening for a week he first took testimony, and later, when night had stolen silently upon the town and the number of passers-by had dwindled to an occasional homegoer, he undertook to referee the most ardent love match that ever broke even out of respect for the Marquis of Queensbury. Each entreaty to stay in Pamona was parried artfully. She crossed her heart and vowed that the minute she could decide whether to succeed Julia Marlowe as an exponent of Shakespeare, or to allow herself to be numbered among the stars that form Belasco's great dipper—within a couple of months, at the most—she would have Orlando come and sit in the front row at each performance and count the baskets of flowers handed over the footlights to her at the eleventh curtain call.

In a week's time Katy left, under protest from everybody, and the boarding house seemed like a morgue to Orlando. He grieved and peevish considerably more than was good for his physical well-being. His feet lost their flexibility.

II.

TWO long months went by slowly, and no word had come from Katy telling what the managers had said about her acting. Mrs. Shuster was worried, likewise Orlando. But the latter comforted the fond parent with the fact that the arduous duties of the

stage, together with superintending her maids and choosing the color of her limousine to match her eyes, left Katy little or no time for letter writing.

Sunday mornings Orlando spent his time vibrating between the front porches of what intimate friends he had left after he had issued his ultimatum about teaching the tango, and reading with much vigor the theatrical page of whatever metropolitan newspaper he found thereon, expecting to find in each instance some photographic clew to Katy's triumph.

Another month without news found Orlando utterly disheartened, and with his cup of despair all but drained to the dregs. A brief change of scene, he thought, might help him to forget. And so the following Friday evening we see him alone in the city's human whirlpool, aimlessly approaching the Rain-bow Theater in search of diversion.

The attractions as set forth on the three sheets at the entrance appealed to him no less than the price, and before he realized it he was standing in line at the ticket window with one hand on his watch and the other cautiously embracing his pocketbook.

Riotous horseplay prevailed throughout the performance. Between the acts the usual "olio" set forth individually the talent of the principals of the company, and allowed the chorus—"a galaxy of bewitching brunettes"—to make a complete change of costume and the stage hands to strike the Parisian café "set" without interrupting the interest of the audience.

The last act ended with a dazzle of lights and tights and spangles. The orchestra burst into a crescendo of approximate melody, for, as was fully intended before the curtain rose, the titled party, traveling incognito as an insolvent street troubadour with an ape and an organ, had courted successfully the rich American widow, and all were to live as happily as possible until the next performance.

The curtain fell and rose again, showing the same café scene in the Boulevard Michel, but as devoid of its equipment of light-hearted femininity

as if the hour had been ten a. m. Appeared the stage manager, still appareled as an obsequious head waiter, to announce that the dancing contest was about to commence.

On Friday nights the management of the Bijou—like the management of other houses of its ilk—was wont to depart from the ethics in vogue in the higher-priced halls of the drama, and, swinging wide the doors of restraint at the close of the performance, it encouraged the amateur to histrionic effort. Usually this would assume the form of a pure and simple "amateur night," when embryonic songsters and comedians would receive either the subtle and none too gentle hook, administered from the prompter's position in the wings, or the shower of small coins from the audience, according to the merit of their stunt.

On this particular Friday evening, however, a flaming poster apprised the passing public that a waltzing contest was in order. Ten members of that famous and widely advertised "galaxy of bewitching brunettes"—most of whom were blondes—would be paired off, subdivided, and apportioned among the first ten dashing young male members of the audience that set foot upon the stage after the gong struck. As the poster declared, the contest would consist of waltzing. No by-product of the waltz known from the Barbary Coast to Calle Lavallo would be barred. The more contortions, the more likelihood of winning the contest. Turkey trot, aéroplane, tango, grapevine, Castle trot, kitchen sink—all were to be encouraged and abetted. So read the poster.

When Orlando stood uncovered, a halo of straw-colored hair was seen to circumvent a steadily increasing bald spot. He wore an unruly red mustache that compelled him to imbibe his morning coffee from a cup designed to keep his lip decoration dry. He liked a touch of green in his cravats, his clothes were redolent of musk, the tuberose was his favorite flower, and the lapis lazuli his birthstone.

The stage manager announced that first he would need ten gentlemen from

the audience with which to torture the ten members of the beauty chorus, already emerging in feathers and war paint from the wings. They would find steps leading to the stage just behind the bass-viol player. A solid-silver manicure set—made in Germany—would constitute the prize to be given to the winning lady, and her gentleman ally would receive as many as three cheers and the approbation of the audience.

Orlando's feet began to itch.

Four hardened participators in amateur nights arose simultaneously from the audience, grinned darkly at their less experienced fellows, and hurried upon the stage. The stage manager executed a few verbal acrobatics, and three more from the audience responded, taking their places in line opposite the bevy of chorus belles.

And then there arose from the third row, center, a lanky, elongated party with a menacing red mustache, a touch of green in his cravat, and redolent of musk. He bumped the knees of several seat occupants while attaining the aisle, made his way in the direction of the bass-viol player, and mounted the steps to the stage. The audience chuckled and nudged each other; but it fazed not Orlando. He took his place in line with the other heroes, and calmly awaited the arrival of the remaining two necessary to complete the decimo dancing specialty. These were forthcoming in short order, and the stage manager announced stentoriously that the contest was on, the girls to select their partners and dance their turns in priority to their affiliations with the company. Each pair would have the stage for a period of three minutes, and the prize would be awarded upon the basis of applause which each pair received.

III.

THE uncertainties of a Friday night at the Rainbow are not the least of its flavor. Suppose, for example, that Orlando had not been the last to be chosen. If he had been good looking he might have been first. Suppose,

again, that the turkey trot and the tango and the kitchen sink, and all the rest, with their modulations and deviations, had not seeped through the dance halls along the Barbary Coast, to be exploited in the East as something new and interesting in the art of Terpsichore. Then where would the story be?

Finally, suppose that Hortensia van Pollard, as the name read on the program, had not been the last to join the "galaxy of bewitching brunettes," and therefore compelled to accept the red-mustached Orlando as her dancing partner. Then what? But all these things *did* happen.

The first nine pairs of dancers executed as many different species of the tango and the turkey trot with much vim and determination. They danced as they had never danced before, and some of them danced—so the audience hoped—as they would never dance again. Some provoked laughter, some thunderous applause, some invited the "hook." An amateur-night audience has no favorites. It stays to be pleased. Pavlowa herself would be hissed off the stage if she failed to satisfy.

And then, as if to plague the last pair, the orchestra—and you never could tell what that Rainbow orchestra would do when something on the stage appealed to the leader's sense of humor—the orchestra stopped suddenly its rampagous ragtime, and struck up "The Blue Danube." The audience had little faith in what was to follow, so it began to chuckle and nudge itself again.

Before the orchestra had played eight bars both it and the audience forgot Orlando's make-up. They saw only the ease and grace of the pair dancing. They forgot the turkey trot, and looked with admiration at the old-fashioned waltz danced as it should be danced, but as it never had been danced before within the four walls of this temple of burlesque. The experience was so ancient that it was new. They viewed the waltz in its second childhood.

The dancers glided up and down stage, left and right, eschewing any suggestiveness of the tango as if by prearranged consent. They seemed the

incarnation of the tempo, and for the orchestra to have changed from the simple waltz, commenced in ridicule, would have been a sacrilege.

Their three minutes was up, but still the orchestra fingered "The Blue Danube" with measured rhythm. After five minutes, the audience, unable longer to contain its enthusiasm, burst into applause, which swelled in volume until the orchestra could scarcely be heard. Up in the gallery they whistled and stamped upon the floor. Finally the musicians gave up in sheer recognition of the survival of the fittest.

The stage manager led each pair of dancers to the footlights, and allowed the audience to make its final decision by the process of elimination. When, at the last, Orlando and his partner were escorted down stage, the audience stood upon its feet and howled. The old temple of burlesque had not seen such a demonstration in years.

Orlando was waiting for Hortensia at the stage door. After half an hour she appeared in street costume, the manicure set in its green, cloth-covered case tucked under one arm; and he, philanderer that he was, proposed that they go across the street to Liebermann's and have a little beer and shellfish.

"I never thought you'd come down to horseplay burlesque, Katy," said Orlando, when they were seated at a small table in one corner of the room, and the Hungarian quartet had tuned up for the after-theater crowd.

"I never thought so, either," said Katy—for Katy, you have already guessed, happened to be her Christian name. "But this theatrical game is a pretty tough proposition. It's a kind of a case of now-I've-got-you-now-I-let-you-go-again."

She reached for the saltcellar, and Orlando, very slyly, very gently, enveloped not only the saltcellar but her hand, too, in both of his—a trick quite commonly practiced in Liebermann's after the theater.

"Let's go home, Katy," he said, "and make a little call on Squire Berkstressor to-morrow evening."

"Only on one condition," answered the thrifty Katy, aiming her lobster fork playfully at her table companion.

And in less than one week, had you strayed or stolen into Pamona, you might have found the following legend neatly scrolled upon the frosted glass door of the sumptuous apartments above the Golden Eagle Clothing Hall: "Professor and Mrs. Orlando McCloskey, Dancing Academy."

A Gentle Hint

LADY: "And you escaped from the wreck?"

Indigent Seaman: "Yes, mum."

Lady: "How did you feel when the waves broke over you?"

Seaman: "Wet, mum, werry wet; but now, mum, I feels dry—werry dry."

There Are Some Like That

DO you think that Skinner can make a living out there in Australia?"

"Make a living! Why, he'd make a living on a rock in the middle of the ocean if there was another man on the rock."

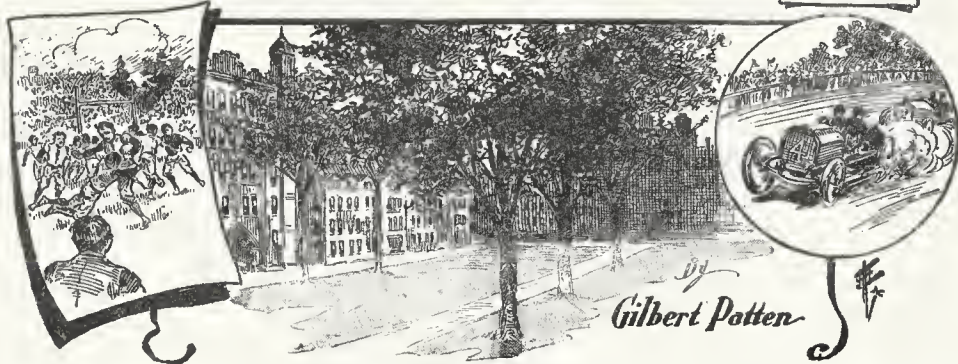
And Then What?

THE pompous woman became acrimonious: "Do you call yourself a lady's maid?" she cried.

"I used to, ma'am," replied the servant, "before I worked for you."

On College Battlefields-

A Boltwood
of Yale
Story



CHAPTER I.

DIVIDED DUTY.

SIXTY minutes before the race for the Spalding Cup was to begin a huge gray roadster whirled up to the Keating encampment, and a tall, spare man in a linen duster sprang to the ground with the agility of one twenty years younger. He was recognized instantly as Cyrus Keating, president and chief stockholder of the Keating Motor Car Company.

A small group of employees fell back respectfully as the new arrival strode toward the open door of the garage, through which the racer, stripped to ungainly ugliness, could be seen with two helpers working over it. In leather coat and skating cap, his goggles pushed up on his forehead, a clean-looking, clear-eyed, firm-jawed young man stood a few feet away, frowning at an open telegram held in his hand.

"Good morning, Roger," called Keating, as he entered. "Danforth tells me you've had the car out for a last whirl over the course."

With a slight start, Roger Boltwood lifted his eyes from the yellow sheet of paper to the face of his employer and benefactor. He was unusually pale, and at the corners of his mouth there

appeared a few lines expressive of pain.

"Yes, sir," he answered. "I've just come in."

"Anything wrong? You told me last night that everything was all right."

"I'm having the spare tires shifted a bit, so that they can be handled more quickly. Otherwise everything is as right as it possibly can be—that is, with the car."

"With the car!" echoed Keating, feeling a twinge of apprehension. "Do you mean to say there's anything wrong with you? You look worried—upset. You aren't sick, or anything like that?"

Boltwood hesitated before replying. "I'm upset a bit," he admitted slowly. "I'm sorry, but I can't help being. I feel like a murderer!"

"Hey? What do you mean, Roger? Good Lord! I hope you're not going into the race with anything on your mind but the idea of winning."

"There will be nothing else on my mind when I start in the race," was the assurance; "and I shall win if it's in me to do so. I believe it's in the car, Mr. Keating."

The manufacturer of the Keating car drew a breath of relief. "But what's the trouble? Tell me. Something is wrong."

"Read that," said Roger, passing over the telegram.

Keating's stubby mustache bristled as he saw the words on the yellow sheet:

Go ahead, my son, and drive the last nail into the coffin of your father's business. It is quite likely the funeral of the business will follow mine, for the doctors say the valves and pipes of my heart are rusty and plugged. Another defeat by Keating is pretty sure to put them out of commission.

HENRY D. BOLTWOOD.

"That was waiting for me here when I got in," explained the young racing driver, as Cyrus Keating looked up at him. "You can see that it was pretty sure to jar me some. And, knowing that my father is liable to drop dead from valvular heart trouble any minute, you understand why I feel like a murderer."

Cyrus Keating wrinkled his face until it was a mass of furrows. For a moment he seemed at a loss to find words. "Yes," he said finally. "I understand. I realize the position you're in, my boy, but last night you assured me that you were ready to——"

"I'm ready now, Mr. Keating. I'm not a quitter, and I have an agreement with you, the conditions of which are fully known to my father. I owe you more than I can ever repay. It was you who made it possible for me to return to Yale after the quarrel between my father and myself a little more than a year ago. You gave me a chance to drive the best car in the Traymore Cup Race, and the best car won. The money you paid me carried me back to college. The money you've loaned me since has made it possible for me to go on with my course. Don't think for a moment, sir, that I've any intention of breaking my agreement to drive for you. My father knows it. Let me add again the assurance that nothing—not even this message from him—will prevent me from driving to win to-day if I've got the goods to deliver."

"I believe it, Roger!" cried Keating, grasping his hand with a nervous movement. "You're square as a brick, and your word is as good as the iron-bound

contract of any other man. There are plenty of other drivers I could get. They have been dogging me and begging for a chance. Some of them are cracks, too. Why, only last night Leon Zeigler tackled me. Zeigler hasn't put his hand to the wheel of a racer for a year—promised his wife he'd never drive again after going through the fence at Ascot Park and cutting down a tree. But he's lost his money, what little he'd saved. His wife is dying in a hospital. There's no chance for her to recover, they say. He wants to make a stake and do it quickly, so that he can take care of her as she should be cared for. Zeigler has no superior as a driver. He said he was certain he could win with the Keating."

"And so he could," agreed Boltwood. "My father thinks the Comet has a chance, but he's superstitious, and he believes that chance is made slim by the fact that his son is to pilot the Keating. I had a talk with him yesterday. 'Roger,' he said, 'if the Comet is beaten to-morrow, you'll do it. We've got a better car than we had last year, and we ought to beat the Keating.' It's a foolish whim, perhaps, but that's the way my father feels. He believes in me. He believes in the Boltwood luck, which he fancies will stick to me in the race. He's a sick man, and sick men get such whims."

As he listened, the face of Cyrus Keating depicted varying emotions, the least of which was regret. He had learned to respect, admire, and trust this young man, the son of a business rival for whom he had long entertained an intense antipathy. The seed of affection, unconsciously planted in his heart by Roger Boltwood, had sprouted and flourished. The plant had been fertilized by the failures of his own son, Tom, who had disappointed him in a hundred ways.

"Let's step outside, Roger," said the older man suddenly, as he produced a handkerchief and mopped his face. "The air's stuffy in here, and it smells of gas and oil."

Boltwood lingered a moment to give the helpers a word of advice about the

readjustment of the spare tires, then followed his employer into the open air. A short distance from the garage, Keating halted, scowling at the ground, while he still mopped his face with the handkerchief. Roger waited for him to speak again.

"For three years," said the president of the Keating Motor Car Company, "the struggle between your father and myself has been bitter. I've played the game fair and square in a business way. I've never resorted to misstatements, underhand methods, or crooked dealing of any sort. I regret that as much cannot be said for the Comet Company. Whether or not your father knew about it, Jasper Christy, treasurer of the concern, entered into a dirty deal with Prowley, who was engaged to drive the Keating in the Traymore Cup Race last year. Prowley's letter accepting Christy's bribe to throw the race is still in my possession, and never again as long as he lives can Prowley drive in a race on American soil. Unfortunately, Christy was not committed by that letter to an extent which enabled me to put him where he belongs, behind prison bars. Of course, he denied ever making a proposition to Prowley.

"With all sincerity I maintain that I'm not malicious or bitterly revengeful. Some months ago I made a proposition to Henry Boltwood. I offered to let up in the fight against him if he would accede to one request. I even proposed to divide certain territories, to withdraw from active operations in a number of Western States if the Comet Company would withdraw from a like number of Eastern States. My terms were that Christy should be thrown out bodily from the Comet Motor Car Company. Had these terms been accepted, the territory I was willing to yield should have shown sufficient sales for the Comet to encourage the financial backing of the Great Northern Lubricant Company. But your father refused to meet me. It was like business suicide on his part. He claimed that the territory I asked for was three or four times as valuable as that which I was ready to concede to his concern.

Even if this were true, having the whip hand as we did, he was in no position to demand a further concession or to parley over my offer. So you can see, Roger, how it is that I am disposed to absolve myself of blame. I've vowed to get Christy's scalp, and if your father insists that his shall go with it I can't help that."

Roger Boltwood nodded. "I think I appreciate the situation, Mr. Keating; I'm sure I understand your position. But isn't it possible that you don't understand the position of my father? Christy has grafted himself so solidly upon the Comet Company that he can't be cut off without destroying the whole concern. Even if my father was disposed to yield to your demand, he could find no way to oust the company's treasurer. There's no question in my mind about this being the reason why he declined to meet you."

"He's a fighter—a bull-headed man who never gives up," said Keating. "That's his boast. You've got a lot of his bulldog spirit, Roger, but I'm glad to say it's tempered with good sense. Now, I'm rather stuffy myself, but the message which you showed me a short time ago gave me a jolt. The whole automobile world knows of the fight between our concerns. It's waiting to see the Comet Company go under. Outside of a very few persons, however, hardly any one understands the relationship between you and me. I'm aware that I've been condemned by many people for enticing you away and turning you against your father. That's something I never did, but outsiders don't know it. Should you drive a Keating to victory to-day, and the assured downfall of the Comet people follow, I'm bound to be censured by those who don't understand.

"Up to a few minutes ago I had no idea of altering my plans in the slightest. But when I saw how hard that message from your father hit you I confess I wavered. If you drive for me your father never will get over it. Whether he lives a day or a year, or longer, he'll always feel that you, his only son, turned against him and helped

to crush him in a most unfilial manner."

He dropped a hand on the younger man's shoulder. "Roger, I'm going to release you from our agreement. I'll put Zeigler on the Keating. I can find him in less than ten minutes. Drive the Comet to-day, and drive it with all the skill you possess. Zeigler will be instructed to win, and he will have the car to do it. It's possible that you may finish second, and that might encourage the Great Northern Lubricant Company to furnish the funds needed by your father's concern."

CHAPTER II.

A LITTLE KNOT OF BLUE.

IT required no thought for Roger to know that Cyrus Keating was making a sacrifice, and taking a big chance with a new driver, not through any consideration for Henry Boltwood, but because his sentiment toward Boltwood's son was of such a nature that he was willing at any hazard to remove himself as the barrier which separated them.

That Keating was taking a chance there could be no question. True, Leon Zeigler had been a great driver in his day, but for a year the man had not put his hand to the steering wheel of a racer, and in that year it was more than probable that he had lost some of his cunning. Like a billiard player, in order to keep continually keyed to his top form, and to do his best in a great contest, a racing driver must keep constantly in practice. Furthermore, Zeigler was unfamiliar with the Keating car, and he had never driven on the Indianapolis Speedway. Added to this was the possibility that the accident at Ascot Park, marking his last appearance in a race, had affected his nerve.

"I can't do it!" cried Roger suddenly. "You must know I can't, Mr. Keating. Whatever I owe my father, the situation at this minute demands that I do my duty by driving for——"

"The situation at this minute," interrupted the elder man, with equal firmness, "demands that I refuse to let

you drive. I shall; I have. Rather than send a car into the race to-day with you at the wheel, I'll withdraw. That's flat and final."

Two men, officials of the concern, appeared, and one of them called to Keating.

"You know there's a telephone inside, Roger," said the inflexible man. "You'd better notify the Comet people at once that you're going to drive for them." Then he turned to join his two friends.

Boltwood stood in his tracks, still feeling like one rooted to the ground. Around him was the bustle of other garages stretching away in a long line, but his eyes gave no heed to the hustling movements of mechanics and helpers who were giving the sixteen racers their final grooming for the grilling, whirlwind grind of five hundred miles which was bound to break the iron heart of more than one. Less than a quarter of a mile away thousands of people had gathered already in the stands overlooking the brick-paved course, and thousands more were pouring in to find their seats and get settled before the starter's pistol should send the sixteen snorting monsters leaping away in a death-defying dash for glory. This would happen now in less than fifty minutes. In less than fifty minutes, if he was to drive at all, Roger must make arrangements to pilot the Comet in the place of Selden, who had been engaged for that job. Doubtless Selden would object. Boltwood suddenly realized that the chances were better than a hundred to one that he would not get into the race at all.

Keating was talking sharply with the two stout men who had hailed him, both of whom had grown suddenly excited. "You're crazy!" one of them cried. "You can't make the change now. There's no time to——"

"There's barely time," cut in Keating. "Notify the officials of the change in drivers, Danforth. Do it at once."

"But where's Zeigler?" demanded the other stout man. "Is he here? Is he ready?"

"I'll have him here in no time," said

Keating. "He told me where I could find him up to within ten minutes of the start."

Then both men attempted to talk at once, but the president of the company thrust them aside, and strode toward the big gray roadster, which was waiting with a man at the wheel. He sprang up beside the driver, the tails of his duster snapping, and the self-starter ground the motor into life with a single turn. The roadster was in motion even before Keating had settled on the cushion.

Both of the stout men charged at Roger. "Cy Keating's gone loony!" panted one of them, grabbing Boltwood. "He's completely lost his head."

"You're going to drive the Keating!" wheezed the other, purple-faced, grasping Roger on the opposite side. "He can't fire you this way. Stay here——"

Boltwood shook them off. "He hasn't fired me. You don't understand, Mr. Danforth."

"Then explain!"

"No time for that now!" He brushed aside the pudgy hands of Danforth, reaching for him again. Into the garage he dashed, to snatch up the few personal things he wished to secure. The Comet garage was not far away, and already he had decided to lose no time by attempting to telephone. Excited as he was, he did not fail to observe two persons coming forth cautiously from a little room at the rear of the garage, nor did the throbbing rush in his ears deafen him to the words of one of them:

"Come on, Bat; the old man's gone. We can get out now without being seen."

It was Tom Keating, the son of Cyrus, whose hatred for Roger Boltwood approached the verge of mania. His companion, a huge, thick-necked young man, was likewise recognized as Bat Hopkins, a fitting associate. That both these fellows had been drinking was apparent, but Hopkins was carrying his load steadily, while Keating appeared somewhat wabbly.

Roger gave them no more than a glance. He was ready to leave with his

belongings when Keating actually stumbled against him.

"Hello!" cried Tom thickly. "Here y'are. Here's the gov'ner's pet, Hopkins. Here's the gink the old man thinks knows more about race driving than Dawson, De Palma, Robertson, or any the rest of 'em. Won the Traymore Cup by accident, he did; but he'll get his med'cine to-day."

Hopkins leered at Roger; but, doubtless remembering a sound thrashing Boltwood had given him some months before, kept at a respectful distance.

Paying absolutely no attention to either of them, Boltwood hurried out of the garage, and they followed him more slowly. The moment he was outside he broke into a run. Near the gate, a short distance away, he almost bumped into a rather sober-faced young man who was escorting a strikingly attractive girl.

"Oh, Mr. Boltwood!" cried the latter. "Just a moment! I know you're in a hurry; I can see that. But I won't keep you a minute."

Doris Keating had the most wonderful eyes in the world; at least, Roger thought so. Her voice thrilled him, and at her call he stopped, as a vassal might obey a queen. His face, which had been set and grim, softened into a smile.

"I am in a hurry, Miss Keating," he said; "but it would be a matter of life or death that could prevent me from giving you the minute you ask for. How are you, Dowling?"

"First rate, Boltwood, old man," responded Andy Dowling, a college friend who was likewise an admirer of Doris. "Wish you luck to-day. Miss Keating was determined to see you. She wants you to wear her colors—our colors—the blue."

Already, to Roger's surprise, the girl was tying a knot of blue silk to a button of his leather jacket. He looked down at her white, shapely hands, from which the gloves had been hastily pulled, then into her eyes, his face flushing crimson.

"Thank you!" he said, stumbling over the hasty words he sought to utter.

"But you don't know—you haven't heard; I'm not going to drive the Keating car to-day."

She uttered a little cry of amazement and dismay, while Dowling whistled his astonishment.

"Not going to drive!" she exclaimed incredulously.

"Not the Keating. I don't know that I'll drive at all; it's doubtful. I wish I had time to tell you what's happened, but you'll learn everything from your father. That minute must be up. I'm sure you'll pardon me, but I've got to rush. I may drive another car, and in that case this knot of blue——"

"Another—another car!" she stammered, in still greater bewilderment. "Certainly I don't understand."

"Shall I return this ribbon?" he asked.

"No, no! Keep it—keep it as a talisman, an amulet to ward off harm in the hours of peril you will pass through if you drive."

"Thank you!" he said, again experiencing that strange thrill with which she alone could stir his pulse. "I'll keep it. I'll wear it to-day."

Again he was running with long, easy strides toward the Comet garage. As he ran his hand again touched the knot of blue, beneath which his heart was throbbing.

CHAPTER III.

SHIFTING SANDS.

APPROACHING the Comet garage, Roger could see three or four men working upon the racer, tightening nuts and bolts and making many minor adjustments in their final inspection of the car. At the same moment his ears were assailed by the sound of loud and angry voices, which seemed to indicate that two or more men were engaged in a heated war of words. He saw them as he entered.

Of the group of five persons, one with curly side whiskers and a smug face seemed to be the most excited. He was shaking his fist at a tall, wiry, dark-faced young man, who listened to his words and regarded his threatening

gestures with a grim, contemptuous sneer. The latter Roger recognized as Bert Selden, who had been engaged to drive the Comet; the agitated individual with the kinky side whiskers was Jasper Christy, treasurer of the company.

"It's an outrage!" Christy was squawking in high falsetto. "It's a holdup! You can't put anything like that over with me, Selden; I won't stand for it."

"Oh, very well," returned the driver, his arms folded, his eyes fixed unblinkingly on Christy's face. "You know what you can do. My agreement was with Henry Boltwood."

"Show it to me—show me the contract in writing by which you are to get seventy-five per cent of the prize money, besides a thousand dollars for driving. There are plenty of drivers who'd jump at the chance for a five-hundred guarantee and thirty-three per cent of the prize money."

"Hundreds of them," agreed Selden; "but I don't belong in that class. You don't deny the thousand guarantee. Unfortunately, the agreement regarding the prize money was made orally with Mr. Boltwood. He's sick, and I didn't think it necessary to have a written contract with a man whose word is said to be as good as a government bond. But now they tell me he has heart disease, and is liable to die any minute. What if that happens before we come to a settlement? Where do I get off if he should die to-day? I tell you, you'll have to put it in black and white for me if I drive the Comet in this race."

"Boltwood's a lunatic!" frothed Christy. "If he hadn't been crazy he'd never made such talk. I don't believe he made it, anyhow. You can't bluff me, Selden. I refuse to be sandbagged in such a manner, and I'm backed up by Stockton and Camp. No matter what Boltwood said, he's not here now, and you've got to deal with us."

Two men, one at each side of Christy, wheezed their confirmation of his assertion that they were backing him up. The fifth individual of the group, a round-faced, blue-eyed youth, detached himself and hurried toward Roger,

whom he had perceived. This was Elmer Christy, son of the treasurer, and his countenance showed surprise and interrogation as he approached Boltwood.

"What are you doing here?" he asked. Then, without waiting for an answer, he went on: "The very dickens is to pay. Selden has balked, and the governor's blazing mad. I don't know what he can do, for it looks to me as if Selden has us on the hip. Perhaps you can straighten things out, Boltwood. A row like this just now is a bad thing."

"It's not my quarrel," said Roger, "and I think I'll keep out. I don't know whether my father made such an agreement with Selden or not."

"It looks to me like what the governor calls it—a holdup," asserted young Christy. "Selden knows he can force us to give him the written agreement, which we can't repudiate after the race. If we don't do it, he threatens to quit and walk out."

"If he does that," said Roger Boltwood, "I'll drive the Comet myself."

Elmer almost staggered. "You! Why, you're going to drive the Keating."

"No, I'm not. Leon Zeigler will drive the Keating."

"Great smoke!" ejaculated the son of the treasurer, bursting into a sudden, exultant laugh. "Then Selden hasn't got us pinched, after all! We can call his bluff." He whirled, and rushed back to the group, from which Selden had now detached himself.

The driver, having given his ultimatum, turned and walked toward the open door, almost brushing against Boltwood as he passed out, and paused to light a cigarette. Christy, Stockton, and Camp were talking excitedly when Elmer broke in upon them and seized his father's arm.

"Say, dad, here's Roger Boltwood, and he tells me he's at liberty—he can drive for us. Something has happened, and Leon Zeigler's going to handle the Keating. Boltwood on the *Blue Streak* can get the goods just as easily as Selden."

Roger came forward deliberately.

Jasper Christy had ceased talking and gesticulating, and his eyes were turned on the son of the company's president with an expression of doubtful relief, which did not mask his dislike for the young man who had once spoken plainly to him regarding crooked methods in business and racing.

"This is rather remarkable," he said, and his voice had suddenly become repressed and suspicious. "It demands an explanation. How did Keating happen to fire you at this late hour?"

"He didn't fire me," answered Roger promptly. "I can't go into details, but I'll explain in a few words." This he proceeded to do. "And now," he concluded, "if I'm to drive the Comet the committee and the starter must be notified of the change right away, so that it may be announced. I'm here and ready."

"Take him, Christy," urged Stockton.

"You've got to do it," said Camp.

Jasper Christy looked toward the open door. Selden had disappeared. "There's no choice," said the treasurer, with cold sullenness. "Stockton, hustle out and give the notification that Roger Boltwood will drive the *Blue Streak* instead of Selden."

"Done!" wheezed Stockton, hurrying away, and beginning to pant almost with the first stride.

Elmer Christy grabbed Roger's hand and gripped it, grinning broadly. "Now, if you can get out there and beat the Keating," he chuckled, "it will be the biggest day of your life and the salvation of the Comet concern. Go to it, Boltwood, old man."

"You know the course, Boltwood," said Jasper Christy, "and you're perfectly familiar with the Comet. We've got a car far superior to last season's, and it's due to surprise motordom if driven right to-day. The Keating crowd think they've got a snap. If you really want to beat them, you'll come so near doing it that old Keating, as well as your father, is liable to need the attention of a heart specialist."

"If I really want to?" echoed Roger, looking steadily at the man. "Do you

think I'd drive with any other idea in my head?"

"It doesn't seem likely, but this whole business looks queer to me. Their shift to Zeigler at the last minute is mighty odd. That it should happen just when Selden was standing us up, and you should appear at the psychological moment, is still more singular. They've been spying on us. They know they're not going to have the snap they had at Dempford. It was pretty rotten business, Keating turning you against your own father's concern and——"

"Mr. Keating never did anything of the sort, Mr. Christy. He's a square and honorable man. I don't like your insinuation that there's anything crooked about——"

"No use to waste words now; the result is what will tell. Get ready. We'll be ordered out of the paddock in ten minutes. Hansen will go with you as mechanic. You know Hansen?"

"I know Hansen," said Roger, nodding to the stolid, steady-nerved Swede who had looked up from his task of supervising the helpers who were putting the last touches to the grooming of the racer. "I'll be ready in five minutes."

He threw off some of his clothes to give the bandagers a chance to swathe him. Leather supporters were strapped upon his wrists. His own Yale sweater, with the white Y removed from the breast, was donned, and he hung two pairs of goggles about his neck. Then, as he was about to slip into the seat, Selden came striding swiftly back into the garage. His face blazed with wrath as his eyes told him what was taking place.

"Hold on here!" he snarled, rushing forward and planting himself beside the car, while his black eyes measured Roger from tip to toe. "What in blazes does this mean? What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to drive the Comet in this race," answered Boltwood calmly.

"The deuce you are! Not much! I've been engaged to drive this car, and I'm going to drive it."

"I think I heard you throwing up

your job as I came in a short time ago. You're out of it now by your own action."

"I'm not out of it, and you can't put me out!" shouted Selden. "I was simply demanding a square deal, according to my arrangement with Henry Boltwood. But I'm going to drive, anyhow. I'll drive, and rely on Boltwood to keep his word with me."

"That's different," said Jasper Christy. "That changes things entirely. You're the man engaged for the job, Selden." He jerked forth his watch. "We'll be ordered out in three minutes. Get ready. You'll drive."

Stockton had returned in time to hear this. For a moment he stood gaping and bewildered. That moment past, he caught his breath with a gulp, and cut in:

"That's impossible, Christy. I've given notice of the change of drivers. It's been announced."

"I don't care a hoot if it has," flung back the treasurer. "Who gave you authority to notify the officials of such a change?"

"You did."

"I never did," denied Christy, with astounding brazenness. "You misunderstood me, Stockton. I'm not responsible for your mistakes. Selden will drive!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE MAN THAT DROVE.

CHRISTY was precisely the sort of man Roger Boltwood thought him to be—unreliable, shifty, treacherous; a man who would instantly repudiate his own word should he have even the slightest reason or desire to do so. The low estimate in which Roger had hitherto held the treasurer of the Comet Company instantly flamed into unspeakable contempt, expressed only by the look which he flung at the smug-faced rascal.

Selden, ready for business, prepared to mount the car, but, to the astonishment of every one, Stockton suddenly became a Vesuvius, pouring the lava of his wheezing, spluttering wrath upon

Christy. "What in blazes do you mean by throwing me down like this?" he panted, his perspiring face purple with rage, his eyes bulging. "I've followed your lead in everything. You've had your say from the start. You sent me out to give notice of the change of drivers. Now you go back on your own orders, and show me up for a fool, make a monkey of me, give the impression that I haven't any power or authority. I'll be blown if I'll stand for it! I'll tell you what I think of you!"

Temporarily it shocked Christy, who had always regarded the pudgy, pacific Stockton as a creature of putty, to be molded as he chose. He recovered in a moment, however, and gave the stout man a push, producing a momentary hiatus in the bubbling, gurgling flow of language which was punctuated with a grunt.

"I'm running this show," Christy declared, "and I'd like to see somebody stop me."

Boltwood spoke a low word or two to Hansen, who chanced to be standing at his elbow, and the Swede nodded. Then Roger turned to mount to the seat of the *Blue Streak*.

Selden grabbed him fiercely by the shoulder, yanked him back, and struck at his face. Boltwood ducked the blow. An instant later his fist, driven with all the force he could command, came around and upward, crashing full and square upon Selden's jaw. The smitten man went down instantly, and lay stunned.

At that moment the order came for the Comet to leave the paddock and get out to the starting line. With a certain amount of deliberation, yet without loss of time, the son of Henry Boltwood took his seat at the wheel, and the mechanic sprang up beside him.

Stockton had spluttered himself out like an expiring fuse. Camp simply uttered one startled exclamation, then stood staring. Christy, benumbed for a moment, attempted to leap forward, but somehow his own son awkwardly got in the way and baffled him. Hansen had uttered a single word, which caused one of the assistants to whip the

motor of the Comet into life with a half turn of the crank and then leap aside.

Roger Boltwood drove out of the garage and turned toward the paddock gate.

In a cloud of smoke the sixteen racers made a flying start, cheered by the thousands of spectators who packed the stands. Those who had bet their money on the Keating *Gray Ghost*, the favorite in the race, were still speculating over the change of drivers which had placed Zeigler at the wheel of the car, and transferred Roger Boltwood to the Comet. Most of them, however, were confident that this was simply a shrewd move on the part of the Keating people, who, despite Boltwood's astonishing performance in winning the Traymore Cup at Dempford, must have had reasons to believe Zeigler, the former speedway wonder, superior to the man with a single triumph to his credit. Why the Comet people had dropped Selden in favor of Boltwood was a matter of speculation, but already from lip to lip was traveling the report that Selden had been injured by a fall.

Despite the skill of other drivers in starting, it was the Imperial *Black Eagle*, with Cox at the wheel, that, having the most favorable position, took the lead on the first turn. Zeigler sent the *Gray Ghost* Keating in onto the Imperial's quarter. Ralph Charter, with the Morgan *Jack Rabbit*, pushed them close. The others, bunched, jockeyed for place. The whole thundering mass of racers went bellowing round the brick-paved turn.

While exalted in spirit by the electrifying thrill of the tremendous game in which he was participating, Roger Boltwood had never in his life been calmer, steadier, more the master of himself. Although the Comet had fought the Keating to a desperate finish in the great race of the previous season, although his father's concern believed the latest model of their manufacture—represented in its perfection by the *Blue Streak*—was far superior to anything they had hitherto produced, Roger knew that the world of motordom had

not reckoned the Comet as a probable winner. Therefore, in the early stages of this five-hundred-mile race other drivers would not be likely to give the *Blue Streak* special attention, and there would probably be no attempt to pocket Boltwood or bother him in any way. As far as conditions permitted, he would be given a free course without fear or favor.

If no serious accident befell the *Gray Ghost*, which he knew so well, and which he believed to be the speed monarch of America, Roger had little hope of winning. There was, however, always the chance of some accident, some breakdown, some unforeseen holdup, which would set the favorite back, and give another car a chance for victory. And at any rate he hoped to finish in second position, and so close upon the heels of the cup winner that the achievement would in a measure reinstate the Comet in popular favor.

Driving on this finest motor speedway of the country was quite a different thing from his task of last year upon a course which had embraced oiled earth roads through open country and village streets. Here at all times the speed would be terrific. With no shutting off of gas to negotiate bad turns, the banked curves would be taken, whenever opportunity offered, with the engines getting the mixture, even though the feeding should be reduced. In three days of practice with the *Gray Ghost*, however, he had come to know the "feel" of every foot of this wonderful speedway, and to understand just how and where to make maximum speed.

He knew cars of other makes, their capabilities, their limitations, their strength, their weak points. He knew that, besides the Comet, the Imperial was one to be reckoned with; but it was likewise his belief that, fast as it was, the Imperial could not stand the test of five hundred miles. In time that hurricane flight would tell upon the endurance of the *Black Eagle*; in time its wings must fail beneath the dreadful strain.

The taste of burning gas and oil was

on Boltwood's tongue; the rumbling roar of blazing exhausts beat in his ears. In some degree his goggles protected his eyes from the glare of the sun on the red bricks, over which in the stretches the Comet seemed to skim as a swallow skims the surface of water. Forgotten were the thousands who cheered the fire-breathing monsters of speed as they ripped past the long stands—forgotten, all save one. Roger remembered that somewhere in that great throng was a wonderful girl, whose splendid eyes would watch him as he passed.

CHAPTER V.

CHARIOTS OF FIRE.

FOR nearly three hundred miles Cox spurred the *Black Eagle* with the reckless abandon of a madman, and, to the astonishment of rival drivers and watching sharps, the Imperial car stood up under the fearful strain. It was bound to tell in time, however, and Cox could not slacken or ease up without losing the lead; for Zeigler, infuriated by his inability to get into the pace-maker's position, was hanging to the *Black Eagle* like a bulldog. Twice Cox had been forced to hold up for minor repairs, but, by a strange coincidence, each time Zeigler was likewise compelled to pull into the repair pit.

Zeigler's peculiar temperament turned him into a frothing fury as long as he was headed by the other car. In vain he was warned of reckless driving by signals from Keating stations; he seemed deaf to word-of-mouth pleadings and threats when held up for repairs. His one thought seemed to be that the Imperial was keeping him in second position, when his knowledge of the two cars told him that he should be setting the pace, with the leader already limping far behind.

Meanwhile Boltwood was in third position, the Morgan having smashed a rear wheel, and met with other mishaps that had practically put it out of the race, although, doctored by repair men, it was still circling the course. Three

full laps composed the gap between the *Blue Streak* and the leaders. Even at that, Roger felt that he had been forcing his car slightly beyond the limit of endurance. The signal system had kept him posted concerning the standing of the racers. Just as well as the thousands who watched the score board from the big stand, did he know how many miles he must make up in order to get into fighting position for the cup. When the Imperial blew a tire and pulled up at the first pit, Roger knew it. He knew also that the Keating met with a similar misfortune a few seconds later. It was his opportunity, and he reached for it.

A full round of the course he made without interference; then, whirling past the long stands, he came upon five cars so bunched that it was only by taking a hair-raising chance that he cut between two of them, the hub of his rear right wheel clicking the hub of another car's left forward wheel as he passed. Watching this performance, the great crowd was thrilled into temporary silence, following which rose a mighty shout of admiration as the *Blue Streak* shaved clear of the bunch, and took the banked turn ahead of them.

One lap had been covered, and Roger was eating up the second one, when from the Comet track-side tent flashed a white signal bearing the ominous letters, "L. R. C."

Hansen, pumping oil steadily, saw it, and shouted from the corner of his mouth. Roger, his benumbed hands grasping the wheel, saw it, and something like a groan came from behind his clenched teeth.

"Left rear change," the signal had said. Even as Boltwood darted through the bunched cars in front of the stand, keen eyes in the Comet repair pit had noted that his left rear tire was going flat. Instantly a telephone wire running across the oval to the track-side tent had carried the unwelcome warning, which one of the men at the tent had flashed from the uplifted signal board as the *Blue Streak* roared past.

Roger's high hope of cutting down the lead of his rivals was dashed. He,

also, must stop for a tire change. So, with yet a little air in the sinking tire, he pulled up short at the repair pit.

The repair men were ready with jack, wrenches, and shoe, and in one minute and thirteen seconds the car was jacked up, the flat tire ripped off, and an inflated shoe locked in place on the wheel. Meanwhile other men had refilled the gasoline tank.

Roger leaped to the wheel. Hansen sprang crouching beside him. The *Blue Streak* was off again with a rush and a roar. It had worked out beautifully, for the halt of the Comet had been twenty seconds shorter than that of the Keating, and nearly forty less than the holdup suffered by the Imperial.

But twenty seconds won did not seem of much importance in the face of the fact that three laps must be overcome. The *Gray Ghost* was now in the lead, with the Imperial second, and Cox breathing the exhaust smoke of the pacemaker. The wise ones said that Zeigler would never be headed again. The Imperial had proved a great surprise, and Boltwood was driving a wonderful race with the Comet, but the odds were reckoned as better than three to one that Zeigler would easily finish first.

Within the next fifty miles the Imperial began to show signs of breaking up. Steadily the *Gray Ghost* drew away, while the *Black Eagle* began to flutter and falter. Roger perceived when he passed the Imperial that, as far as that car was concerned, the inevitable was transpiring. Had the *Black Eagle* been leading, Boltwood would have eased up by lowering his speed, knowing that such a fearful pace would not be required to place the Comet easily ahead. But he was after Zeigler now, and not until he was trailing the *Gray Ghost* closely did he relax a whit. Even then, watching the favorite like a hawk, he waited an opportunity to forge ahead.

Before the four-hundred-mile mark was passed the Imperial, wheezing, rattling, back broken, fell out of the contest, as had half the other cars entered.

The interest of the crowd became centered upon the two leaders. Grimy, smoke-blackened, stony-faced, Zeigler and Boltwood fought round and round the course. Three times Roger attempted to pass, and three times Zeigler's foot thrust the throttle wide open, and the Keating car held its rival blocked.

Hansen pumped oil regularly and stolidly. His swollen arms numb to the shoulders, the muscles of his splendid back puffed and hard as iron, Roger kept his teeth set, his mind concentrated on his task. Through speed alone he knew now beyond doubt that he could not hope to triumph. Barring misfortune, second place seemed assured for the *Comet*; but with that for which he had hoped apparently within his grasp, he was not satisfied. When Zeigler sought to shake him in the fastest lap of the race he hung on like grim death, losing less than a few yards in the entire round of the course. And Zeigler could not keep it up without running a fearful risk of burning his tires or putting the *Gray Ghost* to the bad in some other way. The *Blue Streak* was a leech he could not shake by the most frantic effort.

Then it happened. With a bang the Keating blew out a tire. Boltwood felt his heart give a tremendous leap of hope, but almost as an echo to the report of the Keating tire came another, and the *Blue Streak* wobbled.

Almost before the car stopped, Hansen was off and tearing loose one of the spare shoes. Half a dozen *Comet* helpers came rushing to the spot. The work of replacement was taken up, with every man doing his part. There was no interference one with another, no loitering, no bungling. Boltwood kept his lips sealed, his jaw set.

The Keating car had pulled up squarely at her repair pit, which gave her a slight advantage. Gas was being poured into her tank while the blown-out shoe was replaced. Zeigler shouted and snarled at the repair men, and his rage was not assumed. With still nearly a hundred miles to make, and a lead of only two laps, he knew the value

of seconds. The tenacity of the *Comet* had exasperated him.

In this case the change on the Keating was accomplished more swiftly than that on the *Comet*. Five seconds' difference enabled Zeigler to get away again, with Boltwood trailing. Round and round they circled, Zeigler, warned by what had happened, making no attempt to increase his lead. Only when Boltwood pressed him did he drive harder to retain the position he seemed to have clinched.

Again breathing the smoke of the Keating exhaust, in the course of time Boltwood became vaguely aware of something peculiar. For a long time it fretted his subconsciousness. They were on the last fifty miles of the race when suddenly Roger realized that the air held something like the smell of camphor. Again and again he obtained a whiff of it. It puzzled him. Annoyed that anything like that could disturb his mind, he sought to dismiss all thought of it.

"I've got second place," he told himself, "and that, in a race like this, with the third car so far behind, ought to be a pretty big thing for the *Comet Company*."

Presently he realized that the *Gray Ghost* seemed to be letting up. It was possible that Zeigler was pulling down and taking it easy, with the intention of speeding the instant the *Blue Streak* should again try to pass. Still, something seemed to tell Roger that Zeigler was having trouble with the Keating. All at once he gave the accelerator a punch, and the *Comet* closed in. Alongside the *Gray Ghost* it forged. It began to creep ahead.

Like a stoic, Hansen worked the oil pump. The air was filled with a thunder like breakers on a rocky shore following a storm. It was the roaring of the great crowd as the *Blue Streak* raced past the *Gray Ghost* and left it behind, with the gap steadily widening.

There was a drumming in Boltwood's ears. Every nerve in his body quivered. The signals told him that there were nineteen more laps to be made. Only nineteen, and two to be gained over the

Gray Ghost. He threw caution to the winds. Extracting every possible particle of speed from the Comet, he flew like a madman round the oval. Twice he circled it, then he saw the Keating car pulled up, with men sprawling under it working for their lives. It was Boltwood's opportunity, and ere the plugged intake pipe of the *Gray Ghost* could be torn lose and replaced by another the distance separating the cars had been cut to a matter of rods.

Zeigler was off again. Boltwood was after him, and for a mile the two cars fought it out. But the trouble which had attacked the Keating seemed to return and persist. Try as he might, Zeigler could not hold his scanty lead. The *Blue Streak* once more came up and passed. With half a dozen laps to make, the Comet was leading.

Boltwood finished the final two laps with full knowledge that the Keating car was again pulled up and helpless. Something had put it wholly out of the race, and the Comet had won.

CHAPTER VI.

VICTORY, WITH A QUESTION.

BOLTWOOD had triumphed. The thunderous cheering of thousands acclaimed him the adored hero of the day. Men saluted him with lusty, full-throated shouts; women split their gloves and waved white handkerchiefs. As the *Blue Streak* brought him round again past the long stand, some women who were near enough tore from their gowns the flowers they had been wearing and cast them—carnations, violets, roses, and orchids—raining down upon him.

In the first flush of triumph his heart had shouted for joy, though his cracked, dust-caked lips were sealed by a grim smile. He had won, and the Great Northern Lubricant people would have to keep their compact with the Comet concern. His triumph would mean the reinstatement of the latter company on a sound financial basis. With this buoyant thought in his mind he again passed the unfortunate *Gray Ghost*, abandoned at the trackside. It was a sight to fill

him with strange emotions, among which regret was not the least. He had learned to feel real affection for the defeated car, and he had believed that for speed and endurance it had no superior in America. Yet there it stood at the trackside, helpless, done up, dead. He could not understand how such a thing had come about.

"I wanted to win," was the thought that passed through his mind; "but I hoped to do so with the Keating in the running, and fighting me to the last."

He wondered if the fault had been Zeigler's, yet he could not imagine how the driver had put that wonderful car so thoroughly to the bad that it had gone dead beyond repair, with only two miles of the five hundred to be covered. Something was wrong. There was something to be explained and accounted for.

So, madly cheered, pelted with flowers, Boltwood returned, somber, unmoved, to hear the announcement of the judges. In the judges' stand he saw Zeigler making frantic gestures and talking wildly. If the man protested, it had little effect, for in due time the announcement was made that the Comet, Boltwood driving, had won the Spalding Cup. Roger was forced to bow his acknowledgment, and then his chin seemed to sink forward upon his breast. His appearance was that of a man pegged out, completely done up.

In that moment his eyes rested upon a bedraggled knot of blue ribbon. In that moment his thoughts were not of the triumph that had come to him, but again, as before the race had started, he seemed to see white fingers tying the ribbon to the button of his coat. It was the dark blue of Yale, the color he loved, the color he was ready and proud to fight for at any and all times. While placing it there she had believed he would drive the Keating car. Fate had decreed otherwise. Surely she would understand.

A little later, Roger drove from the course to the paddock. Stepping from the car in the garage, he was amazed to find himself face to face with a stout, thickset, square-jawed man, who

beamed upon him, holding out both hands.

"My boy," said Henry Boltwood, his voice somewhat choked, "you did it! I knew you could."

"Father!" cried Roger. "You here? Why, I thought——"

"I couldn't stay away, son. The doctors told me I couldn't come. They told me I must stay in bed. I stood it as long as I could, and here I am. But I couldn't watch the race; I didn't dare do that. I stayed here until they brought me word of the finish. Roger, you're your father's son."

They were surrounded by a group of highly elated men, all interested in the Comet concern. Every one was eager to shake the hand of the cup winner. Even Jasper Christy came forward, his smug face wreathed in smiles.

"I didn't think you had it in you," he said; "but I'm willing to acknowledge a mistake. Of course, we'll have to settle with Selden, but——"

Roger turned away.

"Christy told me all about it, son," said Henry Boltwood, in Roger's ear. "I found him raving like a lunatic, but he's all right now. As soon as I heard what he had to say I told him I was glad you did it. But I don't understand how you got your release from Keating."

The younger man explained briefly.

"Ha!" said Henry Boltwood. "So old Keating thought he'd got a better driver in Zeigler, and he jumped at the chance. That's like him!"

"I'm certain you misjudge him, father. He read your telegram to me, and he didn't wish to be the cause of a break between us under such conditions."

"Tell it to somebody else; I know the man."

Elmer Christy was standing at a distance, watching Roger. When their eyes met, his face lighted up with a smile, and he came forward quickly. "The governor was ready to kill me," he said. "I had to bump into him to keep him from trying to grab you."

"I saw what you did," responded

Roger, grasping the hand of the youth, "and I won't forget it."

He was tired in every atom of his body, which cried out for rest. Nevertheless, he walked forth into the open air alone, and his gaze was turned in the direction of the Keating garage. Over there was the man who had befriended him in his most desperate time of need. What had he done in return for such friendship? "I must see Mr. Keating," he murmured. "I must see him a moment before I keel over, and I can't keep on my legs much longer."

Men gazed at him curiously as he walked stiffly and somewhat unsteadily toward the Keating quarters. Some called to him, and he answered with a nod or a weary movement of his hand. At the very door of the Keating garage he met Andy Dowling and Doris coming out. Involuntarily his hand went up to the bedraggled bit of blue ribbon. "Miss Keating," he said eagerly, "your talisman kept me safe from harm. I'm sorry that——"

He stopped abruptly, the words cut short upon his lips. She had not paused. Her eyes—those wonderful eyes—had given him a look full of contempt and scorn, even loathing.

CHAPTER VII.

CROOKED WORK.

HAD the girl struck him with her clenched fist, Boltwood would have felt the blow less. Staggering in his exhaustion, he grabbed at the edge of the garage door for support, swinging round to stare after her retreating figure, his eyes wide, his tanned, grimy face pale. At Dowling's side she walked steadily away, without turning her head for one backward glance. He had not believed such a thing possible of her. In fancy he had endowed her with a lofty broad-mindedness possessed by few of her sex. Circumstances had led her to misjudge him in the past, but he would have staked his life that such a thing could never happen again.

"She doesn't understand—she can't understand," he whispered huskily.

"She thinks I quit her father to drive the Comet. Why couldn't she wait until she learned the truth? Mr. Keating would have told her."

Vaguely he became aware of the sound of many voices behind him in the garage. Men were talking loudly in there, and at first his sense picked up the words, "crookedness," "treachery," "dirty work." Still his eyes followed Doris Keating until she disappeared beyond the paddock gate.

"Somebody is going to suffer for this underhand trick. The judges wouldn't listen to me, but I'll make the whole country listen before I'm through. I'll uncover the crooks, and show 'em up. The Associated Press will be ready enough to spread the story."

Roger gripped the doorjamb harder as the words of the infuriated speaker reached him from the interior of the garage. He knew it must be Zeigler who was speaking. The man was taking his defeat hard. Drawing a long breath, the cup winner turned slowly and stepped inside. Zeigler was surrounded by a group of men, none of whom had yet perceived Boltwood, so absorbed were they. Frank Selden was one of them.

"The Boltwood gang was bound to win this race by fair means or foul!" declared Selden. "They were in a corner and had to win. Only for a dirty trick I'd have driven the Comet. But they'll pay for that."

Roger advanced slowly. "Where is Mr. Keating?" he asked.

Zeigler whirled like a flash, thrusting two men aside, and stepped out to confront the questioner.

"Well, you've got your nerve!" he exclaimed. "You've certainly got a crust, coming here!"

Roger lifted a remonstrating hand. "I came to see Mr. Keating."

"He'll be delighted to see you—I don't think! He'll welcome you with open arms, after what you've done."

"Don't take it so hard, Zeigler. No man can win every race he drives in."

"I'd won to-day but for a foul piece of underhand work that ought to put somebody in the jug for about ten

years," flung back Zeigler. "And if they get the right man I fancy you'll have just about that much time to think it over behind the bars."

A throb ran over Roger Boltwood. His drooping shoulders squared, and his jaws came together with a snap. "Do you mean that I——" His hands reached for Zeigler's neck as he stepped forward.

Dan Hogan, one of the Keating pitmen, thrust himself against Roger, whom he grasped about the waist, while others promptly intervened.

"Oh, let him come," said Zeigler disdainfully.

"But look out that he don't hit you when you're not looking," sneered Selden. "That's his trick."

Boltwood broke Hogan's hold upon his waist and thrust the man aside. "I didn't come here to fight," he said, recovering his self-command; "I came to see Cyrus Keating. I was foolish to pay any attention to the ravings of a sorehead. Some losers always make more or less idiotic talk about crookedness. I don't know what Zeigler and Selden mean, and I don't believe they know themselves."

"Oh, is that so!" rasped Zeigler. "Let me tell you something: I had that race cinched; you couldn't have beaten me out in another five hundred miles. Having two laps to the good, I was simply holding you where you were. You tried to pass me time after time. Then my car went wrong."

"And you blame that on me," said Roger, with a pitying smile.

"My car went wrong," repeated Zeigler. "It's out there beside the course with the plugs foul, the intake plugged, the carburetor choked, ports and pistons gummed. How did that happen?"

"I suppose," said Roger sarcastically, "that I must have tampered with it while we were circling the track at a speed of eighty or ninety miles an hour."

"Somebody tampered with it!" asserted Zeigler savagely. "The trick was done before the *Gray Ghost* went onto the track. It was done before the car left this garage."

"Right," put in Dan Hogan, "and I reckon I know who did the pretty little job."

"We all know, every one of us," maintained Zeigler, "and no one knows better than Roger Boltwood. You won the cup, Boltwood, but the exposure of your methods will make a fine scandal. You've driven in your last race. If nothing worse happens to you, you'll find yourself blacklisted inside of thirty days."

Still Roger retained command of himself. For the time being he had forgotten that he was tired to the point of collapsing. These men were accusing him of the vilest sort of treachery. They were seeking to brand him as an ingrate who had betrayed the trust of his friend and benefactor. As yet, however, they were holding their cards concealed, and in order to meet their play and block it he must get a glimpse of the hidden cards.

"I'm surprised to find myself up against such a bunch of squealers," he said, with scorn. "Any loser can put up a howl, but it requires proof to convince fair-minded persons. When and how did I tamper with the *Gray Ghost*?"

"When you found you weren't going to drive it," answered Zeigler promptly. "You did it before you left this garage."

"Sure," confirmed Hogan, "and I reckon I saw him do it."

"So you saw me, did you, Hogan?" questioned Roger, almost gently. "Do you mind stating just what I did?"

"Murphy and Alexander were changing the spare tires, as you suggested," said Hogan. "I was helping a bit. Just before you left you came up to the car and got your gloves from the seat. The gas tank had been opened. Kennedy and Shaw were bringing a can of gas. After picking up your gloves, you stepped round beside the tank at the back of the car. I saw you put your

hand on the tank. I saw you, man, with my two eyes."

"Well, go on," urged Roger.

"That's all," said Hogan; "that's all, except that, a minute before, you'd had your hand in the pocket of that coat you're wearing. On the seat cushions I found something before the *Ghost* went out, with Zeigler driving. I found this!" He held up between thumb and forefinger something like a marble, round, white, opaque. Roger eyed it curiously.

"What is that?" he queried, still apparently calm, although quivering with a desire to lay hands on the accusing pitman.

"What is it?" cried Hogan. "And ye don't know? It's a mothball. A handful of them dropped into the gas tank put the *Ghost* on the bum. When they dissolved in the gasoline they plugged pipes, ports, pistons, and carburetor."

"And I guess that will settle your hash, Boltwood," jeered Zeigler.

Unconsciously Roger's hand slid into the side pocket of his leather coat. Scarcely realizing what he did, he brought it forth, and on his palm lay two duplicates of the mothball exhibited by Hogan. He stared at them.

"Look!" cried Hogan, pointing. "There's proof! He has them in his pocket still, what's left of the handful he dropped into the tank of the *Ghost*!"

"You perjurer! You scoundrel!" exploded Roger, leaping at Hogan. "I'll choke the truth out of——"

Selden, watching for an opportunity to even up, planted his fist below Boltwood's ear. Roger's legs melted beneath him. He dropped. At their feet he lay, his eyes closed, as if exhaustion had claimed him at last.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Further chapters of this serial will be found in the December mid-month TOP-NOTCH, out November 15th. As this magazine is issued twice a month, the reader has but a short time to wait.

The Art of Warfare

STRATEGY," declared Private Murphy, "is whin yez don't let the inimy discover that ye are out of amunishun, but kape on firin'!"

Talks With Top-Notch Readers

By BURT L. STANDISH

GIVE AND TAKE

APPRECIATION of stories he has read in TOP-NOTCH, and suggestions for future tales to his liking are made by E. F. Turcott, of Eleventh Avenue, Moline, Illinois. He says:

I have just finished J. A. Fitzgerald's story, "Business After Pleasure," and wish to predict that the Steve Blake series will be a great success; that is, if he keeps them up to the standard of the first. I nearly dislocated my jaw laughing at the predicament of Steve Blake upon discovering the identity of the warbler.

Such stories as "Dark Magic," "The Purple Emperor," and "The Dream Pirate" appeal to me. Give us some more in the same line, that deal with the mysteries of the future, and are not of present-day possibility. Another treasure-hunt story would be welcome. "The Divided Medal" and "Fortune's Challenge" were excellent.

Some of the short stories that have made a hit with me are as follows: "When Shelby Junction Dolled Up," by J. A. Fitzgerald; "On Running Edge," by Wallace Watson; "The Greater Call," by James French Dorrance; "Once an Umpire," by J. A. Fitzgerald; "The Golden Ebb," and "The Unofficial Champion," by Harold C. Burr. How about a college football serial by yourself?

In this number a college football serial is begun—"On College Battlefields." Although the sport interest is not confined to football, there is plenty of that pastime in it, along with the automobile racing that affects the fortunes of the hero, Roger Boltwood.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: A year ago you received a letter from me. To-day I'm sending you this epistle to show you that the magazine is still one of my favorites. I do not wish to criticize any of the stories, as some readers prefer those which others do not approve of, but allow me to tender you this toast: Here's luck to the TOP-NOTCH, read all the world through, while time drags on wearily, when one feels blue. Yours sincerely,
SIDNEY FRANK.

New York City.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I have been taking the TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE for about three years, and during that time I have not missed one issue. To my thinking, it contains the best of reading, and I would recommend it to any one desiring a real magazine.

I greatly admire your Lefty Locke and Brick King stories, and hope you will continue to give us one in each issue. I liked "Service Courageous" and "Service Audacious," and the stories by Roland Ashford Phillips, Tom Bullock, W. Bert Foster. "The Arizona Test" was especially good. How about some more Camera Chap tales?

I want to say that I wish you success and a big increase in the circulation of the best magazine on the market. Yours sincerely,
GEORGE T. SHAY.

Baltimore, Md.



MRS. MARY SUTHERLAND, of 2912 Washington Avenue, St. Louis, sends the following, on the subject of the "boost" and the "knock":

Not seeing any letters from women readers, I wish to offer my most sincere approval of TOP-NOTCH. But I do not agree with Mr. E. W. Hawley, of San Francisco. I must say you have a very talented staff of authors. I have been reading some excellent stories in the last eighteen months, and hope they continue to be so. If I cannot *boost* an author I most assuredly will not knock him. I believe in giving all a chance. I don't see how a sensible reader can do anything but appreciate the stories in TOP-NOTCH, and boost the authors. I would like to see this letter in print, in order to convince some of my women friends that the letters you publish are not fictitious.

Many letters from women are received for publication in these pages, and they appear from time to time. Thousands of women and girls read TOP-NOTCH.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: Have just finished reading my TOP-NOTCH, and find most of the stories good. My favorite authors are Boston, Patten, Burr, Phillips, yourself, and Lebhar. Your baseball stories are great, especially "Lefty o' the Blue Stockings." Your theater and actual-place stories are also good. I noticed a mistake in the story by Fitzgerald, "Getting Hunk With Reilly," On page 90, first and second paragraphs in the second column, it says that with two out Hanley gets a single, and is caught off of first base; the next man gets a two-base hit, and the next man strikes out, which would make four out. Otherwise the story was good. Give us stories like "At the Film's Command," and "Fortune's Challenge." Wishing TOP-NOTCH best of success, I am, yours truly,

AUSTIN WEINER.

Fifth Avenue, Chicago, Ill.



IN the course of a long letter, M. Edna Sutton, of Elm Street, Newark, New Jersey, says:

I bought the first copy of TOP-NOTCH

published, and I have taken it ever since. I was pleased to note the advance it made when it was enlarged the first time, and sold for ten cents, and very grateful to the editor when it was still further enlarged at no further expense to the reader. I enjoy every story in it. My favorite writer is Burt L. Standish, but I don't feel that I have any right or even the inclination to criticize any of the writers; they all turn out clean, bright stories, and I feel deeply grateful for the diversion and recreation they have afforded me. I lend them to my brother, and many of them find their way to friends who are ill, and others who are fond of good reading.

I was reading some of the criticisms to-day, and I can't help thinking I would like to see a "story" one of those same "critics" would write. I feel a deep gratitude to publisher, editor, and writers.

It is no argument to tell a critic to do something better than the thing he criticizes. We don't expect our readers to be able to write stories. We do expect you to know what kind of stories you like and don't like, and we have no objection to your writing to us about them with the utmost frankness. That helps us in the publication of a magazine that's built for you.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I am employed in a news dealer's store, and I read many magazines, but T.-N. can't be beaten. The stories I like best are those of Burt L. Standish, Bertram Lebhar, J. A. Fitzgerald, and Ralph Boston. All the other authors are good. Although I hate boxing, I like Mr. Burr's stories for the fortunes and adventures through which his characters pass. I was delighted when I read the advertisement on the book cover about "Brick King, Backstop." I never omit reading the "talks," because I like to hear somebody else's opinion of T.-N. I see that Mr. Lebhar's story, "At the Film's Command," has ended this week. I am very sorry

to see it end so quick. I hope you will have another story of Mr. Lebhar's when the "Brick King" story ends. Of course, I don't expect you to have the book filled with my favorite stories.

Yours truly,
S. LULOFF.
Stapleton, Staten Island, N. Y.



AN advertiser who manufactures something which young men are likely to buy—let us say a sweater, or something of that kind—after several interviews with our representative, told him that if he could prove that TOP-NOTCH was read largely by young men he would be glad to give him some business. Our advertising man told Mr. Advertiser that it would be easy for him to prove that, because we had not only hundreds, but thousands, of letters from young men commending the magazine, and showing very clearly that they were interested in it.

So he came back to the office, and asked the editor for a bunch of letters. Without a word the editor pulled open his drawer, gave the ad man a bunch containing several hundred, and the ad man straightway went back to Mr. Advertiser. Judge his astonishment and dismay when the man who was going to advertise began to laugh uproariously. Upon demanding to know what was the matter, the advertiser quietly handed him this letter:

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I have read your magazine for several years, and wouldn't do without it if it cost twenty-five cents a copy, and I am a grandmother, and work for my own support. I am sending for the first June issue, as I failed to get it from the news dealer.

Mr. Standish is my favorite of all, though Mr. Lebhar's snapshot stories are great. Mr. Standish's "Lefty Locke" serials are fine, but I think "Bainbridge of Bangor" was better. In

fact, there is not a poor story in the magazine. I read a good deal, but like TOP-NOTCH the best of all.

I have never seen a letter from this part of the country in "Talks With TOP-NOTCH Readers," though lots of people read it. You can't find one on the news dealer's stand two days after he gets them.

Wishing you continued success, I am,
very truly yours,

MAY M. SIMMONS.
Magnolia, Miss.

Our ad man had an uncomfortable ten minutes trying to explain matters, but the advertiser finally, upon looking over the other letters, saw that many of them were from young men, and decided to give us his business, so nothing was lost by the chance letter from grandma, but rather a friend was gained.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: Congratulations on "The Arizona Test." It was grand. When are you going to stop getting better? Very truly yours,

ED. E. CHARTIER.
Detroit, Mich.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: Having been a reader of T.-N. since April, I am writing to tell you my likes and dislikes. Run serials like "Lefty o' the Training Camp," "Snapshot Diplomacy," "The College Rebel," "Brick King, Backstop," but don't overload us with ones such as "The Voice in the Night," or "Boots and Saddles," which was rather dry except at the end of each installment.

James French Dorrance is a crackjack at Western tales; they're far better than his present circus serial. "Roped Rivers" is the best complete novel I have read, and "The Purple Emperor" the poorest. Give us all forty-page-long complete stories instead of the shorter ones.

Get Mr. Lebhar busy on another Camera Chap tale. They can't be beaten. Am looking forward to a college football serial this fall. Please

don't disappoint me. I am very truly yours, an ardent booster of TOP-NOTCH.

KEN PITTES.

Gerard Street, Toronto, Canada.



FROM Harry Lawrence, of the Massett Indian Reserve, Queen Charlotte Islands, we have this, culled from a long letter:

I have been reading the T.-N. since the first issue when I was anywhere in civilization where I could get it, which hasn't been as often as I would like, though I have nearly always been able to obtain the back numbers of those I missed. Naturally I like it, or I wouldn't buy it. It has certainly helped me to while away many a long weary winter's evening along the Yukon, even though the issues I had up there were some months old.

I don't recall having read any stories of the Indians, except where they were brought in incidentally. I have often wished I could find a story written of these Indians here, and some of the same tribe in Alaska. Down in civilization I believe it is one of the less-known tribes on the continent. People unfamiliar with the history of the coast tribes erroneously call them all Siwash, but these people, the Haidas, are far from being the same people as the Siwash; in fact, they are insulted if they are called such. At one time, not so very long ago, they were as warlike and full of fighting as the plains Indians, the Sioux, Cheyennes, Apaches, or Navahoes.

Many is the tale I have heard told by the old men of the tribe of battles with the Japs who have come down from their sealing grounds in the Bering Sea, and tried to establish colonies and settlements on this and the Alaskan coasts. In fact, these people acted as a buffer against the Japs, and there is no doubt that the Canadian and American governments have the Haidas to thank for keeping our coasts free from Japanese settlement and colonization through the past ages. At one time the

Haidas controlled and held the coast from Vancouver Island to Skagway and beyond, though at the present day there are only a few remnants of the once mighty people left—two bands here on these islands, and one or two in southeastern Alaska.

Many of the old men can remember even in their own day, when they were children, of battles fought by their fathers against marauding bands of Japs, and there are two men at least living now that themselves fought in some of these battles. If some of your authors, or any one that can write stories, could hear these tales and legends, and write them up, I am sure they would make very interesting reading, and, moreover, be founded upon facts which can be proved. I only wish I had the ability to write them up in the form of a story, but I've never tried it, because I know that I couldn't, and wouldn't have the nerve to send them to any magazine.

I have been very much interested in the story by John D. Emerson, "Beyond the Law," just completed in the April number. I personally know something of these fish pirates down on the Sound, and Mr. Emerson's story could easily be a narrative of actual events. There are many men like his "Captain Culbertson," and "Uncle Sky," and "Iotte Montana," to say nothing of the cannery bosses. Mr. Emerson has certainly been on the ground, and knows whereof he writes.

Another writer whom I like in the T.-N. is the gentleman who styles himself "Mayn Cléw Garnett." It is evident he is a sailor himself, because he also knows whereof he writes, and I am a fair judge, holding a deep-water board-of-trade mate's ticket myself, and having put in some years at the sailing business. I hate to pick up a magazine and read so-called sea stories or so-called Western stories by authors who don't know anything personally about the subject. They are bound to slip up somewhere, and the initiated can always find them out, and naturally they blame the magazine, and not the author.

I have noticed that in T.-N. the au-

thors know what they are talking about, which is more than can be said of some of the magazines I have read. I like to read your stories, Mr. Editor, and I presume you know whereof you write, also, though you couldn't prove it by me, as I have had no personal experience in the activities to which your heroes are confined. I hope to see some more Bainbridge stories.

Mr. Terhune is also fine on historical novels. In spite of the many knocks I have read against his "Service Audacious," I'll put in a good word for Don Cameron Shafer, and simply say that it was fine, and the said knockers must be hard up for something to hammer when they go after that story. I have a knock to register against Gilbert Patten in his "Boltwood of Yale," which is as follows—to wit, Boltwood strikes me as being too much of a goody-goody boy; in fact, borders mighty close on what we call a "willie-boy" in the West, not by his physical actions, for they were certainly manly enough, but by his mental processes, which the reader was permitted to frequently follow.

While I am at it I might as well pass on another knock. This letter seems to contain mostly knocks and "hot air," but the knocks aren't of such a serious nature that I can't say a whole lot truthfully that the T.-N. certainly is the "toppest-notch" of all the magazines, and I'll keep on reading it until a certain well-known summer resort of exceeding torrid climate in the life to come freezes over. The knock I started to register a few lines ago is this: When you have any more "actual-place" stories, for the sake of Pete don't let the title rhyme with said place. In other words, let's not have any more titles reading "Wished on Him in Washington," "Bungled in Binghamton," "Won in Williamsport," and many others I can't recall now. I guess you are saying that the best thing I can do is to start a magazine of my own, and then I will be satisfied. Well, if I had the price I might, but I'd want you to run it, and make it like the T.-N.

Well, anyhow, good luck to you, and

keep the T.-N.'s coming, and fix them up any old way you want. Never mind "us knockers." We'll be glad of the chance to buy it anyhow, any time, any place.



FROM George C. Wantage, writing from Cleveland, Ohio, we have this suggestive letter:

I am a traveling man, and I am impressed with the splendid luck TOP-NOTCH is running into all along the line. Say, everybody's buying it, and, what is better, reading it. Those Steve Blake tales, if kept up to the present standard, are going to make a hit with us knights of the grip. I would like to meet Fitzgerald, the author. He's the goods, all right, when it comes to delivering the laughs.

The word "luck" expresses a pleasant thought, and we don't mind having it about our endeavors any time; yet we don't believe in luck quite to the point of thinking it has carried TOP-NOTCH to success. We don't think our readers believe in luck to that extent.

You know there must be some good reason back of the selling qualities of TOP-NOTCH. You know that it must be due, first of all, to a true appreciation of the likes and dislikes of its readers—to a study of those likes and dislikes on the part of the publishers, and their ever-present purpose to make good their claim for TOP-NOTCH, that it is the Magazine That's Built for you.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: ANOTHER word of gratitude and appreciation from one of your many readers. This magazine is the only one of its kind, in my estimation, that prints good and select reading, written by some of the best writers of to-day. Out of all of the many magazines I have read publishing short stories, never have I read one that I think puts TOP-NOTCH in second place.

Of course, there have been stories

at times that did not appeal to me, while there were others that I took a great deal of interest in; but I do not say that there was any defect in those that did not interest me. I believe many people would have liked them. Considering the fact that TOP-NOTCH is widely read in this section, and I have not seen any letters from this section, which, I know, abounds in pleased readers, I decided to write to you, that our section of the country may add its testimony.

Very truly yours,
JAMES KASTL.

Morristown, N. J.



FROM Spencer, North Carolina, we have this, the writer being W. P. Kizziah:

As I seldom see a letter from North Carolina, I will write, so that you will know that TOP-NOTCH is read with as much interest here as in any of the other States. I have been a reader for a little over a year, and it simply can't be excelled. The best story I have ever read was "With Rapiers Drawn." I don't remember the author.

I also like the Western stories, and such stories as "The Voice in the Night." My favorite authors are W. E. Schutt, W. Bert Foster, A. Sadler, yourself, and Gilbert Patten. You have the best corps of writers of any magazine published. Give us more of Mr. W. E. Schutt's stories; they are certainly fine. Hoping to see this in print very soon, and to see some more letters from "The Old North State," I am, Yours very truly.

We are glad to announce that another tale by the author of "With Rapiers Drawn" will appear in an early number. That author, by the way, is W. E. Schutt. His latest effort is a colonial tale, laid in this country, and we are quite sure you are going to like it.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: Upon reading a few of the criticisms from readers of your magazine, I resolved to write to you

myself, and give you my opinion of those criticisms and of the TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE as a whole. As to the critics, if they think any better stories can be written, why don't they come out and prove it, not go giving criticisms on work that is the best that can be had.

The TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE is full of good, clean, healthy stories, and cannot be beaten in its line of stories. But I hope it will never go away from that path, or I would give up reading it even after having never missed a half month of the magazine since it has been published.

Hoping that you will ever be able to write and publish your interesting stories, I remain, yours very truly,

WILLIAM L. MULLIGAN.

Edward Street, Buffalo, N. Y.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: Not seeing any letters from South Carolina, I thought I would give you my opinion of T.-N. My favorite authors are Ralph Boston, Bertram Lebhar, J. A. Fitzgerald, and last, but not least, yourself. Please give us another Lefty and a Camera Chap story soon. Yours very truly,

WILLIAM F. WOODY.

Gaffney, S. C.



WE get many letters asking that we state what kind of stories we want for TOP-NOTCH; that if we will give the inquirer an outline of our needs he will be glad to send us something. Well, that sort of letter is rather discouraging to the editor, who thinks that people ought to be able to learn from reading the magazine what kind of stories are wanted.

We want first of all a story in the true sense of the word—something more than the elaboration of an incident or adventure. A story, as we see it, should contain at least one adventure, but the account of an adventure alone does not make a story. There

should be characters moving amid the adventure and a play of conflicting motives.

We want particularly stories about baseball, football, rowing, yachting, basket ball, hockey, tennis, lacrosse, and all other sports; these sport stories may have the color of college, industrial, or any other life.

The stories of adventure should be vigorous, brisk tales of the sea, the land, the air, the city, or country, of the East, West, North, or South—tales that are laid anywhere, preferably in the United States or territory belonging to the United States or in Canada—enough that they be real stories, fashioned upon phases of life and human passion in which normal people, young and old, will take interest.

The stories should have the feeling of to-day, and break new ground in plot and incident.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: To convince some doubtful Thomases, will you please publish this letter? I have seen quite a few letters telling how poor they thought "Service Courageous" and "Service Audacious." In my opinion these stories were very good. "Boots and Saddles" did not interest me; it seemed too complicated. Are you going to have another "Boltwood" story? I thought they were great; in fact, the best this magazine has published. "Brick King, Backstop," is A-one. This is the kind of a story that makes your magazine so popular. With best wishes

for your success from a three-year reader, I am, truly yours,

R. J. ELWORTHY.

West Orange, N. J.



SOME time ago we printed a letter from Floyd M. Elmore, of 1247 Geary Street, San Francisco, California. The writer said that a friend had agreed to pay him a dollar if his letter appeared in these talks. His friend, of course, was one of the skeptics who persist in thinking that these letters are not genuine. Now we have the following from Mr. Elmore:

Well, I have to let you know how I came out on that bet. I *did* win the dollar, and convinced many of my friends that the stories are fine. I also notice that many of them are now reading TOP-NOTCH regularly. The magazine is improving right along, and let me say that you have the best fiction magazine on the market.

"Brick King, Backstop," is better than "Lefty." When are we going to hear from Bainbridge? The "Voice in the Night" is fine, as is "Rivals of the Film."

Why don't you have Mr. Lebharr, or the others, write a story about San Francisco? I have not read a story about this city yet.

We have a Bainbridge story on hand, and as soon as we can find room it will go into the magazine.

Stories laid in the city of San Francisco have appeared in TOP-NOTCH.

The Quick Comeback

STANDING by the entrance of a large estate in the suburbs of Dublin are two huge dogs carved out of granite.

An Englishman going by in a motor thought he would have some fun with the Irish driver.

"How often, Mike, do they feed those two big dogs?"

"Whenever they bark, sir," was the straightforward reply.

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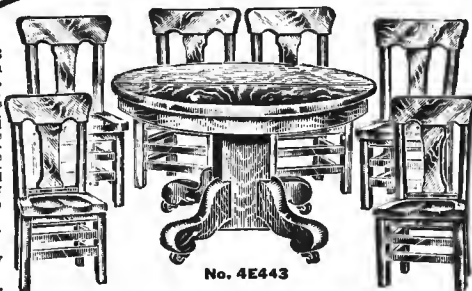
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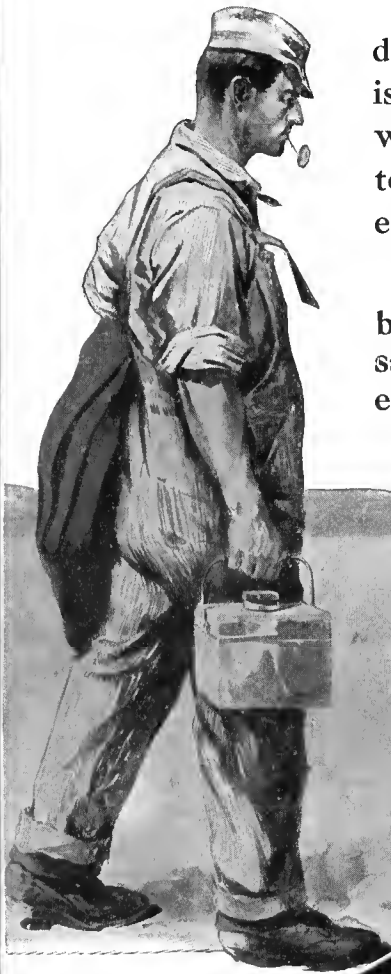
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Mechanical Draftsman	Teacher
Refrigeration Engineer	English Branches
Civil Engineer	Good English for Every One
Surveyor	Agriculture
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A Box of Film FREE With The Machine
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This Moving Picture Machine which I want to send you FREE, gives clear and life-like moving pictures as are shown at any of the regular moving picture shows. It flashes moving pictures on the sheet before you. This machine and box of films are FREE—absolutely free to every boy in this land who wants to write for an outfit, free to girls and free to older people. Read MY OFFER below.

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Received your Moving Picture Machine and am well pleased with it. My chum, Tom Neal, and I, together, made \$12.00 in one night. Every boy in the United States ought to have a Moving Picture Machine in his home. There is no end of fun.—A. M. PIERSON, Jr., Welona, Ala.

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140 West 61st Street
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We have found very great advantage in its use, and cannot speak too highly of its good qualities. We have also used it for the Sisters of our own Order, resulting in several satisfactory cures.

Two cases recently, one of the Sisters having since last March, a knee so inflamed, that she could scarcely walk. A few applications of Thermozone recently, relieved the pain and inflammation, and permitted its natural use again.

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Thermozone A new discovery with almost miraculous powers for drawing out poison and healing inflamed and suppurating sores of the skin. Makes an airtight antiseptic cover for a burnt surface and heals quicker than any other method. Retaining heat for many hours makes it ideal for Pleurisy. Severe Burns, Boils, Carbuncles, Ringworms, Rheumatism, Neuralgia, Sprains, Aching Muscles, Eczemas, yield almost instantly to this wonderful application. Outfit, consisting of a can of Thermozone, with proper accessories, prepaid, \$1.00. Sold only by the manufacturers, PASTEUR CHEMICAL CO., 98 Beekman St., New York City

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After fighting fat for 26 years I was a free and well woman, and it was the first and only time in my life that I ever had health.

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Very respectfully yours,

MARY SPENCER BORDEN for M. S. BORDEN CO.

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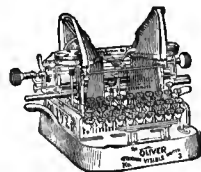
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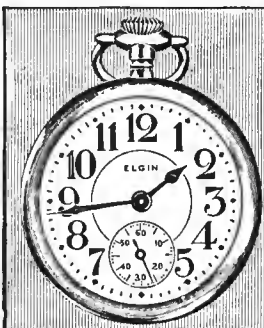
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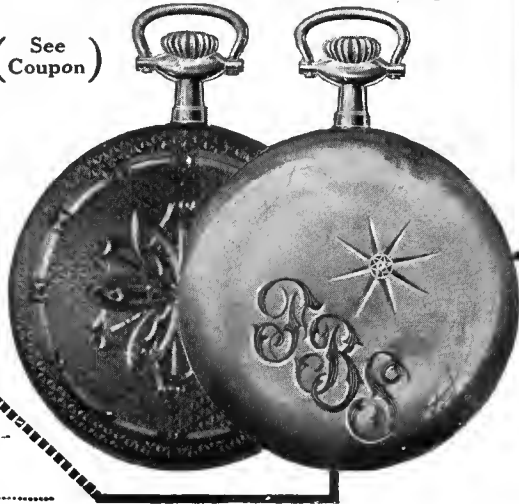
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