

MARCH-1913

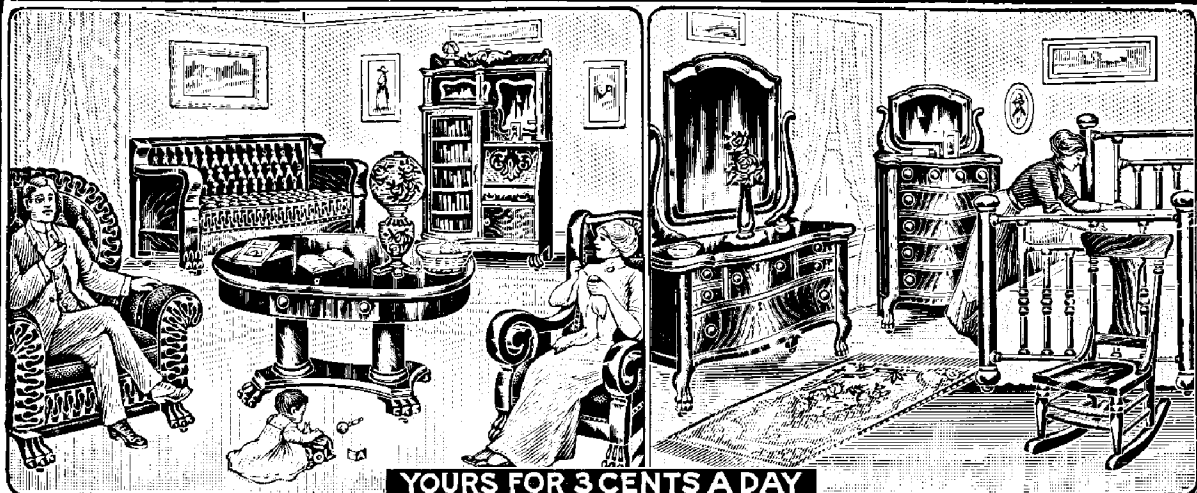
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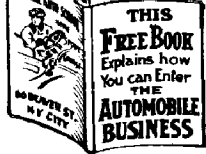
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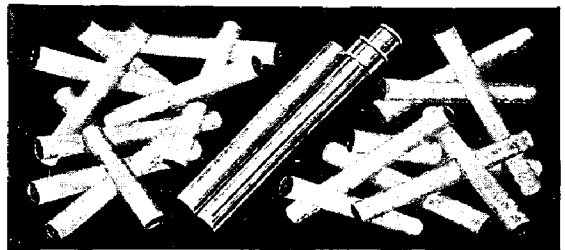
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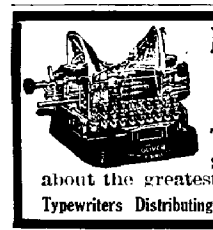
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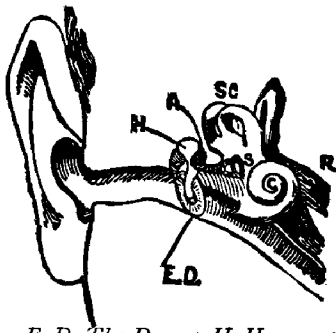
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Vol. XI

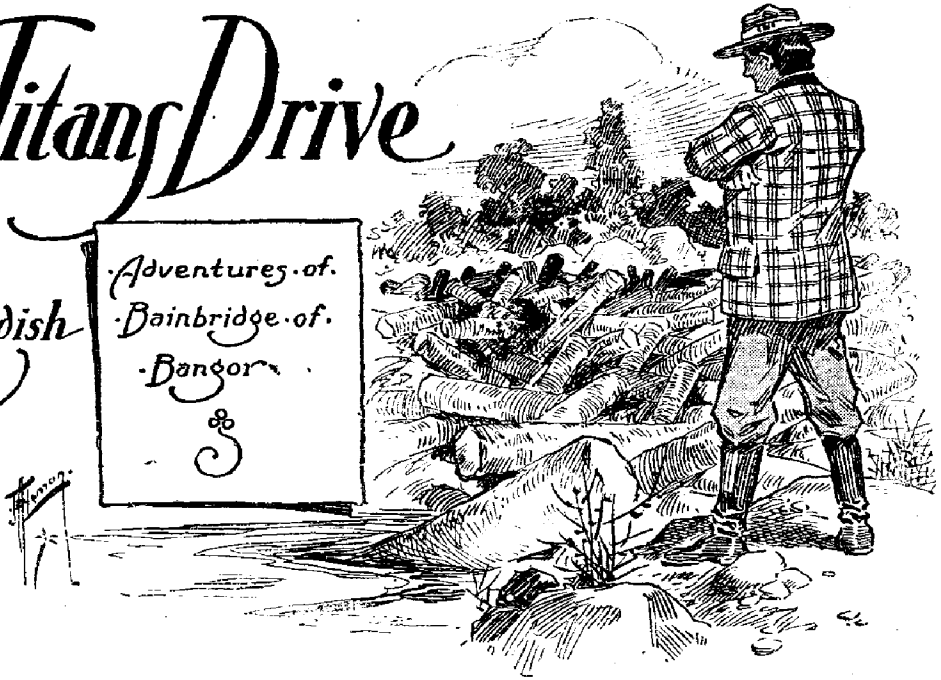
MARCH 1, 1913

No. 5

When Titans Drive

By
Burt L. Standish

Adventures of
Bainbridge of
Bangor
&



(A COMPLETE NOVEL)

CHAPTER I.

STRUCK IN THE NIGHT.

WITH muscles tense and legs spread wide apart, Bob Bainbridge found himself crouching in the middle of the office shanty. It was yet dark, and in his ears still seemed to sound the dull, rumbling detonation which had made him leap from the bunk before he was even half awake. For a second the stillness was absolute. Then from the other side of the small room came a hoarse, shaking whisper:

"Bobby! What the dickens was that?"

The young man drew a long breath,

and an instant later the flame of a match split the darkness.

"Don't know, John," he answered, hastily lighting a candle. "It sounded a lot like—dynamite!"

He set the candle down on a rough table, and, reaching for one high, spiked shoe, began swiftly to drag it on. From the bunk across the room came a stifled gasp of dismay, and a short, stout, middle-aged man with a heavy, square face and deep-set blue eyes rolled forth into the uncertain, wavering light, and sat for an instant staring at his companion.

"Dynamite!" he repeated, in a tone of consternation. "You don't mean to say——"

"I don't mean to say anything," was

the crisp reply, as Bainbridge tied the leather lacings with a jerk, and reached for the other shoe. "I only know it sounded like dynamite to me, and people don't usually set that off at three in the morning—for fun."

John Tweedy delayed no longer. With an agility surprising in one so bulky, he fairly flung himself at the pile of outer garments lying on a near-by box, and when Bainbridge, a couple of minutes later, jerked open the door to plunge forth into the night, the stout man was close at his heels.

Quickly as they had acted, there were others equally swift. The windows of the big bunk house across the clearing glowed faintly, and they had no more than reached the open before the door was flung wide to eject a crowd of men fully dressed in the garb of the lumber country. They were headed by Griggs, foreman of the drive. Tall, lean, with a tanned, impassive countenance which betrayed nothing, he glanced for a second toward the approaching pair, and then fell into step with Bainbridge.

"Well?" queried the latter crisply. "What is it, Harvey? The dam?"

The foreman's eyes narrowed, and, under the drooping lids, seemed to gleam dully.

"I don't know what else," he said. "Listen!"

For a second Bainbridge stood still, head thrust slightly forward in the direction of his foreman's pointing finger. Behind him was the thud and clatter of men still pouring from the bunk house, mingled with the bustle of those already in the open, chafing at the delay, and impatient to reach the scene of action. The wind was blowing half a gale from the north, but above it all could be heard—faintly, intermittently—the distant, ominous roar of rushing water.

It brought Bob's teeth together with a click, but not in time to cut off a savage exclamation. Then he turned and started down the slope toward the south, followed closely by the entire crowd.

The hillside was dotted thick with

stumps and great piles of tops and "slashings." The resinous, green, unwithered masses of pine branches, as well as the whiteness of stump ends and scattered chips, showed the cutting to have been lately done. It had, in fact, been completed scarcely a month before; the last load of timber had been sent down the short, narrow stream to Chebargo Lake within the past twelve hours. And at the thought of that great drive of logs, held in place by the many booms until the moment came for it to be sent down the river to the mills, Bob's jaw hardened, and his face took on an expression of tense anxiety and suspense.

Still he did not speak. Griggs was at one elbow, Tweedy at the other, both puffing a little, but moving with unexpected ease and agility. Behind, at a lope, came the throng of husky woodsmen.

At the foot of the hill Bainbridge swerved sharply to the left along the narrow stream. A space had been cleared through the undergrowth for a rough road diversified by protruding roots and bowlders, bog holes and stretches of corduroy leading across swampy places. The rush of water sounded clearer now, and more distinct, and presently, unable longer to restrain himself, Bob broke into a run.

Up and down slopes and hillocks, in and out of hard-wood groves he sped. Behind him the thud of many feet pounding on the frozen ground mingled with quickening breaths and an occasional muttered imprecation. Then suddenly the whole crowd, racing up the side of a knoll which overlooked the upper end of the lake, stopped abruptly with an odd, concerted gasp.

Below them lay the lake bed—for it was a lake no longer. In spite of the darkness, the starlight showed Bainbridge quite enough to make him give a low groan of dismay and fury.

The lake was an artificial one some two miles long by three-quarters wide, formed for the purpose of facilitating the handling of Bainbridge & Tweedy's huge Chebargo cut. The dam had been constructed only the summer before un-

der Bob's personal supervision, and was equipped with the latest thing in patent locked gates to prevent any possible meddling with the head of water.

Evidently, however, these had proved insufficient in the present instance. Out in the center of the lake bed a swiftly diminishing flow of water was vanishing toward the dam. In five minutes at most nothing would be left save the narrow, crooked stream curving between slopes of mud. Along the face of these slopes sprawled the massive, useless booms of logs which had been designed and constructed to hold in check the great drive of timber that now towered over and behind them, stranded high and dry beyond the possibility of human interference.

Bob paused here only a minute or two before starting on toward the location of the dam. He realized perfectly the futility of such a move. He knew as well as if they were looking upon the ruin that the dam had been destroyed or rendered utterly useless. The mere opening of the gates could have no such far-reaching effect as this. Nevertheless, he felt that he must see it with his own eyes before he could bring himself to plan for the future. And so he kept on.

He was right, of course. They found the concrete structure utterly ruined. More than half its surface had been blown away, leaving a great, gaping, ragged fissure through which the water must have rushed, a veritable flood. Long before that could be repaired the spring freshets would have ceased entirely. It would be a physical impossibility to bring the head of water back to its original level until next season. The great drive of finest white pine stranded back in that mudhole was doomed to lie there a prey to rot and destructive boring insects for the better part of a twelvemonth, and in the end was quite likely to prove an almost total loss.

Such a catastrophe would be a serious blow to any firm, no matter how great their resources might be. To a concern whose credit had already been strained almost to the breaking point, it would quite likely mean ruin.

CHAPTER II.

THE INDOMITABLE SPIRIT.

MY country!" gasped Tweedy, suddenly clenching a fat fist, and shaking it fiercely. "Sixty thousand dollars gone to pot! How in thunder can you stand there, Bobby, and not say a word? Don't you realize that near half our season's work is lost? That timber can't be got out this year any way you think of, an' by next spring the logs'll be so full o' worms they won't be worth touching hardly. It's Crane and his gang that's put one over on us! The trust's been after us ever since you started that reform racket, and now they've got us good!"

The stout man fairly choked in the excess of his fury, thrusting a purpling face close to Bainbridge's.

"It's sixty thousand dollars as good as thrown into the gutter," he sputtered. "For the love of Heaven, Bobby, can't you wake up and say something?"

The young man's gaze turned slowly from where it had been resting thoughtfully on that last wrecked boom with the shadowy masses of logs sprawling behind it, and he moved his shoulders impatiently.

"What's the use in saying anything until there's something to say?" he inquired, with some tartness. "I'm not quite a fool, John. I know Crane's turned a rotten trick, which is going to cripple us badly. I'm trying to think of a way out."

"Humph!" grunted Tweedy despondently. "There ain't any that I can see. I tell you, son, every penny of that sixty is gone beyond the reach of anybody."

"Not quite," Bob said curtly, turning to Griggs. "What's it cost a thousand to bark white pine, Harvey? About a dollar, isn't it?"

"Round that," nodded the foreman.

"That cuts out any danger from borers, doesn't it?" Bainbridge continued briskly.

"Sure!"

Bob's eyes narrowed, and his well-shaped mouth grew firmer. He glanced again at Tweedy, and raised his eyebrows.

"That's all there is left for us to do—eh, John?" he said quickly, and even the not particularly sensitive Tweedy was aware of a ringing undercurrent in his voice. "We'll bark 'em at once, and I'll send down to Bangor for men and material to repair the dam. Harvey will look after all that, and we'll save three-quarters, at least, of the value of the drive, in spite of Crane's dirty work."

"That may be true enough," retorted the older man dispiritedly, "but do you realize what it's going to mean to lose the use of that capital for a whole year?"

He stepped closer to his young partner, and lowered his voice to a whisper:

"You know the condition we're in financially, Bob. This campaign of yours against graft has cost us money—bunches of it. Our resources have never been so low. This loss is going to cripple us in a way which even the officials of the trust, with all their means of finding out things, can't guess. It may be impossible even to get credit, and I don't see how on earth we're going to get through the year without something——"

"We've got to!" Bob's voice was hard and determined. "Can't you see that's just what Crane's after? He's done this to draw our sting and leave us helpless. We'll have to weather the storm somehow, John. I'll be hanged if I'll let that crowd of crooks have their way. We've got the biggest stock of manufactured lumber in years—that's one good thing. The other is our Megantic drive. Once that's down at the mills we ought to be in fair shape, and able to tell our esteemed former partner and his crowd to go to—Halifax."

But Tweedy refused to brace up and look upon the bright side. Instead of being cheered and encouraged by Bob's optimistic manner and fighting spirit, his frown deepened, and his lips drooped still farther at the corners.

"Once it's at the mills—yes," he retorted significantly. "What guarantee have we got that it'll ever get there? You don't suppose for a minute they're

going to let that alone, do you, after what they've done here?"

Bainbridge flung back his head, his dark eyes glittering.

"No, but they're welcome to try their darndest!" he exclaimed. "They can't turn any such trick as this, and I mean to start for the Megantic camp as soon as day breaks. I'll stick with that drive till the last log is safe in our mill booms, and if the gang tries any more dirty work there'll be something doing, believe me! You'd better beat it down to Bangor and arrange about credit. You can do it, somehow. It's going to be a fight to the finish, John,—and I reckon they'll find out before it's over that we're not quite the easy marks they seem to think."

Tweedy made no reply save a pessimistic hunch of his pudgy shoulders. It seemed to him that Bainbridge was decidedly underestimating the extent of the damage done them by the treachery of those cowardly miscreants who, though actually unknown, could not possibly be other than tools of the hostile and unscrupulous Lumber Trust.

For practically the entire winter the firm had been pouring out money in wages, supplies, and equipment, expecting to clean up large and immediate profits from as fine a lot of timber as either of the lumbermen had ever seen. To have the entire drive suddenly stranded in this manner was like losing every cent which had been paid out, for Tweedy was not at all sure that anything could be saved from the wreck. He had no great faith in the efficacy of barking. It seemed like throwing good money after bad, and he said as much in very decided terms when they were back in the office shanty making hurried preparations for instant departure.

He was overruled, however, by both Bainbridge and Griggs, who were quite certain the logs could be saved at an expenditure of about a fifth of their value. And since Bob was in charge of the woods end of the business, the older man was forced to give in.

There followed, during a hasty breakfast, a brief consultation regarding the steps Tweedy should take to-

ward getting additional credit, at the same time doing his best, of course, to sell at once some of their big stock of manufactured lumber. Griggs was given instructions as to the method of working and the number of men to keep. Then came a hurried farewell between the two partners.

The sun had scarcely risen above the fringe of trees around the camp before Tweedy was being driven rapidly toward the nearest railroad station, while Bob, accompanied only by Joe Moose, an Indian guide, was sitting in the stern of a canoe, paddling steadily up Chebargo Stream.

CHAPTER III.

MORE TREACHERY.

THE Megantic drive, starting from a point some forty miles northwest of Chebargo, was already in motion. Its course would be down the Megantic Stream through several ponds and lakes into the Katahdin River, and thence down the Penobscot to the mills at Bangor.

By paddling upstream and making three portages of less than a mile each, Bainbridge and the guide cut off a lot of distance, and struck the Megantic between the second and third lake toward three in the afternoon.

Knowing when Pete Schaeffer, the drive boss, had started, Bob calculated that he would have advanced considerably beyond this point, and turned the canoe downstream, keeping a close lookout along the banks for signs which would inevitably be left by a great drive.

The country was rough and wild, the stream boiling and tumbling between rather high, rocky banks. Presently, however, these gave place to lower, muddy stretches, which bore no single trace of stranded logs, or the tracks made by the rear crew following along behind a big drive and "sacking" the river.

It took Bob very little time to make certain of this, and his heavy, dark brows came suddenly together above

the bridge of his well-shaped nose, a single, emphatic line.

"The drive hasn't passed," he said abruptly, thrusting his paddle straight down by the side of the canoe, and stopping the frail craft instantly.

The Indian moved slightly, and turned a copper-colored profile over one shoulder.

"Him held up above," he suggested. "Mebbe jam."

"Jam!" repeated Bainbridge sharply. "Why should there be a jam? The stream's straight and wide enough, with a fine head of water. The hard parts come farther down. With a boss on the job, and halfway attending to business, the drive ought to be down as far as Loon Lake by this time."

Still frowning, he gave a wide, powerful sweep of his paddle, which headed the canoe upstream.

"Besides," he went on, as the craft danced along under the impetus of their sturdy, practiced strokes, "Schaeffer's had time to break up half a dozen ordinary jams. He's no fool, and he knows his business as well as any man in the country. He knows this high water can't last much longer, and that we're altogether dependent on it till we reach the Penobscot. If he——"

A sudden extremely unpleasant thought made the speaker break off abruptly, with a swift catching of his breath. His frown deepened into a scowl, and a touch of angry red glowed under the clear, healthy tan of his clean-cut face.

"Mebbe him no care about making hurry," remarked the Indian coolly, without even glancing around. "Mebbe him like to see drive hang up."

The extraordinary manner in which the guide's comment chimed in with his own mental process fairly took Bob's breath away. He hesitated for an instant, wondering whether the Indian knew anything special or whether his remark had been prompted by mere guesswork. Knowing Moose for many years, Bainbridge had never been quite able to determine whether the man was attached to him personally, as sometimes in his stolid, self-restrained man-

ner he seemed to be. It was more likely to be simply the canny shrewdness of the native knowing on which side his bread was buttered. At all events, Bob had never counted on it to the extent of any great familiarity, though, under the conditions in which they were frequently alone together in the woods, he could scarcely help letting down the bars a little.

"What makes you say that?" he asked, suddenly making up his mind. "What earthly reason could Pete Schaeffer have for wanting to see the drive hang up? He's been offered a bonus for every extra day he gains in landing the logs at the mill booms."

The square, buckskin-covered shoulders hunched again. "Mebbe not offer 'nuff," retorted the Indian stolidly. "Mebbe he get more to hang up drive."

"Who the deuce are you talking about, Joe?" inquired Bainbridge crisply. "Who would pay him to play a dirty trick like that?"

The guide slowly turned his head, and regarded Bob with a sort of impassive significance.

"Big Punch know who," he retorted briefly.

"Perhaps I do, perhaps not." Bob's tone was decidedly impatient. "Anyhow, let's have the name, and see if we agree."

"Huh!" grunted Moose wearily. "Him Crane. Pete, he great friends with Crane's man, K'lock."

Bainbridge's jaw dropped, and unconsciously he drove his paddle deep down into the current, checking the canoe for a moment or two.

"Bill Kollock!" he exploded, in angry amazement. "Do you know what you're talking about, Joe?"

The Indian grinned faintly.

"Sure! Joe see 'em in s'loon in Bangor heap many times. Ver' friendly. Come to Pete's camp yonder five—six days ago, see K'lock goin' away."

Bob's face was scarlet with rage, and the eyes fastened upon the guide's impassive countenance flashed.

"You did, did you?" he cried angrily. "Why didn't you tell me, then? You talk a lot about being a friend of mine.

Why didn't you put me wise to all this before?"

"Big Punch no ask of K'lock," replied the Indian. "Joe think he no care. Think he pull K'lock's stinger last month when find him out."

Bainbridge's lips, parted for a vitriolic retort, closed with a snap, and he resumed his paddling in silence. After all, the fellow was not to blame for possessing the characteristic Indian quality of reticence. Knowing his habit of wandering all over the northern part of the State, Bob should have questioned him the instant the Indian set foot in Chebargo camp the day before.

But questioned him for what purpose? Up to five minutes ago not the slightest suspicion of Pete Schaeffer had ever entered his employer's head. The man had worked for them a number of years. He was quiet and taciturn, sometimes almost sullen; but few woodsmen have much to say for themselves. He had proved himself more than competent, and was apparently faithful to the interests of those who paid his wages.

"Faithful so long as it suited his purpose and no longer!" said Bainbridge under his breath. "The minute the trust gets after him to do its dirty work he's perfectly willing to knife us. I can hardly wait to get at the cur!"

He was obliged to postpone that gratification a good deal longer than he had expected, however. Though they strained every effort, and sent the canoe fairly flying upstream, the sun sank lower and lower, without the slightest sign of the drive appearing.

With every thousand feet of progress Bob grew more raging. When at length the sun dipped behind the cold, gray, distant hill line, he was filled with a hot, furious anger against the treacherous Schaeffer—an anger which needed every ounce of will power he possessed to suppress.

Determined to find the drive, and have a settlement that night, he stubbornly continued to paddle long after darkness had fallen, and when they could not see much more than a boat

length in any direction. At length, however, there was forced upon him a realization of his folly. It would be much wiser to land now and camp, continuing the journey at daybreak, rather than try to make headway through this pitchy blackness.

Still reluctant to pause, Bob milled this over in his mind for ten minutes or more before finally giving the word to Moose, who had made no comment of any sort. The Indian obeyed stolidly, driving the canoe toward the right bank. Within five minutes the two men were hunting dry sticks for a fire.

Later, as he sat relaxed before the grateful blaze, consuming the rough supper with an appetite which only life in those wonderful north woods can give, Bainbridge remained preoccupied, his forehead wrinkled thoughtfully, and his brooding eyes fixed upon the dancing flames.

CHAPTER IV.

THE JAM ON MEGANTIC.

THERE was no time lost either in turning in that night or in rising next morning. So early was Bainbridge astir that the cold, gray half-light dawn had barely begun to lighten the velvety blackness. The two men had embarked and were paddling vigorously upstream before it was possible to see more than the vague, indistinct shadows of concrete things.

Bob's rage at the treachery of his trusted drive boss had not lessened greatly. There was mingled with it, however, a bitter hatred for the man higher up, and a dogged determination not only to thwart Elihu Crane in his attempt to ruin the independent firm, but to carry the war into the enemies' camp with a zest and vim which his more or less impersonal blocking of the Lumber Trust's game had hitherto lacked.

Before sunrise they had reached and crossed the first of the three lakes, which was little more than a good-sized pond. Two miles northwest of the inlet another stream, almost as large, joined the Megantic. The juncture was

scarcely passed before Bainbridge became aware of the slackening current, and unnaturally low level of water in the stream. Something was holding it back, and that something could be nothing less than a jam of unusual size and extent.

Bob's eyes narrowed ominously, and three deep, vertical lines flashed suddenly into view above the straight nose. Downstream there were several spots which had always been more or less dreaded by river drivers. There all the skill and care in the world could not always prevent trouble. To the northward, however, was comparatively clear sailing. The most ordinary skill in driving, and just average attention to business would make the forming of a jam impossible.

Bob set his teeth, and drove the canoe ahead swiftly. He made no comment, nor did the guide. For ten minutes or so they paddled in silence. Bainbridge was quite aware that under ordinary conditions such a proceeding would have been foolhardy to a degree. For all he knew the jam might be started at any moment; the swirling, tumbling logs might sweep down upon them with irresistible force, overwhelming them before they could even reach the shore. But these were not ordinary conditions. Having allowed the jam to form with malicious intent, there was not one chance in a hundred of Schaeffer's doing anything to break it unless absolutely forced to.

Events proved the accuracy of this judgment. Some three miles above the juncture of the two streams the Megantic curved suddenly to the westward almost at a right angle, narrowing around the bend to less than two-thirds its usual width. It was at this narrow spot that Bainbridge expected to find the jam, and before they had circled the bend he saw above the low fringe of bushes on the point the jagged, bristling line of logs thrust high above the surface of the choked and dwindling stream by the tremendous pressure of well-nigh the whole drive behind it.

There was not the slightest hint of hesitation or indecision in the manner

of Bainbridge now. He had evidently made up his mind exactly what course to take, and he proceeded to take it without delay. His face was no longer impatient or angry, but stern and determined, while his black eyes gleamed with satisfaction that the tedious delay was over at last and he could begin to act.

Speaking briefly in a low tone to the Indian, he turned the canoe inshore and drove the bow deftly up on the gently sloping bank. Giving Moose a hand in carrying the light craft well back into the bushes, Bainbridge straightened up and pushed through the undergrowth toward the scene of action.

From the location of the jam came the sound of intermittent clinking, as of peavies languidly applied. Mingled with it was a vast deal of loud talk and raucous laughter which brought Bob's lips together tightly, and made him flush darkly under his tan. He uttered not a word of comment, even to himself. His muscular fists were clenched as he strode on.

Though he made not the slightest effort at concealment, conditions were such that his approach was entirely unnoticed. Passing swiftly through the bushes, with the Indian close behind, he reached the other side and paused for a moment, staring intently at the scene before him.

From this viewpoint the jam looked much more serious and far-reaching than from below. It seemed like some huge abatis bristling with spikes, and holding in place a vast expanse of tumbled timber piled up and mingled together in inextricable confusion. A greenhorn, unused to lumbering conditions, would have said at once that no human power could possibly break up this terrific tangle. Bainbridge's practiced eye, ranging swiftly from right to left, and back again to the breast of the jam, saw instantly that affairs were serious indeed, but far from being hopeless.

He looked for Schaeffer, but at first he could see nothing of the person who was supposed to have charge of operations. There were in sight some sev-

enty or eighty men, fully half of whom were gathered on the near bank, lounging in groups, laughing, talking, smoking, or sprawling at full length in the sun, luxuriating in its increasing warmth. Scattered over the jam were the remainder of the crew, making a half-hearted pretense at working which could not possibly deceive any one. As he watched one after another of them dally with a peavey in an indolent, purposeless kind of way, smoking a cigarette the while, and carrying on a jocular sort of repartee with neighbors, Bainbridge felt swelling within him the fury he had so long suppressed, but which seemed now as if it must find expression.

He was about to step impetuously from the undergrowth, and wake up that crowd with a volley of vigorous English, when a figure appeared at the entrance of one of the tents pitched a little way back from the water. At the sight of this person the watcher held himself motionless, a gleam of intense satisfaction flashing into his eyes.

The man was tall and lean and narrow-joined, with wide, muscular shoulders. His face was rather rough hewn, and the heavy black brows gave him a lowering, almost sullen look. There was, however, no lack of strength and intelligence of a certain sort in his expression. One would never have called him stupid, even though his appearance might not seem particularly prepossessing.

He stood for a second or two staring at the jam and that throng of men playing at work, without changing his expression a particle. Then he strolled slowly down toward the crowd, hands thrust into his pockets, and lithe body swaying easily from side to side in the manner of one having all the time there is.

His course led him along the edge of the bushes, and Bainbridge waited his coming with poorly restrained impatience. The man's complacency infuriated him, and yet he was wise enough to realize that now was the time of all others when it was absolutely necessary to hold himself in hand. He stood

there, lips tightly pressed together, and nails digging into the palms of his hands, until the foreman was almost opposite. Then he stepped suddenly forth.

"I seem to have arrived at a very opportune moment, Schaeffer," he said.

The man gave a barely perceptible start, and stopped with a jerk. For an instant he stared at Bainbridge, the dull red creeping slowly up from the open collar of his flannel shirt. Then his thin lips curled in a smile which held little mirth in it.

"Quite a surprise you've given us, Mr. Bainbridge," he drawled. "Didn't expect you around for a week yet."

Bob's eyes blazed dangerously, but his voice was steady and cold as ice.

"That's very evident," he retorted curtly, with a swift side glance at the jam.

Schaeffer moved his shoulders slightly and his lids drooped a little. Otherwise he entirely ignored Bainbridge's meaning.

"Yes, we got in a bit o' trouble here," he said coolly; "but it ain't anything very serious. Now that the boys are all here to git after it, we'll have her pullin' in great shape before you can say Jack Robinson."

Bainbridge took a single step forward, bringing his flushed and angry face close to Schaeffer's.

"Don't think for a minute you can bluff me with that sort of rot, Schaeffer," he said, in a voice which held in it the essence of concentrated fury. "I've been standing here for ten minutes watching what's going on out there. I never yet had a man who was fool enough to let a drive hang up at this bend unless he wanted to. Get me? I'm wise to everything, and the sooner you pack your duffle bag and beat it out of here the better it'll be for you."

Schaeffer's face had turned a brick red, and his eyes were glittering dangerously. For a second Bainbridge thought the man meant to pour out a furious stream of profane abuse. Instead of that, however, he turned suddenly, and his gaze swept keenly over the throng of men, each one of who had

become aware of the newcomer's presence, and was watching the altercation with frank curiosity and interest.

"So I'm fired, am I?" inquired Schaeffer, in an oddly gentle voice, and without glancing at Bainbridge. "Fired without a chance to say a word in my own defense?"

"You are!" retorted Bob crisply. "As for saying anything in your own defense, you may as well save your breath. I haven't the time or the inclination to listen to lies. You've played the traitor and been found out, and if anybody ever asks why I let you go they'll get the truth—no more, no less."

"That so?" murmured Schaeffer, idly moving a small pebble with the toe of his heavy, spiked shoe. "I wonder, now?"

Without the slightest warning or preliminary movement of any sort, he whirled and smashed Bob square in the face with every ounce of strength he possessed. Bainbridge, staggered by the force and unexpectedness of it, stumbled back, tripped, and struck the ground with a crash. The drive boss leaped forward, his face distorted with passion, and delivered a fierce, slashing kick straight at the prostrate man's groin.

CHAPTER V.

FIGHTING FOUL.

HALF stunned though he was, Bob still had the wit to fling himself swiftly to one side, and he did so with such quick, intuitive agility that the long, sharp spikes of Schaeffer's shoe barely grazed the flesh of his thigh.

Bob Bainbridge's brain was cleared with the thoroughness and rapidity of an electric shock. He leaped to his feet just as the foreman tripped over Joe Moose's deftly extended foot, and crashed headlong to the ground.

"Get up, you cur!" cried Bainbridge, as he jerked off the encumbering Mackinaw and tossed it from him. "Get up and take what's coming to you!"

He was filled with the sudden, fierce, elemental joy of physical combat. For

what seemed an eternity he had been holding himself in check by sheer will power, and now the relief of handling with bare fists this fellow who had played such a contemptible trick upon him was indescribable.

Schaeffer was on his feet like a cat, and came at Bainbridge with a rush. Bob side-stepped, swinging with his right at the drive boss' ribs. To his astonishment the blow was blocked with the cleverness of a professional. An instant later Schaeffer whirled like a Dervish, and again his opponent felt the tearing of those spikes in the flesh of his left leg as he went staggering to both knees.

The surprise of discovering that Schaeffer could box scientifically was undoubtedly what checked Bob, and gave the fellow a chance to get in that second foul kick. The touch of those spikes, the realization that a man who *could* fight fairly and squarely was low enough to resort to such disgraceful tactics, made Bainbridge see red. Whether the Indian interfered again in his behalf he could not tell. He only knew that he was on his feet once more, fighting instinctively, and fairly overwhelming his opponent with a series of rushes which there was no withstanding. Schaeffer blocked them as best he could, depending a lot on clever footwork, and waited for his chance. It seemed certain that Bainbridge would soon let up and take things easier, and then it would be possible for the tricky riverman to use some of the other fouls of which he seemed to be a master.

The moment Bob came to his senses he did cut down his steam considerably. No human being could keep up that speed for any length of time and hope for victory, and Bainbridge meant to be victorious in this struggle. Even though Schaeffer possessed the skill of a champion, he must be beaten in some way, for the thought of succumbing to a treacherous cur like this was intolerable.

The fight which followed was a strange one. Bainbridge had never known anything like it in all his varied experience as a boxer. His opponent

possessed exceptional skill in the art; he would, in fact, have been a hard man to defeat in the conventional ring. Add to this a knowledge of fouling which was simply extraordinary, and it will be seen what sort of an antagonist he was.

The mere mental strain involved was exhausting. Not only had Bob the thousand legitimate devices of the ring to look out for, but he never knew when to expect a vicious jab below the belt, or a nasty butt from the head. And always in the back of his mind was a fear that those murderous spikes might at any moment strike deeply, maimingly, at the vital spot for which they had been aimed twice before.

By this time, of course, every "river hog" within sight had raced up, and the combatants were surrounded by a ring of eager spectators, several deep, which swayed and moved and billowed out elastically as the fight progressed. A number of them were evidently in sympathy with Schaeffer, and kept urging him to go in and win, but the majority remained silent save for occasional muttered ejaculations when a particularly clever or vicious blow struck home. Moose, his small black eyes glistening, but otherwise as stolid and unmoved as ever, managed constantly to retain his position in the front row.

For a long time Bainbridge kept his opponent in hand. Always the strain of waiting, expecting, planning to meet the unknown foul, was uppermost in his mind, to the exclusion of almost everything else. He knew in an intuitive sort of way that he was fighting well. He had landed several blows which staggered the man, and the fellow's face, from which Bob never for an instant withdrew his eyes, was cut and bleeding. That proved little, however. He was evidently the sort that could take any amount of punishment, and come up for more. His wind seemed to be quite as good as Bob's, and at length the latter was conscious of a single flash of doubt regarding the issue.

What if he should not win, as he had determined in the beginning? What if Schaeffer should, by fair means or foul,

manage to knock him out? It would not be like an ordinary knock-out—simply the end of a fairly fought contest to decide which of two men is the better scrapper. He would be helpless for a space, and in the power of this cur who had thus far stopped at nothing. Moose could accomplish little on his behalf when opposed by the crowd of spectators, all of whom seemed, from what Bainbridge had caught of their comments, to be on Schaeffer's side.

The thought of what might happen was not a pleasant one, and possibly it was that which led to Bainbridge's undoing. He had so far instinctively avoided clinches as being favorable to fouls, but now, with his mind for a second partially distracted, after delivering a left-hand jab he did not spring back as swiftly as he might have done. The riverman took instant advantage of the chance, and leaped forward, gripping Bob's wrist. In an instant Bainbridge had wrenched it away, but not too soon to prevent that close contact which he felt to be so dangerous.

"He'll try something dirty now," flashed through Bob's brain. "I knew it! No, you don't—now."

Just in time he saw Schaeffer's left knee suddenly jerked up and forward. Like a flash he leaped to one side, his whole mind intent on thwarting the intended trick, and so he fell for a move which would never ordinarily have bothered him.

A clenched fist, hard and compact almost as a stone, thudded solidly on the very point of his jaw. Bainbridge went suddenly limp, slipping noiselessly to the ground.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FINISH UNEXPECTED.

AS Bob toppled forward and lay still, a long, deep, concerted sigh of released tension arose from the spectators, followed by a chorus of admiring commendation. These rough-and-ready river hogs saw nothing unfair in their foreman's method of fighting. The woods' rules of combat are simple. "Get

your man," is the principle one. The manner of getting does not count.

"Nice work, Pete!" called one. "Pretty!"

"Good for you, old buck! You put him to sleep fine!"

Schaeffer made no reply to these comments; in fact, it is doubtful if he heard them. His face, torn and bleeding in many places, bore an expression of utter savagery. His cut lips were drawn back over sharp teeth in a bestial snarl. His fists were clenched tightly, and every muscle was tense as he stood glaring down with hate-filled, bloodshot eyes at the body of his fallen opponent.

"You meddling dog!" he snarled viciously, after a momentary silence. "Thought you could lick me, did you? Thought you could put one over on me, you skunk! Well, you got yours, an' I ain't done with you yet, not by a long shot!"

He took a single swift step toward the prostrate man. It was plain to every one that he meant to drive that heavy, spiked boot again and again at the helpless body, yet not one of the rivermen uttered a word of protest. A number of faces expressed disapproval, but in the big woods if a man chooses to end a combat in this manner it isn't etiquette to interfere.

Schaeffer paused beside the prostrate figure for a second or two, as if to prolong his pleasurable anticipation. Then, with a sudden snarl of returning fury, he swiftly drew back one foot.

"Stop!"

The word which came snapping across the circle held in it so much of the essence of command that the riverman obeyed instinctively; obeyed, and then, realizing what he had done, foamed with a fresh fury.

"Why, you copper-colored whelp!" he exploded, glaring darkly at the imperturbable redskin. "Wait! When I get through with this junk here——"

He stopped abruptly, and drew his breath with a whistling sound. Joe Moose was moving leisurely toward him, a most efficient-looking revolver

pointed casually at the riverman's stomach. He halted within a few feet of Schaeffer, and stood regarding him with that cool, expressionless stare which was so characteristic. On the ground between them Bainbridge gave a low groan, and moved his head uneasily from side to side.

"Fight not finish," remarked the Indian blandly. "Bell go clang, like in ring. Heap soon Big Punch get up, start 'nother round. Get me, Steve?"

Schaeffer took an involuntary step backward, his face distorted.

"Somebody get busy an' put this lunatic out o' business," he roared, glaring around at the ring of interested faces. "Bury a lead slug in his worthless carcass where it'll do the most good."

The guide was bending over his friend, vigorously chafing one limp hand.

"Better not," he advised coolly, without raising his eyes. "Joe's gun go off plenty quick. Hit Pete in bread basket. Make plenty bad hole no cork up."

His weapon was still aimed directly at the discomfited riverman's person, and Schaeffer seemed for the moment bereft of ideas for a proper retort. The silence was swiftly broken by a loud guffaw from one of the spectators, to whom the whole affair seemed to appeal as something uncommonly amusing.

"By thunder, boys!" he chuckled. "Hanged if the flea-bitten old cuss ain't right! The kid's comin' around fast. I move we call this the end o' the first round, an' let the fight go on. It'll help pass the time away, if nothin' else."

Schaeffer snapped out an angry expostulation, but the Indian's idea seemed to take with the rough-and-ready crowd. Not one of them thought for an instant that the contest could possibly be drawn out for more than a few minutes longer, or they would, perhaps, not have been so eager. As it was, however, they took the Indian's part with a rough sort of jocularly which the irritated drive boss knew better than to oppose.

And so when Bainbridge struggled

back to consciousness—it had not been a complete knock-out, and he had never, save for the briefest second, been entirely senseless—he found this unexpected condition of affairs.

As his glance flashed past the Indian's inquiring black eyes, and came to rest on Schaeffer's sullen, hate-filled face, he made a queer, inarticulate noise in his throat, and tried to scramble up. Moose placed a firm, restraining hand quietly on his chest, and forced him back.

"Take easy," he whispered. "Plenty time. Big Punch lie still. Get wind."

Bob was no more anxious for this delay than was his complaining antagonist, but he was forced by Moose to keep his place even to a point when the spectators began to grumble. When at last he was allowed to get on his feet, however, he was more than thankful for the redskin's wisdom. Even now his legs were not quite steady; the dragging lassitude and weakness which had gripped him were not wholly gone.

It vanished an instant later before that rush of vim and vigor and fierce determination—strange as the second wind which surprises the distressed runner—that suddenly came over him.

He waited Schaeffer's savage charge instead of meeting it; waited with a cunning pretense of weakly swaying on his heels. But when the riverman was almost on him, he side-stepped neatly, lashing out a stinging right which caught his antagonist on one cheek, and sent him spinning around.

That blow was the beginning of the end. In itself it was nothing, but it marked a vital change in Bainbridge's method of fighting. Hitherto his work had been clever boxing, to be sure, but just a trifle lacking in that dynamic energy which animated his opponent. The sense of fight convention was so strongly ingrained that, without consciousness of so doing, he was playing according to the rules.

Now, though he lost not a particle of his former skill, he used the defensive part of it less. He did not parry or block or feint so much. His work became more simple, more elemental, and

—more deadly. He was out for results now. The hot blood tingled through his veins and flamed into his brain. The crude brute lust for combat gripped him to the exclusion of all else. This man had hurt him cruelly, and humiliated him beyond words. He meant to make him pay, and pay well, for both these injuries. The only difference now between himself and his opponent was that he continued to fight fairly, if ferociously, while Schaeffer did not.

The latter found little opportunity of fouling, however. To his amazement, he discovered that he needed every bit of skill and strength he possessed to keep his feet. Bob bored into him relentlessly, slugging like a pile driver, hammering at his stomach, raining well-directed blows on the heart and kidneys, or varying them now and then with a solid jolt to the jaw.

At first Schaeffer met this extraordinary assault with blind confidence in his ability to wear it out, accompanied by a furious anger at the presumption of the man. But swiftly this mental attitude changed to doubt, nervousness—at length to fear.

It was all so pitilessly indomitable, so machinelike, yet not at all mechanical, that Schaeffer began to grow afraid. He had a yellow streak, of course—men of his stamp usually have—and now it began to come out. His defense grew weaker and more flurried. Bainbridge's punches struck home with increasing strength and frequency. Once, after a series of swift, smashing blows in the face, Schaeffer staggered back and dropped his guard involuntarily. Bob was following up with a straight body punch, but his cracked and bleeding fist stopped less than an inch, it seemed, from his opponent's heaving chest.

"Put up your hands, you cur!" he panted harshly. "This fight isn't over yet. Put 'em up and get busy!"

A second later, having obeyed ineffectually, Schaeffer was flung back into the astonished crowd by a jolt which nearly cracked his jaw.

"Let up on him!" suddenly cried one of the men who had been particularly eager, earlier in the game, in urging

Schaeffer to the attack. "He's had enough, I says. Time to quit an' have done with it."

Bainbridge flung back a long lock of black hair with a quick jerk of his head, and glared around the circle with fiercely blazing eyes.

"Is that so?" he jeered. "Who's running this game? I didn't hear any talk like that when I was getting the worst of it. You were ready enough to let him do what he liked with me, so keep out of this now while he takes his medicine."

His glance veered swiftly to Schaeffer's face, looking like a chalky mask dabbled with crimson, and he thrust his head forward.

"Well?" he sneered. "Scared, are you? I thought you were yellow down at the bottom. Put up your hands!" His voice was hard and cold, and utterly pitiless. "I'm not half done with you yet."

The man's exhausted, almost pitiful condition did not move him in the slightest. He thought only of the fellow's treachery, of the repeated exhibitions of foul play and attempts to maim, and he had no mercy. When the riverman raised his hands in a weak, instinctive attempt at defense, Bainbridge leaped forward and broke his guard by smashing blows on the face.

Schaeffer gasped, cried out in agony, and then thrust forward blind, groping hands. He was a picture of utter helplessness, and suddenly the sight of him standing there, with quivering lips and trembling hands, aroused in Bainbridge a bitter disgust—disgust for Schaeffer, for himself, and every one in sight.

He stepped back, his heavy black brows contracted in a frown, and stood for a second sizing up his man, and deciding just what sort of a punch would most quickly end the contest. Like a flash he leaped forward. The blow started almost at Bob's hip, and held the whole compact mass of him behind it. It doubled Schaeffer like a jackknife, and sent him whirling backward into the arms of his men, a limp, utterly senseless mass.

CHAPTER VII.

MASTER OF THE SITUATION.

UNCONSCIOUSLY Bob Bainbridge stepped back a pace or two, and rested one hand on the shoulder of Moose. He was breathing hard, and the reaction from the stress and strain of vigorous fighting made him feel limp and unsteady.

No hint of this appeared on the surface. With cold, unemotional eyes he watched three or four men pick up the unconscious Schaeffer and carry him back to the tent.

Some of the men stood staring curiously, but the majority had gathered about a brawny youngster, handsome in a physical way, with bold blue eyes, a thatch of tawny yellow curls, and a reckless, dare-devil manner. He was one of those who had been readiest to take Schaeffer's part, and now, as he turned toward Bainbridge, followed by a dozen or more of his companions, Bob was conscious of a sudden, curious sense of familiarity with the boy's face. For a second he thought it simply the result of a rather good memory. This was his first sight of Schaeffer's river gang, but it was quite possible he had run across the rather striking youngster at some other time or place.

Curiously, yet impassively, he watched the latter approach. There was a devil-may-care impudence in the very swing of his lithe, muscular body. When he came to a stop before the lumberman, hat stuck rakishly on one side of that yellow thatch, and hands resting lightly on his slim hips, his whole manner was one of such cool arrogance that Bob's eyes narrowed, and the angry blood began to tingle again through his veins.

"Look here," said the fellow insolently, "that was one dirty trick you played on Pete, and you're goin' to pay for it. Do you know what we're goin' to do——"

"Yes!" flamed Bainbridge, in a voice which made more than one husky river hog start nervously. "I do! You're going down to that jam on the jump—and *work!* Get me? I mean real work,

too, and not an imitation of kids playing. Thanks to a crooked drive boss the logs are hung up where no drive ever hung before. If you'd been half-way men you'd never have let such a thing happen."

"By' cripes!" roared the blond furiously, leaping at Bob. "There ain't a man livin' as can talk like that to me an' git away with it. Why, you city dude, I'm going to show you that you can't——"

"Cut that!"

Bainbridge suddenly loosened his grip on the Indian's shoulder, and thrust his face squarely into the young fellow's, until scarcely six inches separated them. He said not another word, but something blazed in his black eyes which presently sent the lids fluttering down over the blue ones, and brought a touch of dull scarlet flaming dully beneath the deeply tanned skin. It was simply the force of a stronger nature, a nature untroubled by brag and bluster which imposes its will on others by sheer strength of character.

The instant the silent duel had ended, Bob flung back his head and glanced again at the puzzled, waiting throng of men.

"I'm Bob Bainbridge," he said, in a crisp, unemotional tone, which was in odd contrast to the sense of tension just passed. "We've wasted entirely too much time jawing, and it's up to you boys to get a move on. That jam's got to be started before sundown. Understand? Now, where's the jam boss, Jack Peters?"

"Laid up," explained one of the men, after a moment's hesitation. "He got his foot near cut off with an ax."

Bainbridge's eyes narrowed. This would be termed an accident, of course, but there was no doubt in his mind that it was simply another score to the credit of Schaeffer and the men who had bribed him to do his dirty work.

"Humph!" he shrugged. "Where's your dynamite, then? Oh, you're the one, are you? Well, get your stuff down to the jam in a hurry. How many charges have been fired already?"

With downcast eyes the riverman ex-

plained that dynamite had not yet been used. Bob's lips curled.

"I might have guessed it," he said scornfully. "Well, hustle along the canned thunder! The rest of you get ready to follow down the drive."

The men obeyed without question, and in a moment were streaming toward the jam. Besides command in Bainbridge's voice, there was optimistic confidence which stirred these rough-and-ready river hogs. Because Schaeffer ordered it they had dawdled along fruitlessly for several days, knowing perfectly well that the jam was beyond any hope from picking, and that dynamite was the only thing which would stir it. Superficially they had enjoyed these days of loafing, but deep down in their hearts had lingered a feeling of personal shame that a gang of supposedly A-1 lumberjacks should be knowingly throwing away their time in this manner.

The youngster with the bold blue eyes and curly yellow hair went with the rest, but more slowly, perhaps, and biting his lip as he strode away. His face was flushed darkly, and his muscular hands tightly clenched at the thought of having allowed himself to be called down in this humiliating manner, without even a word of retort. Even now he did not know why he had done it. The fact that the newcomer was Bob Bainbridge was not a thing entirely to influence his independent soul. There was something else—some quality in the man himself that had made him knuckle down as he had never done before.

Puzzled, chagrined, scowling blackly, he slouched after his comrades, hands thrust deep in trousers pockets, and feet kicking at roots or hummocks—for all the world like a spoiled, sullen school-boy.

Bainbridge was, by this time, utterly oblivious to the man's very existence. He had thrust from his mind every thought save the immediate pressing need of starting the jam, and to this end he bent every effort.

While Jerry Calker was making ready the dynamite cartridges, Bob

went out on the great mass of logs piled up like a heap of gigantic jackstraws, and inspected it hastily but thoroughly. It was he who directed the placing of the first blast, and he who was the last to seek cover. He it was who first rushed to the spot in the very midst of that shower of bark and splinters and wood chips raining down after the upheaval of timber had subsided.

He saw the whole vast surface of the jam quiver and heave, and for a moment he hoped the shot had been successful. That hope proved groundless, however. The jam settled back into immovability again; they would have to try once more.

The second blast seemed at first to be no more effective than the other. Then Bob's keen eye perceived an encouraging variation. Over the surface of the jam a curious, uneasy motion began to spread from one log to another. The crew, which had run lightly out to the very face, worked swiftly with their peavies, pulling, shoving, jerking the timbers this way and that. From his point of vantage Bainbridge watched their work with approval. They were evidently far from being the incompetents that first sight of them might have led one to suppose. He noticed that the fellow with the curly yellow hair was particularly skillful, having apparently laid aside his grouch, and taken hold from sheer love of the work and delight in accomplishing something.

Somehow Bob could not help following his movements for a minute or two, and presently, in spite of all that had gone before, his heart began to warm to the lithe, active, fearless youngster who seemed to have the knack of always being in the right place and doing the thing most needed at precisely the right moment.

"A good man," Bainbridge muttered to himself at length. "Hanged if he isn't!"

But now the jam was actually in motion, crawling forward with many creaks and crackings. The men worked harder, accelerating its progress, and making sure that nothing went wrong. Suddenly the whole central part of the

face fell forward into the stream with a tremendous crash, and there was a whirling, backward rush on the part of those who had been working on the very brink. As they zigzagged to shore by devious routes, they raised the glad-some cry:

"She pulls, boys—she pulls!"

The sound was as music to Bainbridge's ears, but he only smiled grimly, and strode rapidly along the bank of the stream. His eyes were fixed on the foam and spray and rolling, rushing timbers, on some of which, holding by their sharp spikes and balancing perfectly, rode the skilled rivermen who preferred this method to the more prosaic one of walking ashore.

One of these was the blond youngster, and presently, reaching a point on the bend where he thought a man was needed to prevent fresh jamming, Bob beckoned him ashore.

He came—lightly, easily—leaping from log to log, or working the one he temporarily rode nearer the bank by means of his peavey. His last easy spring brought him to land beside Bainbridge, where he stood at silent attention, his boldly handsome face beginning to show anew the look of sullen embarrassment it had momentarily lost.

"Keep a lookout here for a while," Bob said briefly. "It's rather a bad place. By the way," he went on, struck afresh by that haunting sense of familiarity which had come to him before, "what's your name?"

The young giant dropped his lids, and his muscular fingers interlocked tightly around the stout ash pole of the peavey.

"Curly," he said, in an oddly embarrassed tone.

"Ah! That all?"

The youngster hesitated, and then, flinging back his head, stared defiantly at Bainbridge.

"No," he retorted. "It's Kollock—Curly Kollock."

Bob frowned slightly. "Indeed! Any relation to Bill?"

"His brother."

The frown deepened, and there was silence for a moment. Bill Kollock, the "trouble man" of Elihu Crane and his

associates in the Lumber Trust, was not a character to commend himself to Bainbridge. The brother was more than likely to be of the same breed, he reflected as he stared with hard, narrowing eyes at the flushed, defiant face of the youth before him. And yet——

"Well?" snapped the boy suddenly. "I s'pose this means git my time?"

Bob raised his eyebrows. "Why so?" he inquired coldly.

Kollock shrugged his shoulders with an exaggerated nonchalance and ease which defeated its purpose.

"I don't reckon you're very keen about having a Kollock on your drive," he retorted.

"That's where you guess wrong," returned Bainbridge, with a sudden bland indifference. "If you want to quit, of course, that's your own affair; but as for laying you off, I never fire a good workman because his family doesn't happen to be to my liking. So far as anything really underhand is concerned"—he paused for a second and looked the boy square in the eyes—"I'm not afraid of that—from you."

Without waiting for a reply, he turned and strode on along the river bank, leaving young Curly to stare after him, his face flushed, and a curious, unwonted expression in his blue eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EMPTY BOX.

AS soon as the drive was actually started on its way downstream, Bob made haste to bring some sort of order out of the chaos he had found. Having watched the men at work, he was able to get some slight idea of their capabilities, which was vitally necessary in dividing them into the "rear" and the "jam crew."

The latter, in charge of a hastily appointed foreman, went forward to take charge of the head of the drive. The work of the rear comprised setting stranded logs afloat, breaking up incipient jams, and other duties too numerous to mention.

The men composing the squad were always the most skillful and experi-

enced in the gang. They had to be continually on the alert, working usually at high tension, and more than half the time in icy water to their waists. They had to be able to ride anything in the shape of a log in any sort of water, and work day after day for twelve and fourteen hours at a stretch. They must be swift as lightning in their movements, and possessed of judgment, ability, and nerve.

It was impossible, of course, for Bob to pick out an ideal rear crew from merely having seen the men in action for a scant few minutes. He did not try. He simply used his very excellent judgment, reserving mentally the right to change his mind whenever he felt like it, and juggle the men around as he chose.

The principal necessity was to start things moving. When he had done so, Bainbridge returned to camp with the twofold object of giving the cook his orders, and having a final settlement with Schaeffer. The latter was not particularly pleasant, but it was important. The man must quit the crew at once. Bob had made up his mind not to let the fellow spend even the night where he would have a chance to talk with and perhaps influence the others. With this determination uppermost, he passed by the mess tent to the other where the men slept, pulled aside the flap, and stepped inside.

The place was a mess of blankets and half-dried clothes, but to Bob's surprise it was vacant of anything in the nature of a man. Evidently Schaeffer had recovered and vamoosed. Thoughtfully he sought the cook, and put the question.

"Came in here an' got some grub a full hour ago," that servitor explained briefly. "When he'd eat it he went off ag'in."

"Didn't he say where he was going?" Bainbridge asked.

The cook shook his head. "Nary word."

"And you didn't happen to see what direction he took?"

"Nary a sight," was the reply. "I was busy inside."

Bob frowned for a second, and then shrugged his shoulders. After all, what did it matter where the fellow had gone, so long as he had taken himself away? It was very natural for him to avoid the man who had so humiliated him, though it was rather puzzling to have him slip away without apparently encountering any one.

Bob proceeded to give his orders to the cook, explaining that he would have to pull up stakes at once and start down the river.

"The boys will be a long way from here by nightfall," he said, "so you'll have to hustle. I've saved out a couple of men to help you and the cookee, who'll be under your orders till you pitch camp to-night."

Outside the mess tent he hesitated an instant. Then he entered the other tent. This time he did not pause by the door, but crossed hastily to the farther corner, where there was a small space crudely partitioned off from the main portion. This would be Schaeffer's sanctum, of course, and Bob entered it curiously—only to stop with an exclamation of mingled surprise, anger, and chagrin.

The place was in the utmost disorder. Blankets were rolled up in a ball and flung into the corner. Articles of wearing apparel were scattered about, while over everything were sifted scraps of white paper in seemingly endless quantity. It was these torn scraps that roused Bob's indignation. He seemed to know intuitively, without the evidence of the limp, empty book covers here and there, that the foreman had taken time to tear into shreds every record and paper connected with the drive which he possessed. Time books, scalers' measurements—everything had been destroyed practically beyond the possibility of reconstruction. There would be no accurate way now by which the firm could figure their profits or costs or labor charges. The very paying of the drive crew would be a matter of guesswork.

"Jove!" exclaimed Bainbridge through his clenched teeth. "I didn't know a man could be so rotten!"

He stared at the wreck for a minute longer, and then turned over with his foot the square, wooden box which lay upset in the middle of the mess. Apparently it had served Schaeffer as a receptacle for these same records. It was quite empty, but underneath lay something which brought a thoughtful, questioning expression into the searcher's face, and made him stoop to pick it up.

"Thirty-eight caliber," he murmured, staring at the freshly opened pasteboard box which had contained fifty cartridges. "Hum!"

Presently he let it drop again. He did not move for a space, but stood staring at the ground with that same odd, thoughtful pucker in his forehead.

There was nothing surprising in the fact of Schaeffer's being armed. Neither was it strange for a man in the riverman's position to carry off his ammunition loose instead of in the box. That was not the point. It was simply the train of thought aroused which struck Bainbridge unpleasantly. He felt Schaeffer to be capable of almost any villainy provided it could be accomplished with safety to himself. The humiliation of that fight, too, had added a powerful incentive to the one already offered by Crane and the Lumber Trust for the eclipse of Bob Bainbridge. And a total eclipse would be so easy! Just a single shot fired from the bushes at a moment when there was no one else about to see or hear. In this wild country the chances of escaping were infinite. The man might not even be suspected.

Bob suddenly moved his shoulders impatiently, frowned, and turned away. A moment later his eyes twinkled mirthfully.

"Another minute and I'd have the undertaker picked out," he chuckled. "The scoundrel hasn't the common courage to do murder. All the same," he added, with a decisive squaring of the shoulders, "I'll put a crimp in his little game about those records. I'll have cookee scrape 'em all up, and ship the whole bunch down to John. That clerk, Wiggins, can put 'em together,

I'll bet! Patience is his middle name—patience and picture puzzles. We'll have the laugh on Pete, after all—hanged if we won't!"

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE SWIFT CURRENT.

THE clumsy, slow-moving scow loaded with the cook's outfit and a supply of bedding followed the drive downstream, and, that night, fastened up to the bank close to the inlet of Deer Pond, the middle one of three small bodies of water strung along the length of the Megantic. It was a full day's work, much better than Bainbridge had hoped for, and, as he approached the big drying fire flaming up at one side of the camp made by Charlie Hanley, the cook, Bob shook his own hand in silent, grinning self-congratulation. He knew that they were far from being out of the woods yet, but a good beginning always means a lot, and he had no word to say against this start-off.

Presently the various driving crews appeared, wet to the skin from the waist down, and ravenously hungry. The drying racks were swiftly steaming with the soggy garments, and the men fell to upon their supper without a second's delay. There was little conversation—they were too busy for that; but Bainbridge noticed with satisfaction that a certain element of good-tempered raillery seemed to prevail. Evidently the crowd as a whole bore no grudge against the man who had given them such a tongue-lashing that morning. In fact, if one could judge from their manner toward their boss, they thought a lot more of him for having done so.

Next day all hands did even better, and nightfall found them at the inlet of Loon Lake, with the drive before them. Bob could not understand it. All day he had been expecting some disagreeable happening of a nature to retard their progress which could be laid at the door of the trust. When it did not come he was almost disappointed. It was impossible to believe that Crane had given up so easily; he was not that sort. He would explode a bombshell of some sort

soon, and the longer he delayed the more deadly was likely to be the nature of his attack.

However, there was nothing to be gained in discounting the future, nor time to spare for fretting over the unknown. Bob was far too busy during the daylight hours even to think of Crane or his satellites. It was a ticklish job to get the drive across even so small a body of water as the so-called lake, and it took one entire day and the better part of another. It was done without mishap, however, and Bainbridge was just congratulating himself on having got safely over one of the most disagreeable bits of the entire distance when Jerry Calker approached him as he stood watching the last few logs bob slowly out of the lake into the swifter current of the stream.

"Jack wants to know can you spare him a few minutes, sir," he explained. "There's a bit of trouble down below."

"What kind of trouble?" Bob asked swiftly, turning downstream without an instant's delay; and walking by the side of the dynamite man.

Calker scratched his head slowly. "I ain't quite certain sure, Mr. Bainbridge," he drawled, "but I got a idea there's a fellow with a mill who's run out a sortin' boom that's goin' to hang up our drive if we ain't mighty keerful."

"A mill!" exclaimed Bob incredulously. "Why, there isn't such a thing within twenty miles—at least, there wasn't three months ago."

Calker grinned. "Thought it looked kinda new. I couldn't rightly say that it's finished, but there ain't no manner of a doubt about the boom. The jam had started before I come away, an' I left Jack havin' it hot an' heavy with a red-headed son of a gun who sure looked as if scrap was his middle name."

Bainbridge frowned, but asked no further questions. He scarcely spoke, in fact, during all of the four miles, but it was evident to his observing companion that he was doing a lot of thinking.

Long before reaching the point of obstruction it became evident that another

jam had formed. The current grew more and more sluggish, and the progress of the logs downstream became slower and slower, until at length the entire surface of the water was covered with floating timber. These in turn crowded upon one another with a rapidity which threatened to equal that first jam unless something was swiftly done.

Hurrying on, Bob presently caught up with a throng of his own men, who had apparently just landed from the dangerous, constantly shifting surface of the river. They looked at him with a frank curiosity, as if wondering what he meant to do in this emergency. On the faces of a few were expressions of grim, anticipatory amusement, but Bainbridge heeded these no more than he had the others. Without pausing or even glancing to right or left, he strode on, and reached the scene of action.

On the same bank, a little way back from the water, stood a small building, so hastily thrown together that the roof was not yet completed. One or two men were standing near it, staring interestedly at the crowd gathered about something at the water's edge which Bob at once saw to be one end of a massive, well-constructed log boom. The other end, out beyond the middle of the river, was supported by some stout spiles, and the whole affair took up so much of the stream's width that Bainbridge's drive had jammed against it hard and fast.

All this Bob took in without slackening his pace. Reaching the outer edge of the circle, he pushed through to where Jack Peters, his jam boss, stood facing a compact group of six or eight strangers, gathered closely about the end of the boom. Jack was florid with rage, and choking with impotent fury. The strangers composing the little group instantly struck Bob as being singularly strong and rugged. They looked as if they had been picked for their physical efficiency. Each one was armed with rifle or pistol, while their leader, a competent-looking person with red hair and whiskers, held in one hand a snub-nosed, businesslike automatic.

"Well, Jack," Bainbridge said curtly, as he reached the foreman's side, "what's the trouble?"

Before Peters could reply the red-haired man took a single step forward and faced Bob.

"I can tell you in two shakes of a lamb's tail," he snapped viciously. "This river hog o' yours thinks he kin play the devil with my boom, but he's got another guess comin'. I own this land an' that sawmill. I got a right to run my booms out in the river same as anybody else. I ain't lookin' for trouble, but the first man as tries any monkey business wants to look out, that's all."

Bainbridge raised his eyebrows, and let his gaze wander leisurely from the man's head to his heels with an expression which brought an added touch of color to the already flushed cheeks.

"Indeed!" he drawled. "Who are you?"

"Who be I?" retorted the other angrily. "Humph! I don't see that it makes no difference, but my name's Joyce—John Joyce. An' I ain't the kind as backs down an' takes water, believe me!"

A singularly irritating smile curved the corners of Bob's lips. His unruffled composure served, as he hoped it might, to increase the rage of Mr. Joyce.

"Do you realize that you're obstructing navigation?" he inquired suavely.

"I don't admit it," snapped Joyce. "There's plenty of room for your drive to git past if you had a gang that knew their business, instead of a lot o' green-horns."

"I dare say you could give us all points," Bainbridge murmured smoothly, with just the right inflection of sarcasm to sting. It had suddenly occurred to him that the fellow's object was to make him lose his temper, and thus precipitate a clash, during which almost anything might be accomplished. Not only did he refuse to let go his grip, but he did his very best to goad Joyce himself into flaming out, and possibly betraying a few secrets.

"That's hardly the question, though," he went on swiftly. "Strikes me you've

been rather premature in running out the boom. Your mill isn't operating, and I have yet to see a single log coming downstream except our own."

"Never you mind that," retorted Joyce hotly. "Do you think a man's going to wait till his timber comes in sight afore makin' arrangements to take care of it? You can't come over me with no soft talk like that. The boom's there, an' there it stays. Half the river's clear for you to use, an' that's all you gets."

"Hum! That's your last word, is it?" inquired Bainbridge quietly. "You even refuse to let us swing the boom around so we can break our jam?"

"I do!" replied the red-haired individual emphatically. "The first man that tries to monkey with my property will wish he hadn't, that's all I got to say."

He raised his automatic significantly, but Bob was not even looking at him. The young man's gaze had swept out to the face of the jam, and in an incredibly short space an accurate picture of its appearance had been photographed on his brain. Still without giving Joyce the satisfaction of a glance, he turned away, motioning Peters to accompany him.

"A put-up job, of course," he said tersely, when they were through the circle of his own men. "Same gang who bought Schaeffer."

The jam boss nodded in a troubled way. "I'm afraid they've got us bad, too. It's goin' to take one long time pickin' that jam apart, but I can't see anythin' else to do. I s'pose I'd better start 'em at it right away, sir."

"Not at all," retorted Bob swiftly. "Do nothing of the kind. Let 'em stay just where they are. Jerry!"

At the sound of his imperative undertone Calker hustled up. There was a brief interchange of words between the trio, during which the faces of both lumberjacks brightened amazingly. Then all three disappeared into the bushes a little way upstream, from which they did not emerge for a considerable time.

When they finally appeared, Bainbridge held by his side a shapeless pack-

age of considerable size. Had not Peters and Calker walked so close beside him as he bent his way leisurely toward the crowd about the jam, it would probably have been noticed that this package was made up of a dozen or more sticks of giant powder fastened securely together, and depending from a sling of stout manila rope.

The line of rivermen had turned, and were watching his approach with interested curiosity, but Joyce and his gang could see nothing. Reaching the men, Bob paused, struck a match, and carefully lighted the end of a protruding fuse. As it sputtered up he gave a short, sharp word of command, the line of men opened instantly to let him through, and a second later he stood not a dozen paces from Joyce, deliberately swinging the deadly package round and round his head.

For a second there was a breathless hush. Then the red-haired man leaped forward.

"Stop!" he roared. "You young whelp, if you——"

He broke off with a gurgling sound, and the color left his face. With a final swing, Bob loosened his hold on the bundle, which curved in a perfect arc over the rear of the jam, over the jagged crest, and dropped swiftly out of sight amid the massive timbers up-ended in confusion along the face and close to the spot where protruded the freshly driven spiles which had caused all the trouble.

An instant later the whole throng of men hustled frantically for cover.

CHAPTER X.

THE POWER BEHIND IT ALL.

IN less than sixty seconds—so close had been Bob's calculations—came a detonation which shook the earth, making several of the running men stagger and lose their stride. Up spurted a great mass of water, carrying with it massive logs leaping like agonized things alive. They fell back again, followed by a shower of débris mingled with fine spray, which the wind sifted

down on the heads of the ducking, dodging men.

From his place behind a stump Bainbridge rose swiftly, shielding his face with one crooked arm from the rain of chips and splinters and bits of bark, and stared eagerly toward the jam. It took but a moment to see that the spiles had disappeared, and the boom was shattered. Moreover, the key logs of the jam were so loosened that the whole drive was again on its way downstream. Bob turned to Peters with a gesture of satisfaction.

"She's off, Jack," he said. "Get a wiggle on, now, and rush her along. The water's dropping every minute, and we've got a mean stretch to cover before we strike the Penobscot. I'll go back and hustle the rear along——"

He stopped abruptly, and whirled around as a voice, shrill and trembling with passion, was raised behind him.

"You'll pay for that, you meddlin' pup! I'll teach you to go blowin' up folks' property, an' mighty near com-mittin' murder! I'll show you you can't play tricks on John Joyce an' get away with it. That game might work with some, but it won't——"

Things happened so swiftly after that that even the men standing around were quite unable to understand exactly what was doing, and which of the two was really the one who started the trouble.

The instant Bob turned he saw that Joyce was either beside himself with rage, or giving a most astonishingly good imitation of that condition. His face was purple, with veins standing out on his forehead like cords. His eyes glared with that combination of rage and hate which a badly frightened man almost invariably feels for the cause of his mental disturbance. The automatic was leveled in his hand, and one finger trembled on the trigger.

For a single instant Bainbridge stood rigid, every muscle suddenly tensing. Perhaps he read a hint of Joyce's purpose in the fellow's eye; perhaps it was simply intuition which made him guess what was coming. At all events, suddenly, and without warning, he

launched his lithe body through the air exactly as in the manner of the old forbidden flying tackle.

His shoulder struck Joyce's knees, and the wicked, snapping shot of the revolver rang out at precisely the same moment. There was a yell of fury, followed by a crash. Then almost oppressive silence.

Bob was on his feet like a cat, fingers gripping the automatic he had snatched from the owner's nerveless hand. His jaw was hard, and there was a glint of more than anger in the eyes he bent upon Joyce's supporters hurrying up to the aid of their chief.

"Hands up!" he cried out harshly. "Quick!"

He did not have to speak twice. There was something in his voice, coupled with an emphatic gesture with the automatic, which made those six men, big and powerful as they were, obey him with remarkable unanimity.

"Take their guns, Jack," continued Bainbridge, in that same commanding voice.

Peters stepped forward to obey. The first man drew back instinctively, and started to pull down the hand which held a revolver. Without an instant's hesitation Bob fired. The bullet struck the upraised weapon on its blued-steel barrel, wringing a cry of surprise and pain from the fellow's lips as he dropped the gun.

There was no more trouble after that. Peters collected four revolvers and two Remingtons. Then he glanced questioningly at Bainbridge.

"Throw 'em in the river," the latter commander curtly. "'Way out in the middle, where they can't be recovered."

The riverman walked a few steps toward the bank; then, pausing, he glanced back at the straight young figure standing behind him.

"They're mighty good guns," he said hesitatingly. "Seems a shame to throw 'em away like this."

Bainbridge returned briefly: "I'm simply pulling the stings of this gang."

He watched his man fling the weapons, one after another, into the stream,

and then, sending the automatic splashing after the others, he turned suddenly back to the six humiliated individuals before him.

"Go!" he commanded, with a momentary flare of passion. "Beat it, and don't let me set eyes on you again—understand? I won't be so easy on you the next time. Here, take that scum with you. He's only stunned."

He waited, staring from under lowered lids, until the gang had disappeared in the bushes, half dragging, half carrying their stunned leader with them. Then, with a long sigh, he turned slowly and smiled at Peters.

"All right, Jack," he said quietly. "I don't think we'll have any more trouble here. Just hustle all you can to make up for this delay."

Peters grinned, and snapped out some orders to the men which sent them flying along the bank and even out on the stream over the tumbling logs. But as they went they cast glances of open, unadulterated admiration at the young man coolly brushing a bit of mud from one shoulder, and their comments to each other left no trace of doubt of their thorough approval of everything he had said and done.

Bob heard some of them, and when the men had gone on he smiled a bit. To get that drive down successfully he knew he must have the men with him. He knew also that deliberate planning could not have accomplished that result half so well as this encounter with the tools of the Lumber Trust. The whole affair had proved a great piece of luck for him, thought the young lumberman. His meditation was broken in upon by the sound of a strange voice.

"I had no idea lumbering was such a strenuous occupation."

A moment later Bainbridge was looking into a pair of pleasant, friendly eyes set in the handsome face of a man of about fifty. He was roughly dressed in well-worn, but finely made fishing clothes, and carried a good trout rod in one hand. There was, too, about the stranger an air of forceful capability which attracted the younger man.

"It's not usually quite so full of inci-

dent," said Bob; "but I don't believe you'd ever find it exactly tame."

The stranger smiled, and made a comprehensive gesture with his hands. "And this is your idea of incident," he murmured whimsically. "I should call it something decidedly stronger."

He hesitated for an instant, then moved closer to Bob.

"You're going downstream, aren't you? Do you mind if I walk along with you? My camp's down that way."

Bainbridge acquiesced readily. There was something very taking about the stranger, and within ten minutes he found himself chatting as if to an old friend. His companion turned out to be Wolcott Sears, of Boston, on a two weeks' trip in the Maine woods. The name was only vaguely familiar, but Bob felt sure from his manner that he was a man of affairs. He was tremendously interested in hearing all about the peculiar conditions of this particular drive, and before Bainbridge realized it he had given a brief narrative of his fight with the Lumber Trust and the events which had grown out of it.

"You interest me extraordinarily, Mr. Bainbridge," the older man said, in his crisp, decisive way, when at last they paused at the point several miles below the scene of the last jam, where Sears had to branch off to reach his camp. "Things of this sort always do, for it's only those one has to struggle for which are really worth while. You've certainly had to fight hard in this case, but you've practically won out, haven't you? After this last fracas I shouldn't suppose there'd be much chance for further interference."

Bob shrugged his shoulders and smiled a little. "You sadly underestimate the power of the trust, Mr. Sears. I shan't be beyond the chance of interference until the drive is safe in our mill booms at Lancaster, and even then it wouldn't surprise me if they'd try to work some dirty trick."

Sears frowned indignantly; then his face brightened.

"In spite of everything I think I should bet on you," he chuckled. "There's a certain vigor in your method

of dealing with these people which makes for success. I really believe you'll win, Mr. Bainbridge, and I surely hope so. It has been a great pleasure to meet you, and I trust one to be repeated. I shall be hereabouts for some time yet, and may run across you before I leave."

Bob warmly reciprocated his feeling, and, after a hearty handshake, turned south along the river, while Sears disappeared in the undergrowth to the westward.

"Fine man," commented the younger man aloud. "Hope I do run into him again. Meanwhile, however, the rear isn't coming along half quick enough, and I haven't seen a darn thing all afternoon of the wangan. I hope nothing's happened to it and the grub. That would be one awful blow!"

It was one that was spared him. Within half an hour the clumsy scow hove in sight. It tied up to the bank a little later, and before dark preparations for supper were going on merrily.

Bob did not get in till later. Assured that all was well with the cook and his staff, he went on downstream to see how Peters and his gang were progressing. On his return he discovered a stranger warming himself by the drying fire. He looked like an old-time woodsman, and the instant Bainbridge appeared he was on his feet, extracting an envelope from the interior of his hat.

"From Mr. Tweedy, sir."

The young lumberman ripped it open without a premonition of the blow in store for him. It was natural for Tweedy to write. He would be reporting his success in the matter of credit, of course, and probably gloating over the amount of manufactured lumber he had sold in so short a time. Bainbridge noted that it had been written in the Bangor office the night before. Then, settling himself by the fire, he proceeded to read:

DEAR BOBBY: It's all up with us, boy. We're done, and we may as well admit it first as last and make what terms we can with the gang. I can't get credit anywhere. Crane's been ahead of me and spilled the beans each time. What's more, Gastich ab-

olutely refuses to renew that note. Says he must have the cash for some stocks he's carrying, and all that; but you know what it means. It's due in less than a week, and I can't for the life of me see an earthly way of scraping the money together. Last of all—and worst of all—I haven't been able to make a single sale of lumber for the simple reason that the trust has cut prices below cost and has taken every customer from us. If I cut to meet them they'll go lower. You can see that. They've got the stock and the resources. Crane's set out to ruin us at any cost, and he's succeeded. It hurts like sin to say it, boy, but there's nothing left to do but give in and make the best terms we can. Let me hear from you at once. Yours ever.

JOHN TWEEDY.

CHAPTER XI.

NO QUITTER.

THE letter dropped into Bob's lap, and for a long minute he sat staring into the yellow, dancing flames. His face was blank, and just a little white, for the blow had been a heavy one, and totally unexpected. He could not seem to understand it. It was unbelievable that he and Tweedy, who had been fair and square in every one of their business dealings, could be forced to the wall by such a monster of corruption as Elihu Crane.

There must be some mistake. Tweedy must have been thrown into one of his unjustifiable panics. That was it, of course.

Bob picked up the letter to read it carefully again.

He perused it to the last word, and then leaned back against the sapling, his face drawn and somber. It really did not sound like a mistake. It was all clear and logical, and singularly cohesive. It was the sort of thing Crane would delight in planning and putting into execution—the cutting of prices on a competitor. Tweedy had written that if they attempted to cut under the trust's present rates, there would be a further reduction. That was quite true. Bob knew, because he had had a vast deal of experience with the trust's method of doing business. They would ruin him, no matter how great the cost, because he was dangerous to their continued well-being. With Bainbridge in the ring, and fighting vigorously against

the graft and wholesale theft of timberlands, those juicy melon cuttings which had been so pleasing to the stockholders would cease—therefore Bainbridge must go.

Presently Bob's eyes fell again to the letter, and somehow that single sentence seemed to stand out as if written in capitals: "It hurts like sin to say it, boy, but there's nothing left to do but give in and make the best terms we can."

For a second Bob stared, the blood rushing into his face, a crimson flood. Make terms with Crane? Go on his knees to that scoundrel, who had long ago parted with the last shred of decency and self-respect? Not much!

They must have resources enough to meet that note, at least. The trust could not keep the price of lumber down indefinitely. They must weather the storm in some way. And when this drive was safe at the mills, ready to be cut into lumber, they would have the laugh on Elihu Crane.

Oblivious to the men about him, even to the fact that the cook had some time ago announced supper, Bainbridge began to search his mind for means of staving off the evil day. Most of the stocks and bonds constituting his private fortune had been already pledged as collateral for loans to the firm. He still had a few thousand dollars' worth of Steel Preferred which could be sold; and there was Pinecrest, the beautiful and costly home on the outskirts of Bangor, which had been left him by his father. It should not be difficult to raise a mortgage of ten thousand, at least, on the place.

"The note's for ten thousand, so that's all straightened out," Bainbridge murmured, with a snap of his fingers. "The money from the stock can go for current expenses. I'll fix it up this very night."

He did. Fortunately Tweedy held his power of attorney with the right to sign checks and execute papers of any sort, so it was possible for him to put through these deals without his returning to Bangor. That another note for nearly as much as the first fell due in little more than a fortnight Bain-

bridge knew quite well. By that time, however, he fully intended to have the drive down as far as their mill at Lancaster, fifty miles or so above Bangor. And it is always possible to raise money on timber, even in the rough.

Of course, if the trust continued their campaign of cutting prices Bob's plans would be materially affected. He could not believe, however, that they would do such a thing for any great length of time. A dollar meant as much to them as to any one, and even the pleasure of ruining a competitor would scarcely compensate for the loss of so much money.

A long letter of instruction and explanation was written to Tweedy that night, and despatched the first thing in the morning by the trusty hand of Joe Moose, the Indian. That off his mind, Bob returned to his drive with renewed vigor, for the necessity for haste was now even greater than before. It was a question of getting the logs down in double-quick time or being dragged into the bankruptcy court; and that sort of notoriety did not appeal in the least to the young man.

It was this feeling of necessity which got Bob up next morning before the blackness of the night was more than faintly tinged by streaks of pale gray in the east. He wanted to be off and doing; even necessary inaction chafed. It seemed an eternity before the men had finished breakfast, and were ready for the day's work. As a matter of fact, they took less time than usual, for something of Bainbridge's intense eagerness for speed seemed to have made itself felt.

All morning Bob worked like a Trojan getting the drive out into the Katahdin River. He did not storm and swear at his men, as many bosses do. Instead he had a way of jollyng them along in a manner which might sound superficially like fun, but which held more than an undercurrent of seriousness. He treated them as human beings, not as if they were slaves from whom every last atom of work was to be extracted. And yet, when the need arose, he could hand out a rebuke, the

caustic sting of which was enough to make a man's hair stand on end. The result was that the crew soon admired him, and when they found how urgent was the need for haste they fell to with a will, and gave the best that was in them.

Bainbridge was not long in perceiving their attitude, and it gratified him intensely. He had never actually had charge of a drive before. He knew the theory, of course, but that is very different from the practical operation; and the discovery that he could handle a rough-and-ready crowd like this in a manner so totally different from that generally practiced by bosses of crews gave him no small satisfaction.

By dint of constant labor, at which Bob spared neither himself nor his men, the drive was successfully swung into the slightly larger river by two o'clock. There was no real respite even then. The stream was almost as difficult as the Megantic, and constant watchfulness was necessary to prevent fresh jams at a number of points. Consequently the men snatched a hurried dinner in relays and hustled back to work again.

It was about three, and Bob had just left the spot where only the most strenuous personal labor on the part of himself and four river jacks had kept the drive from jamming. He was hot and sweaty, and generally weary as he continued his way downstream, and his wrath was naturally instant when, on suddenly rounding a bend, he came upon Curly Kollock, cool, calm, and unruffled, sitting comfortably on a rock, enjoying a cigarette.

As the latter saw Bainbridge, he flushed slightly, and half rose from the boulder. Then, with a stubborn twist of his lips, he sank back again, pulling hard on the cigarette, and doing his best to look unconcerned.

Bob walked straight up to him, and stopped.

"Well," he said biting, "I'm sorry you've lost the use of your feet and hands. Is it paralysis?"

Kollock's flush deepened, and he mumbled something inane about taking

a smoke. He found that he had arisen, apparently without volition, and was standing before the other man, who stared at him a long half minute.

"This is no rest cure," said Bob at length. "You're paid for helping the drive along. I don't want any loafers in this gang. Understand? Now, get down to the head of the drive—and *do something!*"

Kollock's face was flaming, and his eyes gleamed angrily. "I don't take that line of talk from anybody!" he growled, clenching his fists threateningly. "I'll——"

"You'll do what I said, and do it quick!" Bainbridge's voice was not raised above a conversational pitch, but there was a ring in it which seemed to take the fight and bluster out of the big riverman with the effectiveness of a keen knife thrust into an inflated bladder. For a second he stood in awkward silence, swallowing hard in his embarrassment. Then he raised his head again.

"I don't need your job," he said, in a poor imitation of devil-may-care defiance. "I'll get my time, and——"

Bainbridge cut him short. "You'll get down to the drive and *work*. Beat it now—quick!"

Without another protesting word, Kollock turned meekly and obeyed.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TEST.

BEFORE he had taken a dozen steps, Kollock was furious with himself, and by the time Bainbridge was out of sight the wrath of the riverman had risen to a white heat.

From the first he had tried to dislike Bainbridge. Pete Schaeffer had been his friend, and after he had been whipped Curly made up his mind that there could be no getting along in a crew bossed by the victor. Then came that brief but pointed interview with Bob which affected him so oddly. He had never before had anybody tell him that he was to be trusted; most bosses had been emphatic in saying the opposite thing. Or, if they kept silent, they

showed in a dozen obvious ways that they considered him in the same class with his notorious brother.

Then there was the incident of the day before. Curly could not help admiring the manner in which Bainbridge had handled the crowd that was trying to hold up the drive. It was exactly the sort of thing he would like to have done himself, and his heart warmed toward the man with the courage and ability to act in that fashion. Moreover, Jack Joyce was an old enemy of his, and the sight of the fellow's humiliation had inclined the riverman even more strongly toward the man who had brought it about.

But that was over now, he told himself furiously as he stamped along the stream, hands clenched and face set in a black scowl. He hated Bainbridge! The man had no right to jump on him that way. How did he know what had been the cause of Kollock's behavior? He had asked no questions, given Curly no chance to explain even had the latter been inclined to lower himself to that extent. He had taken it for granted that the river jack was loafing in spite of the fact that his record as a worker was equal to that of the best.

This was where the sting lay. Kollock was aggrieved and disgruntled because of what was, to him, a very good reason. There had been a definite object in his pause by that stone. The night before he had received a brief note from Bill, in which he was urged to "make use of any chance you git to do—you know what."

Curly did know "what" very well. It meant that he was to thwart and delay the progress of the drive by any means in his power. *Any* means! The simplest, of course, was to cause something to happen to Bainbridge himself. Bill had not hesitated to suggest several ways by which this happy end could be reached. None of them appealed particularly to Curly. He was not over-scrupulous, but he disliked doing up a man in cold blood without giving him even a ghost of a show. Still, Bill had done him good turns more than once when he was out of work; and, last but

not least, there was the financial side of the affair. Curly had never been told who or what was back of these attacks on the independent lumber company, but he knew there was plenty of money in it.

All this he had been thinking over as he sat smoking that cigarette. In the end he decided to have nothing to do with it. Bainbridge had trusted him and played square. For that reason he would be equally square and above-board, and let this dirty work alone.

That was what he *had* decided, but now——

He gritted his teeth, glared fiercely around, and came to an abrupt stop. Every instinct of the riverman was aroused. On his left the river dropped over short falls into a narrow gorge. It was a spot where things were likely to happen at any time, and where a man or two should have been stationed continually. Curly knew, in fact, that there had been men here all morning. They had been called away for some purpose, leaving the little falls unguarded. And as he stood there his practiced eyes told him that he was beholding the very start of a jam.

A log, plunging over the falls, up-ended. Another was thrust under it. A third and fourth, coming down together, caught on the obstruction, all being held by some stones rising mid-stream. Before the current could tear them loose several more timbers were forced against the mass which was piling up so swiftly, bridging to the opposite shore.

To carry out that angry resolve of a minute or two ago, Curly should have rolled himself another cigarette, and watched the growing damage with a sardonic smile. He did nothing of the sort. For a flash he had forgotten his grievance, and was a "river hog," pure and simple. The stoppage must be broken before it reached the proportions of a real jam. There was no one else to do it, and so he leaped to the task without a second's pause for thought.

Upstream he ran a few feet, his eyes fixed on the surface of the river above

the falls. Then he saw what he wanted. An instant later, using his peavey much as a pole vaulter does his pole, he leaped straight out over the water, landed squarely on a big log, and was carried down to the falls—and over them.

He took the drop easily, riding the log with that perfect balance which is second nature to the seasoned riverman. When the timber bumped against the rapidly forming jam, Curly leaped again, thrusting the log down as he did so, and landed on the solid barrier. Scrambling lightly over to the face of this, he thrust deftly with his peavey into the mass, and began to work desperately to loosen the key log—that first upended stick of pine which had started the whole trouble, and which must be started before the rest of the barrier would give.

He got a good hold on it, but the thing defied his efforts to tear it loose. It was wedged too tightly for even his great strength, and, though he seemed to feel it move slightly, he strained his muscles to the utmost in vain to accomplish anything further. Presently he realized, with a thrill, that the jam was piling up behind him faster and faster. He ceased his efforts, and clamping the peavey on timber above the key log, pried it free, and sent it bobbing downstream. Another followed, and another still. Sweat poured in streams from him, trickling blindingly into his eyes, but he did not stop to wipe it away. There was no time. He must go on doing his best till help came, or else——

A faint jar shook the jam. A second later Curly felt a hand lightly touch his shoulder. A familiar voice sounded in his ear:

"Good work, son! Where's that trouble maker? Oh, I see. Let me drop down to that ledge, where I can get a good hold. That's the idea. Now grip her above me. Fine! Ready, now? Yank away!"

It was Bainbridge—swift, agile, incredibly fresh considering what he had accomplished that day. For a moment or two Curly did not realize that this was the man he hated. He simply felt

an overwhelming thankfulness that some one had come at last, and obeyed orders mechanically and without question.

But as his peavey gripped the end of that troublesome log, there suddenly flamed into Curly's mind—temptation. Bainbridge stood below him, perched perilously on the very face of the jam. A little thrust—the tiniest movement of the riverman's arm—would send him plunging into the stream, while another movement would suffice to drop one of the looser logs upon him. There were no witnesses; the whole affair would pass as an unfortunate accident. A chance like this, so easy, so absolutely safe, would never come again.

"Now!" broke in the crisp voice of the lumberman. "Hard over, boy. Toward me—all you know how!"

Curly's muscles strained as he threw every ounce of strength into the pull. The key log creaked and groaned as if in agony, but was thrust gradually forward. Curly felt it moving faster and faster, and instinctively he prepared for that backward leap which would carry him out of reach of the treacherous avalanche of falling logs.

A second later his peavey was torn from his hands by the sudden collapse of half the face of the jam. The logs at his side vanished in the unexpected rush, but that on which he stood remained firm for a precious moment. Below him he saw Bainbridge whirl like a cat and grasp for something solid. Instantly he bent over, reaching out both callous, muscular hands, and as swiftly Bob gripped them. There was a heave, an upward scramble, another crash as the remainder of the jam disappeared into the foaming water. But the two men had leaped in time, and a moment later they were standing together on the bank.

"Thank you—Curly," Bainbridge said, in a level voice. "That was touch-and-go for a minute."

That was all, but somehow Curly knew that what he had done was understood and appreciated. In the stress of the peril which the two had shared shoulder to shoulder like common

brother river hogs, Kollock's anger and hate had vanished utterly. He no longer desired revenge. His attitude of a scant half hour before seemed small and mean and petty. He had saved the life of the man his brother wanted out of the way, and, given the opportunity, he would do it as promptly again.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LIMIT.

CURLY KOLLOCK'S interest and liking for his boss grew stronger day after day. There was something about Bob Bainbridge which stirred the finer qualities in his nature, and brought twinges of shame to the young riverman whenever he thought how near he had come to throwing his lot with his brother. If Bill ever showed up he resolved to tell him just what he thought of him, too. But in the meantime, not being much of a penman, he made no effort to answer the letter. It was sufficient that he considered himself cut loose from the whole miserable bunch. If they were expecting aid from him in their plotting they were doomed to disappointment.

More and more often as they descended the Katahdin River, the boy was stirred to anger at the constant succession of moves made by that gang of crooks against the man who fought them practically alone and single-handed.

Along the river were several dams placed for the purpose of regulating the head of water and facilitating the process of driving. They belonged to the trust, but their owners were bound at all times to allow a normal head of water when it was called for. Instead of doing this now, they played all sorts of tricks on Bainbridge. When he particularly needed plenty of water to float his drive past a shallow or narrow spot, the gates were arbitrarily shut down, and the drive hung up. Again, at one point where the middle part of the drive had jammed and the crew were occupied in picking it instead of using dynamite, the gates which Bob had personally closed were raised with-

out warning, letting down a flood of water which struck the jam with terrific force. It gave instantly, carrying three men with it. Two managed to escape by a miracle, and were dragged ashore with broken limbs; the other was crushed and drowned.

After that Bainbridge placed guards at the various dams with instructions to shoot any one who attempted to interfere with them. This resulted in a terrific outcry on the part of Crane's underlings, an appeal to the law, injunctions, and all that sort of thing. To which Bainbridge paid no attention whatever. He went on his way calmly, knowing well that they could not stop him in this manner, and willing to put up with the inconvenience that would follow when it was all over and he had returned to civilization.

Mr. Wolcott Sears continued his fishing trip along the route the lumbermen were following, and began frequently to appear in camp for an evening pipe with Bainbridge. One evening they had a private conference, which lasted until the small hours, and the Boston capitalist finally departed, leaving Bainbridge apparently much gratified.

The crew was with Bob to a man. By this time they had gathered an inkling of the plot against the firm, and of the stakes involved. Men had strayed into camp telling of the extraordinary reductions made by the trust in the price of manufactured lumber. Large sales had resulted to various parties, report said, thus preventing Bainbridge & Tweedy, as well as several other small independents, from disposing of a single plank.

The lumberjacks were not slow in putting two and two together. They remembered rumors current in the big woods for many months of the fight which had started between the trust and this man who was their boss. It was a fight to the finish, people said, in which one side or the other must go under. From all appearances it looked to these earnest, simple-minded woodsmen as if Bainbridge would be vanquished unless he could get that drive safely into the mill booms; and to that end they

strained every nerve. They toiled from dawn to dark, staggering into camp each night so utterly weary that they sometimes fell asleep with their supper half eaten before them; only to be up before daybreak to do it all over again.

It was a period of stress and strain, but it ended at last when the drive was ushered into the Penobscot, to be seized by the strong current and urged on toward the mills at Lancaster, that goal which had seemed a little while ago so unattainable, yet which was now so near.

That very afternoon was perpetrated the crowning outrage. Bainbridge was shot at from the bushes—shot at deliberately with an intent to kill which was defeated only by the miracle of chance which made him bend over to tighten a shoe lace at the precise moment of firing.

Wild with fury, the men who were present dashed in pursuit of the would-be assassins, but to no purpose. They were in the land of civilization now, where there were motor cars. By the time the crowd of rivermen had surged up the bank and plunged through the undergrowth, the rascally tools of the trust were well away, leaving their pursuers to rage impotently that there was not a gun in the party with which the tires could be punctured and the car stopped.

The most angry of them all was Curly Kollock. He had double cause for wrath, having received that morning a letter from the very town of Lancaster toward which they were striving so hard to push the drive. Brief it was, and to the point. He had played the traitor, Bill wrote scathingly. There was only one way by which he could rid himself of the stigma, and return to the good graces of the gang. He must come at once to a certain house on the outskirts of the town, prepared to place himself absolutely in his brother's hands.

When the younger Kollock read those lines he swore roundly. That even Bill should dare write in such a manner made him rage. He was no man's slave, and there were bounds be-

yond which even a brother could step. He was on the point of asking for time off to come to a definite, final settlement with the crowd when the attempted shooting occurred. At first this cowardly deed only added to his rage, but swiftly in its wake came unwonted gravity.

Disagreeable, even serious, as all those other persecutions had been, not one of them held the weight of this last culminating effort to put Bob Bainbridge out of the running. That Bill was mixed up in it Curly had no doubt, and the realization frightened him. He had always looked up to his older brother with admiration and a little awe, and he could not bear now to think of him mixed up in anything so contemptible. There was the danger involved, too, and altogether the youngster felt as if he must see Bill at once and try to make him cut the gang and get away. His efforts might have no effect, but there was at least a chance.

That night—or rather early in the morning, while it was still pitch black—he slipped quietly out of camp without a word to any one. He reached Lancaster at four in the afternoon, having made most of the journey in a scow doing about six miles an hour. Going at once to the address given in the letter, he found that his brother had gone out not fifteen minutes before.

"Mebbe if you step in an' wait he'll be back soon," suggested the slatternly woman who kept the house.

Curly was shown to a room on the second floor back, where he recognized a number of Bill's belongings scattered about in the usual disorder. Perhaps it was the sight of them which aroused in the young fellow an increasing doubt of his ability to do what he came for. Would this man, who had never been in the habit of taking any one's advice, listen to him? He wondered, and then, unable to remain still, arose and paced the floor anxiously.

Presently he dropped in a chair before a rough deal table, on top of which was tacked a large sheet of blotting paper. A corner of white paper protruded from beneath it, but Curly

scarcely noticed this save as something to pluck at nervously with thumb and forefinger. Finally he lighted the lamp, walked back and forth some more, then relapsed into the chair again, resuming his absent plucking of the paper beneath the blotter.

Ultimately, of course, he drew it gradually forth, and, catching a word or two of writing, he did not hesitate to read the entire page.

It was a portion of a letter, lacking both superscription and first page. Neither was it signed. But there was enough in those few lines to make the riverman leap to his feet with a startled cry of dismay.

"Great guns!" he gasped. "Burn the mill—*our mill?* Well, I guess not!"

He carried the paper over to the light, thinking that he might have made a mistake. But it was plain enough.

Having received orders from me by wire in the manner above specified, you will at once fire the mill in the manner discussed by us and decided upon by me at our last meeting. There must be no delay in your action. Neither should you take a single step before I order. This is of the greatest possible importance. Kindly advise me at once that you thoroughly understand these instructions.

For a minute or two Curly stood staring at this extraordinary fragment. Then his gray eyes gleamed.

"Gee!" he muttered. "I sure wish I could find the rest o' this letter. It sounds like it might be from that old skunk Crane that Bill's so thick with, but o' course you never kin tell. It would certain be worth somethin' to know for sure."

Without hesitation he yanked up the blotter, tacks and all. There was nothing underneath, so he next jerked forth the single drawer of the table, and dumped out its contents. A search through these revealed nothing of interest, and he was about to replace the drawer when it occurred to him to thrust an inquiring hand into the space back of it. His fingers encountered paper, and a moment later his eyes gleamed with satisfaction as they rested on two envelopes addressed to his brother in that same erect black writing

which had characterized the single sheet.

"Got you this time, I reckon," he muttered, in a tone of intense satisfaction. "If Bainbridge ain't interested in this——"

He paused abruptly, and raised his head with a jerk, his eyes narrowing, and his grip tightening unconsciously on the letters. From outside came a queer, vibrating clang. For an instant he listened tensely as the sound rose and fell on the night air, muffled a little by closed doors and windows, but still clear and unmistakable—the primitive village fire alarm. With a gasp of dismay, he leaped toward the door.

"Cripes!" he cried, gripping the knob. "It's to-night—to-night! An' I never guessed!"

CHAPTER XIV.

FIRE AND SMOKE.

CURLY found himself, hatless, and with two letters and a scrap of paper clasped in one hand, running swiftly toward that portion of the river bank where stood the Bainbridge mill. What he could accomplish alone and unaided was a question which troubled him vaguely. He meant, at least, to give the best that was in him toward fighting a calamity he might have prevented if only he had kept his wits about him.

Presently he slackened his pace a little, and a puzzled wrinkle came into his forehead. There was not the slightest glare to be seen in the direction of the mill. It seemed odd that a fire in such a place should not show itself sooner. He hurried on a little farther, but still there was no sign of fire—no noise or scurrying of people. At length, reaching the fence which surrounded mill and lumber yards, he paused, wondering in which direction lay the nearest gate. A second later, half turning, he saw the glow and sparks from a burning building rising above the leafless trees at least a mile away.

"Gee!" he muttered, in a tone of relief. "I'm sure glad I was fooled. For

a bit I thought it was all up, but now mebbe I kin put a crimp in their game."

He stood silent for a minute or two, turning the matter over in his mind. There were difficulties which had not occurred to him at first. If he went to Bainbridge or to the authorities with his discovery, Bill would be sure to pay the penalty. He was not anxious for this. He did not want to mix his brother up in the affair if it were possible to keep his name out of it. If he could only see Bill he felt sure he could make him cut it all and get out of the country. But that was the trouble—to find him and do it quickly. Where had he gone this night of all others? What was keeping him away so long? Was it possible, after all, that the burning *had* been planned for to-night, but planned to take place later?

The interior of the inclosure seemed very quiet and peaceful, yet Curly felt a fresh stab of apprehension when presently he discovered the big gate unlocked and ajar. After a momentary hesitation he pushed the gate still farther open, and, slipping through, closed it behind him, and crept, ghostlike, along in the shadow of the fence.

Ahead loomed the mill buildings, velvet-black shadows against a blue-black sky. To his left lay great stacks of manufactured lumber worth many thousand dollars. He could not see them now, but he knew their location, and the thought of all that property going up in smoke made him scowl fiercely, and clench his fists in the darkness.

Presently he stopped abruptly as the blackness was pierced by a single gleam of light from the corner of the shadowy building. The next instant he gave a relieved chuckle. It came from the watchman's shanty, of course. That was where it stood, close by the corner of the main building.

Everything was so quiet and peaceful that it seemed futile to go any farther, yet somehow the man wanted to make sure. Finally he decided to gain this end by giving the watchman a tip about the gate.

Crossing the open space, he stepped

to the window, and peered through the dingy glass. The shack seemed empty; the lighted lantern stood on a rough table from which a straight deal chair was pushed back. Yet, in spite of this, Curly could not be quite certain, so he reached for the latch and thrust the door open.

It was not empty. Some one—something was there, a huddled mass lying face down in the corner. With a quick gasp of horror and alarm, Curly straightened and whirled round.

Too late! Something heavy struck his head and pitched him, dazed, against the wall of the shanty. He threw out both hands toward the shadows he could barely see, and from his lips came a hoarse cry of mingled pain and fury. A second blow beat through his guard, and stretched him senseless on the ground.

The coming around seemed to Curly merely a matter of seconds; really it must have been much longer. When he recovered enough of his senses to make mental notes he discovered that he was lying flat on the sawdust-covered floor near a big circular saw that gleamed like burnished silver. He was bound round and round with ropes, unable to move hand or foot. A lighted lantern made a bright spot in the intense gloom, dimly revealing above him the heavy beams and rafters of the mill. After a little he saw, sitting on the other side of the lantern, a man who gazed steadily at him, and whose face, even in the shadows, seemed familiar. A moment later he realized that the man was John Joyce.

The discovery was not a pleasant one. Joyce and he had been enemies for a considerable time, owing mainly to the fact that both were paying attentions to a certain young woman who showed decided partiality for Kollock. In a moment of passion Joyce had sworn to "get" Curly, and the latter had jeered at him. He did not jeer now. The best he could do was to summon a forced smile.

"You'll grin out o' the other side of your mouth afore I git done with you, you spyin' scum," observed the red-

haired individual acrimoniously. "What are you doin' here?"

"None o' your business!" retorted Kollock promptly. "Where's Bill?"

"Better keep a civil tongue in your head," snarled Joyce. "How come you sneakin' around this mill to-night? Who put you wise to what's goin' on?"

Possessed of only a small fund of diplomacy, Curly saw a chance to make his enemy writhe, and at once took it, regardless of all other considerations.

"Never you mind who put me wise," he retorted. "I'm on, all right. I know you're goin' to set fire to the mill to-night, an', what's more, I know who put you up to it—see? Git that through your dome? I've got evidence stowed away—in a safe place, too—that'll send somebody to Thomaston Prison for a nice little bit. Get me?"

All of this was not strictly true, but the young riverman could not pass up the chance to make Joyce shiver. A moment later he more than regretted the impulse.

"Little Johnny-on-the-spot, ain't you?" snarled the red-headed man, when he had partially recovered from the shock. "You made a nice bull, though, exposin' your cards before the show-down."

His jaws came together with a snap, and, rising suddenly to his feet, he dropped on one knee beside Curly. In another second he had thrust a lump of waste between the helpless riverman's jaws, and tied it down with a dirty strip of cloth. Then he resumed his seat.

"Jest a little precaution against noise," he said unpleasantly. "My pals are out in the yard, an' I ain't anxious for 'em to know I brung you in here. They think you're a second watchman—see? I got sight o' your face first, an' covered it up so nobody would know you was here. Bill's down to Lynchburg, soused, an' likely won't show up till mornin'. This was to be the night for our little shindy, only, not havin' no word yet, I was goin' to give it up—till you come along. Now I think I'll let things go ahead, word or no word. Get me, Steve?"

He arose, leering hideously, and Curly felt the perspiration begin to burst out all over his body. His wide-open eyes—the only part of him which could move—sought Joyce's, but the fellow's gaze, shifting continually, thwarted the attempt. Kollock noticed—just why he did not know—that the other's face was deathly pale, and that his low forehead was covered with little beads of sweat. A second later Joyce picked up the lantern and moved lightly toward the door.

"Jest tell 'em that you saw me, an' give 'em my regards," he sneered over his shoulder, but his voice cracked on the last word, and, stumbling over a loose board in the floor, he disappeared.

For perhaps half a minute Curly lay absolutely still. Then the horror of what that human fiend meant to do struck him with full force, turning him cold and then hot as fire. He rolled over on his face, and, bracing both feet against the foundation of the saw, strained the splendid muscles of back and arm and shoulder as he had never strained them before. The ropes cracked a little, but held fast, biting deep into his flesh. He paid no heed to the pain. Again he strove with all his might to break those bonds. Again he failed. Joyce had done his work well.

He was still straining, twisting, and flinging himself about till every inch of his body seemed sore to the touch, when of a sudden the faint, light tang of something new in the air made him stop like a person paralyzed.

Smoke!

For a second he did not dare to breathe. Slowly, fearfully, he drew in the air. Then a smothered, inarticulate sound, half scream, half groan, echoed through the dark mill. It *was* smoke! The coward had kept his word and fired the building. No one would ever know. The flames were coming fast—fast. Presently they would reach him—

In a panic of horror he again cast himself here and there over the board floor, the sawdust sometimes muffling the thudding sound of his body. There was not one chance in a thousand that any one would hear him. He stopped

and listened, but detected no sound. A fresh puff of smoke made him gag. It was coming faster and faster, thicker and thicker.

Gasping for breath, he flung himself about again in a mad paroxysm of fear. Above the thudding noise of his own making he could hear the horrible, ominous crackling of flames. Crevices here and there began to be outlined in dull, glowing, changing red. He thought he heard the clanging of the primitive alarm, but he could not be sure.

Hither and thither he rolled, keeping up the motion without conscious volition, scraping, scratching, bumping against obstacles, but always striving blindly to get farther away from the consuming element beyond the partition.

At one time the lapping, gurgling sound of water struck on his dazed senses with the shock of the incredible. Then he realized that it came from beneath him, and knew that he must be in the portion of the mill built out over the river. A few inches of flooring was all that separated him from the cool, soothing touch of that water. The bitter irony of it ate into his soul like caustic, and brought a sudden rush of scalding tears to the stinging, smoke-blinded eyes.

The glow brightened, grew more vivid. A single tongue of flame slid through a crack, and began licking up the wall. The sight seemed to arouse Curly to fresh exertions. He flung himself furiously to one side, and by a strange chance he struck glancingly against the teeth of the circular saw, which cut his face cruelly and tore away the gag.

It took him a second or two to realize what had happened. Then from between his swollen lips a fierce, wild cry of desperate appeal rang out. It rose shrilly, piercingly, ended in a choke. He tried to cry again, but the smoke rushed into his lungs and turned the shout into a gruesome groan.

That smoke was pouring into the room in clouds now. The single tongue of flame had bred a score, casting a lurid light over the place, and driving

black despair into the half-conscious brain of the hopeless victim.

CHAPTER XV.

THE WAY OUT.

BOB BAINBRIDGE came down to Lancaster that same evening. He had made arrangements with Tweedy to be there at a certain hour to receive the wire his partner planned to send regarding a loan necessary to cover that second note.

Arriving in town about a quarter to six, Bob went straight to the telegraph office. The operator, a dapper youth of almost tender years, promptly handed him an envelope.

"Came in just in time, Mr. Bainbridge," he announced. "We close at six, you know."

Bob nodded absently without speaking, and departed at once for the hotel he usually patronized. There would be plenty of time in the morning to send his partner an answer, and he was anxious to have a chance to think the matter over quietly.

Reaching the hotel, he registered, and went at once to the room assigned him. Here he opened the message, and read it through with a perfectly blank expression:

Have cover removed on tank house. Can't use other timber.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" Bainbridge exclaimed aloud. "What the deuce does that mean? 'Have cover removed on tank house. Can't use other timber.' Blamed if I think it means anything. Sounds like gibberish to me."

Puzzled, and decidedly ill-tempered, he sat down and scanned the message closely. He could not believe it had been sent him as a joke. Tweedy was not the sort to perpetrate that kind of a pleasantry, especially at present. But what else could it be?

For twenty minutes or more he sat staring at the sheet before he made a curious discovery. The telegram was not addressed to him at all, but to one William Kollock.

"The genial Bill," he muttered, his

eyes sparkling with a new interest. "Jove! The plot thickens!"

A glance at the envelope showed his own name written plainly thereon. Evidently the boy had carelessly transposed the messages, giving Bainbridge the one intended for the tool of his bitterest enemy. To Bob the annoyance of realizing that, in all probability, Kollock was in possession of Tweedy's wire about the loan was swallowed up in the interest of those ten words before him.

That they were written in a secret code Bainbridge had not a doubt. There was a superficial coherency about them, but when one studied the message, the impossibility of a careless operator being responsible for those errors became plain. Just what that code might be Bob did not know, but he meant to find out if such a thing were possible. A cryptogram addressed to Bill Kollock must, almost certainly, be of vital importance to himself.

The reading of the cipher—if such it could be called—proved even simpler than he had expected. Taking the first letters of each word from left to right made no sense at all. Reversing the process, however, produced this cryptic phrase:

"Touch torch."

"About as dotty as the other," grumbled Bob, crumpling the message into a pocket. "I'm hanged if I'll bother with the thing any longer."

He could not help thinking about it, however, and after a futile walk to the telegraph office, and an equally futile attempt to locate the operator, he went back to the hotel and turned in.

But even here his mind refused to respond to the urgings of his tired body. Though he did his best to forget those two tantalizing words, he found it impossible. What did they mean? What *could* they mean? Perhaps, after all, they meant nothing in themselves, but were simply a cryptic sort of signal which the recipient alone would understand.

"Touch torch," he murmured drowsily, as he stretched his weary body luxuriously on the first real bed he had known in months. "What the deuce!

Touch torch— Great guns! The mill!"

With a single bound he cleared the space between bed and bureau. In a second the lamp was lighted, and he was flinging on his clothes in mad haste. What a thick-headed fool he had been! That was it, of course! Thwarted in those other cowardly attacks, it was the most natural thing in the world for Elihu Crane to make use of this means of crippling his competitor. He who had not hesitated at attempted assassination was not likely to stop at arson.

Within five minutes Bainbridge had left the hotel, and was tearing down the road in the direction of his property. The sky was still dark and placid, and for a little while he thought he would be in time. But as he reached the fence surrounding the mill, and ran along it toward the nearest gates, a sudden reddish glow flashed up through the blackness beyond the high board structure, followed by a little shower of sparks like a feathery rocket.

Without pausing an instant in his rush, Bainbridge drew his revolver and fired twice in the air. Then he broke the stillness with a cry of fire from his powerful lungs—a cry which might almost have raised the dead.

The gates were wide open, and, as he raced through into the inclosure, he almost collided with a shadowy figure, bent over, and running with long, agile strides. The pistol was still in Bob's hand, and, without a moment of hesitation, he sent it crashing square in the middle of the unknown's forehead, dropping the fellow like a log.

"One good thing done, anyhow," muttered Bainbridge, with a fierce kind of satisfaction.

He hesitated an instant, wondering whether to pause and make the fellow secure, or hurry on toward the burning building. Brief as had been the space since it first showed, the fire was beginning to break forth, illumining the sky, and making the mill seem almost like a flaming furnace within. There was little chance of accomplishing any good there, while it would be a pity if one of the undoubted criminals escaped.

He had made up his mind, and was searching through his pockets for something to bind the fellow with, when a scream rang out, so wild and full of agonized appeal that it chilled his blood. It came from the burning building, and in an instant Bob was running toward it with all his might.

He raced around a corner, peering through windows as he ran. The front half of the building was one glare of flaming crimson, in which no human being could live a minute. The man—it was the watchman, of course—must be in the rear.

He kept on around. Reaching another window, he smashed it with a piece of "edging" caught up from the ground, letting out a volume of smoke. With a bound he was inside, facing the glare which came from the billowing mass of fire.

"Tom!" he cried, shielding his face with one crooked arm. "Tom! Where are you?"

There was no answer. Crouching low and holding his breath, he hurried toward a portion of the mill which overlooked the river. Behind him the flames closed in with chuckling crackles like sentient things of murderous intent bent on cutting off his retreat.

"Tom!" he cried again. "Where are——"

The words died in his throat. Sprawled across the log carrier near one of the huge circular saws was the inert body of a man. The fire had almost reached it, but Bainbridge plunged forward without faltering. Through heat that singed hair and eyebrows, and seemed to sear his lungs with the breath of death he plunged. Stooping, he grasped the unconscious man by the shoulders, and dragged him across the floor. He could not retreat as he had come. He did not try. He was making for the opening to the runway or chute over which logs were yanked up from the river. This was rather steep and slippery, and he was forced to change his grip on the man. An instant later he gave a cry of amazement as he recognized the blackened, bloody features of his own riverman.

But there was not a second to lose in speculation as to what Curly was doing here. The glare of the burning building lit up the whole river, and already from the other side came cries of arriving villagers. He could see them running; doubtless many of them saw him as he paused in the fire-lit arch of the chute with the unconscious youth in his arms.

"It's a swim for it," he muttered, glancing at Kollock. "Not much of a one, but mighty cold. Reckon we'll be on our way."

Hoisting Kollock over his shoulder, he stepped into the log-polished trough. For a fraction of a second he seemed to stand motionless, straight as a dart, a striking figure against that background of lurid crimson. Then, still remaining upright, he shot downward at an angle like a person sliding on ice, to plunge with a great splash into the icy water.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE VERGE OF RUIN.

STEPPING hastily from his car, John Tweedy hurried across the sidewalk, and entered the lobby of the Bangor House. His plump face had an oddly sunken, pasty look. The jowls were pendulous, and there were dark rings under the eyes. His whole manner, in fact, was that of a man on the verge of a nervous collapse, holding himself together by sheer determination of will.

Inside the door he paused a moment, staring almost furtively to right and left, as if the ruin he knew to be so imminent was already a matter of public knowledge and comment. The fairly well-filled lobby held a number of familiar faces, whose owners either did not or would not see the stout man. Tweedy made sure that the slight was intentional, and a nervous tremor quivered on his lips.

"Bah!" he muttered, hastening on toward the desk. "They're beginning to cut me. After the fire last night they think I'm out for more credit. It's the beginning of the end."

To his supersensitive mind the very desk clerk, who had so often laughed obsequiously at the lumber magnate's jokes and pocketed with effusive thanks his expensive cigars, delayed purposely in attending him. It was the subtle impertinence of an inferior which seems to cut so much more deeply than any other kind, and it stung Tweedy into a momentary flash of his old spirit.

"Griggs!" he snapped, in a voice which brought the clerk instantly forward. "I have an appointment to meet Mr. Bainbridge here at twelve," he went on, transfixing the young man with an icy stare. "Has he left any word for me?"

Before the flushed, embarrassed youth could answer, a hand dropped lightly on Tweedy's shoulder, and a cheery, familiar voice sounded in his ear:

"Well, John, you're certainly on the dot. Put it there, old man! I'm mighty glad to see you."

It was Bob, clean, fresh, and well groomed. His eyes sparkled, the glow of health was in his cheeks. There was an air of vigor and physical fitness about him which made Tweedy stare in bewilderment, wondering whether his partner was made of iron.

"I'm certainly glad to see you, Bobby," he echoed, gripping the strong, brown fingers. "I don't know how you can stand the pace, though. I'm about all in sitting up most of the night trying to figure out our losses from the incomplete——"

"Just one second, John," interrupted Bainbridge, and only then was his partner aware of the pleasant-faced, rather distinguished-appearing, gray-haired man who stood just behind the young lumberman. "I want you to meet Mr. Wolcott Sears, of Boston. He's been up in the woods fishing, and we got acquainted up there."

Tweedy acknowledged the introduction with the best grace he could summon, in view of the fact that he was burning to get Bob by himself, and find out something of where the firm stood. He knew Sears by reputation as an influential and powerful capitalist, and it

was his policy always to be agreeable to moneyed men. But even that, combined with the Boston man's undoubted charm of manner, did not prevent Tweedy from being a trifle austere. He only thawed completely when Sears presently announced that he would have to tear himself away at once, or else miss the Boston train.

"I was afraid he'd stick around for hours," Tweedy said, as Bob returned from seeing Sears to the door. "Let's go over here where there's less crowd."

"Couldn't have a better man," said Bob, falling into step with his partner. "He's one of the best ever, John, and has been a good friend to me."

"Of course, of course!" returned Tweedy, with a nervous sort of pettishness. "That's all very well, but we don't want anybody else around just now. Tell me about the mill. Complete loss, I suppose?"

Bainbridge nodded. "Just about. Saved a few hundred thousand feet of pine stacked at the upper end of the yard. Everything else went."

A facial muscle quivered, as if the confirmation of what Tweedy had feared, yet hoped desperately against, had touched a raw nerve. He dropped down in one of the row of leather-covered chairs facing Main Street, and took out his handkerchief.

"My country!" he groaned, staring in bewilderment at his companion. "I don't see how you can take it all so easy. You know as well as I do that there's not a cent of insurance on the stock. You must realize that Lancaster was the only mill we had capable of taking care of a big drive."

Bainbridge sat on the arm of the adjoining chair, one leg lightly swinging back and forth.

"That's true enough," he nodded, feeling for his cigarette case. "I've always contended, though, that with proper equipment, the mill at Colport could turn out a third more cut lumber than the Lancaster mill."

Tweedy groaned, and cast up his eyes. "What if it could?" he demanded. "How in creation are we going to

find out? We're broke—busted—cleaned out!" Even in the stress of his emotion he remembered to lower his voice cautiously. "We've hardly an asset left except the drive. We've no credit. One of our notes for eight thousand dollars is due in less than twenty-four hours—due to the very scoundrel who's brought us where we are, and whose plotting won't stop there."

At last he seemed to find a shaft capable of penetrating the armor of Bob's self-possession. With a start, the young man dropped the match, and stared fixedly at Tweedy, the fresh-lighted cigarette dangling unheeded between the fingers of his other hand.

"Crane?" he exclaimed sharply. "You mean to say he's bought up that note?"

"Precisely."

"Huh!" Bainbridge lifted the cigarette, and took a thoughtful puff or two. "That must be why he sent the message I found here a little while ago. Said if I was quite ready to crawl he'd be in his office till two this afternoon."

He hesitated a second longer, and then stood up with a sudden, determined squaring of his wide shoulders.

"How about it, John?" he asked, a curious gleam in the dark eyes. "What do you say to making a call on the genial Elihu?"

Tweedy rose heavily. "I give up," he said, with a deep sigh. "Do as you like, son, it's all one to me. Only don't for an instant expect any mercy from Elihu Crane. Personally I'd rather spare myself the humiliation of an interview which can result in no possible good, but if you're keen on it——"

He finished with an eloquent gesture of resignation which brought a sudden softness into the young man's eyes.

"By Jove, but you're a sport!" he exclaimed, with a touch of his hand on the other's shoulder, which was almost a caress. "Don't you care, though, old man. It won't take long, and I'll attend to the talk. All you'll have to do will be to furnish me with the moral support of your presence."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE VISIT TO ELIHU.

FOR so many years Elihu Crane had preserved his impassive demeanor in public that he gradually ceased to let down the bars at all. Even in his own office—that inner sanctum which he had made as difficult of access as the specie vault of the Bank of England—he retained his pose. At this particular moment, even, holding in his hand that slip of paper which was the strongest thread in the web he had been weaving so long and patiently about his hated competitors, his face revealed nothing of the fierce joy which filled his soul.

That paper was the note which fell due upon the morrow. Bainbridge & Tweedy could not meet it, he was certain. Their funds were exhausted; their credit gone. Barring a miracle, he held them in his power at last. He meant to exercise that power ruthlessly and without mercy.

There was one little carping doubt in his mind—though that, too, was hidden behind the impenetrable mask. Was he to be deprived, after all, of the keen pleasure he had planned for himself—the pleasure of being the one imparting to young Bainbridge by word of mouth the exact status of his affairs, and a gloating account of what the future held in store?

His letter had been placed in Bainbridge's hands hours before. Bob was not obliged to come, but Crane had written with a perfect knowledge of the young man's nature, coupled with all the diabolical cunning he possessed. It would be strange if the combination did not serve to goad the high-spirited youngster into doing what his former partner desired, and yet the minute hand of the clock was climbing swiftly upward from half past one, and there had come no word.

Frowning the least bit, Crane at length stretched out a lean, wrinkled hand toward one of a row of pearl-topped buttons set in the surface of the flat mahogany desk. Almost as he did so one of the telephones at his left tinkled lightly, and he lifted it swiftly. A

brief conversation took place which smoothed miraculously the forehead of the Lumber Trust official.

"Show them in at once, Banning," he finished.

Setting down the instrument, he leaned back, eyes fixed on the door with a touch almost of pleasurable anticipation in them. When presently it swung open to admit Bob Bainbridge, followed closely by Tweedy, Crane's mouth tightened cruelly, and the sandy-fringed lids drooped a trifle.

"And so," he said at length, his lips curling, "you've come to crawl."

Bainbridge did not answer for a moment. He was busy settling down in the chair which had not been offered him, and in seeing that Tweedy did the same. Then he drew out a cigar case and, with elaborate courtesy, extended it to Crane.

"No?" he murmured, as the latter declined with a brief gesture. "Given up smoking? Here, John."

When Tweedy had accepted, and his own weed was lighted, Bainbridge leaned comfortably back in his chair.

"To crawl?" he repeated slowly, "Well, I don't know about that. A fellow never likes to crawl if there's another way out of a difficulty."

Crane's eyes glinted. "Rest assured there isn't," he retorted crisply. "You're in a hole. You haven't a single resource left. Your credit's no good——"

"Oh, I don't admit that," put in Bob hastily.

"Whether you admit it or not, it's true," retorted Crane, a note of cold, calculating triumph creeping into his voice. "You can't bluff me. I've had a man looking up your affairs for some time, and I know what I'm talking about. Tweedy, here, has been breaking his neck all last week trying to borrow enough to meet your note of eight thousand which is due at noon to-morrow. That note"—he bent forward, and raised for an instant the oblong sheet of paper from his desk—"is here."

If he expected signs of surprise or consternation from Bainbridge he was disappointed. Bob simply crossed one leg over the other, and nodded.

"So I understand," he drawled.

There was a briefest sort of pause, during which his dark eyes held the older man's in thrall. Suddenly he arose.

"You may as well hand it over now," he said coolly, moving toward the desk.

In a twinkling Crane had acted. With amazing agility he bent forward over the desk. A buzzer sounded. A drawer popped open. A second later he had snatched from it a revolver, which he leveled swiftly at Bob. Last of all, doors at either end of the office opened noiselessly to admit a pair of stalwart attendants.

Bainbridge, pausing in the middle of the floor, surveyed these maneuvers with interest and frank amusement.

"Very clever and effective," he murmured slowly, exhaling a whiff of smoke. "Plainly no one's ever going to catch you napping. It happens, though; that I had no idea of playing the hold-up game. I wished merely to hand you a check for the amount of that note and interest, and cancel it. Would you mind turning that barrel just a trifle to one side? Accidents will happen, you know, and your staff here seems quite able to cope with the situation alone."

A single momentary flash of incredulous anger rippled across Crane's impassive countenance. Then the mask fell again, and, lowering the revolver, he bent forward.

"You certainly don't expect me to accept a personal check of yours for that amount, do you?" he inquired coldly.

"Not quite," smiled Bainbridge. "Knowing your skeptical nature, I took the trouble to have it certified."

He drew out his bill case, and, taking from it a narrow slip of paper, laid it before Crane. A silence followed—tense, vibrating with something of the sense of that bitter, baffled fury which was rending the older man as he stared at the scrap of paper that was depriving him of his revenge. It was the equivalent of currency. He could not refuse to take it. The amount was correct to the last cent. The whole transaction was one in which even his cunning could find no flaw.

But where had the money come from? He could not believe that any one in Bangor had supplied it. It was impossible that his subordinates could have been so deceived.

With swiftly growing fury Crane made a brief note of payment on the back of the paper. His hand trembled. By the time the signature was written his lips were quivering—his face dark.

"There!" he rasped harshly, thrusting the note at Bainbridge. "Where you got it I don't know, but it'll do you no good. Your best mill's a total loss. You haven't sold a foot of lumber in weeks, and you won't for months to come. Everybody's bought what they want from us at easy rates. You may think this is a mighty smart move, but I'll get you in the end!"

"I think not!"

Bob's voice had taken on a sudden quality of hardness. His face lost the half-bantering expression of a moment before, and grew coldly stern. It was as if he had all at once wearied of the little drama he had been staging, and was determined to ring down the curtain without delay.

"I think not," he repeated curtly. "Who did you make those biggest sales of cut-rate lumber to, Crane?"

There was an underlying significance in his tone which made Crane glance sharply at him from under penthouse brows, and then dismiss the two silent attendants with a gesture.

"What business is that of yours?" he demanded.

Bainbridge laughed harshly, triumphantly. "What business is it of mine? I'll tell you."

He bent suddenly forward, gripping the edge of the desk with both hands. His face was slightly flushed; his eyes, fixed intently on Crane, held in their depths a gleam of singularly disconcerting triumph.

"I'll tell you," he said rapidly. "J. G. Brown, of Portland, had two million feet, didn't he? Creighton, of Rockland, bought half as much. There was Cox, of Portsmouth—Blanchard—Manning—Lafitte. You see, I *know*!"

There was a ring in his voice which made Tweedy begin to tingle and sit forward, suddenly erect, in thrilling anticipation of the bombshell he felt sure was coming.

"Why don't you ask the questions you're dying to? How? Why? You're wild to know; I can see it in your eyes." Bob laughed again, and Crane winced at the sound. "I'll tell you. I know because they're only my agents—buying—for—me!"

"It's a lie!" burst from Crane's white lips. "They paid cash! You haven't a cent."

"I have something better—unlimited credit. Shall I tell you who's backing me because he hates the trust, and has faith in my ability to fight you? Wolcott Sears, of Boston. Now do you understand? Instead of ruining us by cutting rates, you've played straight into our hands. Timber values can't go down. We'll sell at market prices what we bought from you, and clean up a cool half million on the deal."

With an inarticulate cry of fury, Crane leaped to his feet, and stood glaring at Bainbridge with flaming, mad-dened eyes. The mask of inscrutability had vanished from his face. One saw the real man now, stripped of the veneer of temperament and civilization.

"It's a plot!" he raved, shaking a skinny fist in Bob's face. "It's a vile conspiracy. I'll take the case to court. I'll have you jailed for——"

"Sit down!"

Bainbridge's tone was not loud, but there was a compelling quality about it which stopped the boiling torrent of fury with amazing suddenness. Crane gulped hard, caught his trembling lips

between his teeth—and finally subsided into his chair.

"You talk of plots—you!" The young man's voice was hard, cold, full of unutterable contempt. "Do you happen to know the penalty for conspiracy to commit arson—and worse?"

"I—I don't know—what you mean," faltered Crane, avoiding the dark eyes bent so keenly on his face.

"Oh, yes, you do. Look at these."

With a swift, dramatic motion Bainbridge suddenly jerked from his pocket some sheets of paper covered closely with erect, spitefully black writing, and held them before Crane.

"Your own hand," he accused. "Instructions to your henchman, Bill Kolllock? I think the jury at your trial will consider them proof enough."

Crane's jaw dropped. His white face had turned a sickly green.

"You—wouldn't—dare!" he gasped.

"Wouldn't I? Just let me show you."

Without waiting a reply, Bob leaned over, and, picking up one of the telephones, stood erect.

"Headquarters," he said briefly. Then, after a momentary pause: "That you, chief? This is Bainbridge. Will you send up those two plain-clothes men we arranged about? Yes, the arrest can be made any time. That's all. Thank you!"

The receiver clicked into place again, and Bainbridge returned the instrument to the desk. Crane sat hunched in his chair, his face a mixture of hate and fear and baffled fury. Tweedy looked as if a mammoth weight had been suddenly lifted from his shoulders. Bob's expression was inscrutable.

The room was very still.

The Height of Fashion

EXCUSE me, ma'am," said the fashionable lady's new cook, "but would ye moind now if I had this address printed on my card?"

"Why, not, at all, Bridget," replied the lady. "Of course, it is unusual; but this is your new home, and if you have a card, it is perfectly proper for you to put your address on it."

"Thank ye, ma'am," said Erin's brawny daughter. "An' I noticed ye got printed on yer cards, ma'am, 'At home on Thursday.' Wouldn't it be proper for me, ma'am, to have printed on moine: 'Tuesdays off?'"



Cheridah's Valentine

By
Roland Ashford Phillips



WHEN Cheridah first found the valentine, picking it from the jumbled mass of others on the long counter, she gave a quick little sob, and pressed it close to her heart, for all the world as if she had come upon a diamond in the coal bin. She was alone behind the counter at the time, otherwise Mr. Howland, the dignified floorwalker, might have objected seriously to such a demonstration on the part of a mere saleslady.

After the thrill of the discovery was past, Cheridah's shining eyes devoured every detail of the gaudy, multicolored token.

"It's just the same," she murmured, over and over again, her voice tremulous. "It's just the same. Oh, I wonder——"

The valentine was a built-up affair, generously trimmed with paper lace, and resplendent with tinsel. On each corner were white flying doves with outspreading wings, carrying letters in their bills; in the center was a reproduction of a heavy door across which a pink-and-white cupid, perched on a cloud, held up entwined hearts, arrow-pierced. Lifting the door, one was greeted with these words:

"If you love me
As I love you—
No knife can't cut
Our love in two pieces. Ain't it?"

To Cheridah these lines—their grotesque humor so out of key with the rest of the valentine—brought back remembrance of a day, five years earlier, when Hezekiah Saunders, bashful, freckled-faced sixteen, had slipped this valentine's counterpart into her desk at recess. Being fourteen, Cheridah Hawkins had been both flattered and flustered.

The five long years that intervened between the time she had first glanced upon this valentine at school, and the present, when she gazed upon it—or at least upon its replica—in the stuffy, artificially lighted basement of the Store Stupendous, were years fruitful with history; dark, unpleasant, and bitter history.

Somehow Cheridah had never recalled the past so vividly as she did at this moment, standing there behind the counter, her fingers pressing the tawdry trinket—beautiful in her eyes—against her black shirt waist. The hot tears came suddenly and continued unchecked, slipping down her cheek; her lips quivered.

"Miss Downs!" A voice lifted commandingly, shattering her visions as a rifle ball might shatter a pane of glass. "Pay attention! Can't you see there's customers waiting?"

It was Mr. Howland, the refined floorwalker, who had interrupted. With

tremulous fingers Cheridah tucked the valentine beneath the long tray, and bent her attentions upon serving the customers which the big sign—"TODAY AT 49 c."—lured to the counter.

For the rest of the day some vague fear possessed her that the valentine might be sold, and to prevent such a catastrophe she determined to keep it hidden where she had first slipped it—beneath the tray and the showcase. Of course, forty-nine cents wasn't any great sum, but to Cheridah it represented half a day's work; and where one figured debits and credits as closely as she was compelled to—owing to a generous salary from the department store—a five-cent piece loomed as large as a full moon. But Saturday night was pay night, and then she would buy it, if for nothing more than to take home and hang on the nail in the wall that now held her curling irons.

Foolish? She tried to persuade herself that it was foolish for her to do this; but somehow, like a dose of bitter medicine, it wouldn't down. Of course, Hezekiah Saunders had long since forgotten her. She had treated him shamefully back home, when he used to carry her books from the little country school, and sometimes take her to the barn dances and to the ice-cream socials at the church.

And Hezekiah—poor, faithful boy—had been the only one at the train that day she left the little country town of Geetuckett, and set her face toward great, pitiless New York. He had urged her to remain; he was buying a farm—a very good one, too. Soon he would be able to move upon it, and if she would only come with him and—and — How he had pressed her warm fingers for the last time, and fought manfully against the tears that would not stay back.

"I'll wait for you, Cheridah," he had said, just before the train started. "There's nothing in the city but misery and pain and sorrow. You'll find out pretty soon, and you'll come back."

But Cheridah, being seventeen, and believing she possessed a wonderful voice, only pitied the boy. Hadn't her

friends told her she was just cut out for grand opera?

"After all," she reasoned to herself, "Hez is only a farmer boy, and he doesn't know."

In her own narrow way she saw the heights to climb, and the worlds to win. How foolish it was of Hezekiah to think she could stay on the old farm and fight down the ambition which leaped like fire in her veins. She was made for a greater world than that; she was born to dwell in the city of big things. So she had put him out of her mind. It is easy at seventeen, when art beckons.

But a mere voice proved to be unreliable as a provider of food, shelter, and clothes. A hall bedroom soon became her palace, and the Supreme Lunch her banquet hall. Determination, once so firmly rooted, shriveled up like a thirsty flower. So the three years exacted their toll by painting little shadows beneath her eyes, and chiseling tiny lines around her mouth, and pressing a heavy hand on her slim shoulders. When her money was all gone—the pittance left by her mother's will—and the voice found no market, Cheridah gained an existence in return for labor at the Store Stupendous.

For the first year Hezekiah had written often; the second less frequently, probably because she found little time in which to answer him. The last year had brought silence. Besides, she had moved often, and had neglected to mention the new address.

II.

THAT night, in the seclusion of her hall bedroom—what a poor place in comparison to the one she slept in under the low eaves at home on the farm, with the apple tree brushing the window and the crickets singing out in the dim, sweet-smelling meadows, and the clean air that fairly made one glad they were alive—Cheridah went to the bottom of her trunk, and found Hezekiah's picture. Then she gave way to tears.

After a while, Bessie tapped at the door and came in. Bessie was another

cog in the business wheel of the Store Stupendous. The two girls lived at the same dreary boarding house. Bessie saw the photograph on Cheridah's dresser, went over, and studied it critically.

"He's a nice, clean-looking chap," she observed.

Cheridah nodded. Why hadn't she thought so three years ago?

"Do you love him?" Bessie asked.

"Oh, Bess!" And before she was really aware of it, Cheridah was pouring out the whole story.

"That's all this old burg is made up of," was Bessie's comment. "The tootlate folks! The kind that chuck real happiness for a lot of glitter. Listen here, Cherry. This town's like frosting on a cake of soap. It tastes fine until you bite deep. It's all froth and false alarm, and there isn't anything on the level. Believe your Aunt Bess. I know. I've been here for ten years."

"Did you come here to——" Cheridah began.

"No." Bessie shook her head. "I came here because I had to. There wasn't anything else for me to do. But you—— Why, if any man had offered me his love and the beautiful country for a home, and freedom from this grinding city, I'd have thanked Heaven every weekday and twice on Sunday. Get that?"

"I didn't know—then," Cheridah faltered. "I didn't know. I thought I was being held down on a farm. I thought all the real folks lived in the city, and—and——" She broke down and sobbed. "Oh, to see the waving fields once more, Bess, and to hear the old dinner bell, and to eat flapjacks again! That's life, isn't it?"

Bessie nodded. "All but the flapjacks," she said. "They are too much like the wheats they're always browning at the Supreme Lunch."

"And to pick the wild flowers," Cheridah went on, her voice low. "To help with the haying and hunt for nests in the stubble! And I remember the old apple tree that used to whisper at my bedroom window, and tell me the most wonderful stories. Of course they were

all dreams, but—but I know the old tree told them to me. All the birds used to love it, too, and in the spring it would deck itself with the most wonderful pink-and-white flowers."

Bessie was still gazing at the picture. "Haven't you ever heard from him since he quit writing? I mean heard *about* him?" she asked.

"I used to get a paper once in a while," Cheridah answered. "I don't know who sent it. Sometimes I'd read about him. He's got the farm all paid for now, and—and——"

"And probably he's found another girl," Bessie said. "Men are that way. You can't blame them, after all. Maybe he's married and got a nice home, and living the real life."

A great lump came into Cheridah's throat. It must have been about the size of one of the wee oranges at the Supreme Lunch. And the only way she could conquer it was to cry. Bessie dropped the picture and put both arms consolingly about her.

"There, there," she said, like a mother. "Of course it hurts, dear. But don't let it get your goat. I've got so I don't think there's anything in life worth crying over. Honest I don't."

That night, long after Bessie had gone, and the little room was flooded with moonlight, Cheridah lay in bed, her face buried in the pillow. At times she would stop crying and listen for the whispering of the old apple tree. And then she would remember.

III.

FOR the next two days Cheridah guarded the valentine with all the jealous care of a mother watching her babe. One day at the noon hour, when the shoppers were few, and she was alone behind the counter, she wrote her name very faintly under the flying cupid. She didn't mean to keep it there—but suddenly the refined and dignified Mr. Howland pounced upon her, and she had to return it to the usual hiding place.

On Saturday she found that Bessie was ordered to help her at the valen-

tine counter. At noon Cheridah went out to get a bag of peanuts for lunch, and when she returned the valentine counter had been removed.

"Your counter's in the rear of the basement," Mr. Howland explained hurriedly. "We needed this space for the silk remnants."

Almost frantically Cheridah gained the counter, and relieved Bessie. The first thing she did was to feel beneath the long tray. Then the truth crashed upon her. The trays, in being removed, had disclosed the valentine, and some one had tossed it back among the others. With eager fingers Cheridah searched the jumbled mass over. But it was useless. The flying doves and the cupid had been sold.

Her heart sank. It was foolish, of course, to allow such an insignificant thing as a gaudy paper valentine with some grotesque, bad rhymes in broken English to affect her; but somehow, despite her mental argument, she felt miserable, heartbroken. When she got back to the Store Stupendous, Bessie greeted her with wondering eyes.

"Say, pal," were her words, "you're looking too pale around the gills to be in right. What's eating you now?"

"Oh, nothing," Cheridah evaded. "Just blue, I guess."

At nine o'clock that Saturday night, when the store closed, Cheridah hurried out alone, avoided the regular route, and walked all the way home. It was misty and chilly, and the first sharp particles of hardened snow were slanting with the wind and stabbing at her cheeks. Broadway was ablaze with lights and animated with crowds, despite the weather. Cheridah darted off into a side street, and continued on her way. The next day, Sunday, she spent in her room. She refused to go out with Bessie.

"Why won't you tell me what's the matter?" Bessie asked. "Maybe there's something I could do to help you, dearie."

But Cheridah only shook her head. "There's nothing you can do, thanks."

On Monday Cheridah felt so ill—not knowing for certain whether it was

mental or physical pain—that she sent word down by Bessie that she was unable to work.

At five o'clock, eager for a breath of fresh air, she got out the warmest wraps she had, and determined to take a walk around the block. Several times while she was dressing the doorbell rang. She paid no attention to it until it occurred to her that the maid and landlady were both out. She hurried downstairs into the dim hall, and opened the door to find an angry messenger boy in the vestibule.

"Are you Miss Cherry-day Hawkins?" he inquired impatiently, stamping his cold feet.

"Yes, I'm Miss Hawkins," she replied, wondering.

"Here's somethin' for yer." The boy thrust it into her extended hand. "Sign dis; right dere." He pushed a book at her.

She signed, and the messenger dashed away. When she had shut the door and lighted the gas she looked again at the packet in her hand. With pulses aflutter, she broke the cord and seal. The paper came away. Then she leaned back dizzily against the hatrack. It was the precious valentine!

What did it mean? Who could have sent it? Who knew her address except — She started. Bessie must have done this as a surprise for her! Yes, surely it was Bessie! But —

Quite absently she lifted the flap. For a moment the ten-cent store pictures on the wall whirled in her vision. Only a frantic ringing of the bell again brought her back to realization. She groped her way toward the door as if in the dark. She opened it.

"Cheridah!" somebody cried. She could not utter a sound, try as she did. She stumbled forward as if some mighty hand had pushed her. Then a pair of strong arms gathered her close.

"Cherry, dear," the familiar voice was saying, "I've found you—found you at last, sweetheart!"

She opened her eyes and saw clearly now. The warm, eager blood surged in her veins; her heart pounded.

"Oh, Hezekiah! Oh, Hezekiah!" That was all she could say.

He kissed her on the cheeks and accidentally on the left ear.

"I've had the hardest time finding you," he said, laughing, although his eyes were moist. "Why didn't you write me? Why——"

"Oh, I've—I've been ashamed," she stammered.

"I came into New York last week," he said. "And I've been looking the town over. Day after day I stood and watched the rushing crowds on Broadway, thinking to see your face. And then the other day I went into a store and saw some valentines. And right on top of the whole pile was the dove-and-cupid one—the same kind I sent you a long time ago at school, the one with the funny Dutch words. Remember?" He laughed boyishly, and patted her cheek. Cheridah clung to him. She would hold him close as long as possible before she woke up—if it should turn out to be a dream.

"Yes, the very same kind of valentine, Cherry," she heard him saying. "And, Lord! My eyes got so wet I felt ashamed. But I bought it. I don't even know what made me. I guess some good angel does, though," he added, in a lower voice. "And only

yesterday, when I was looking at it I saw your name under the flap!"

"I—I wrote it there," she said, laughing for joy.

"I just couldn't believe my eyes at first," he went on. "I sort of turned sick. Then how I suffered all day Sunday! I was at the store the minute it opened Monday morning—that's to-day. The girl at the counter gave me your address—and maybe she didn't look at me in a funny way! I sent the valentine and came on the heels of the boy."

"I—I read about you—in the Geetuckett papers," she said.

"Did you? Well, that isn't half as good as seeing me, is it?" he replied modestly. "Now, you pack up, right away. We're going to leave this town. We're never going to see it again, Cherry. Why, you and me will have the finest pickle farm in the county. You wouldn't recognize the place now, dear. I've built the finest little house—and it's all ready, waiting for you. And, Cherry," he added, "there's a big apple tree; its branches reach into the bedroom window. I had it set out there—three years ago. Next month it will be in blossom."

"I know, I know!" she exclaimed rapturously. "I've heard that tree whispering."

Amusing Recollections

IN a recent volume of European court reminiscences are a couple of stories about Americans. One concerns a genial Yankee, who, on being presented to Leo XIII., exclaimed, as he seized the pope's hand and shook it heartily: "Sir, I am glad to meet you. I knew your father, the late pope!"

Then there was the American multimillionaire who visited Oxford and paused to admire the wonderful smooth grass turf in one of the college quadrangles.

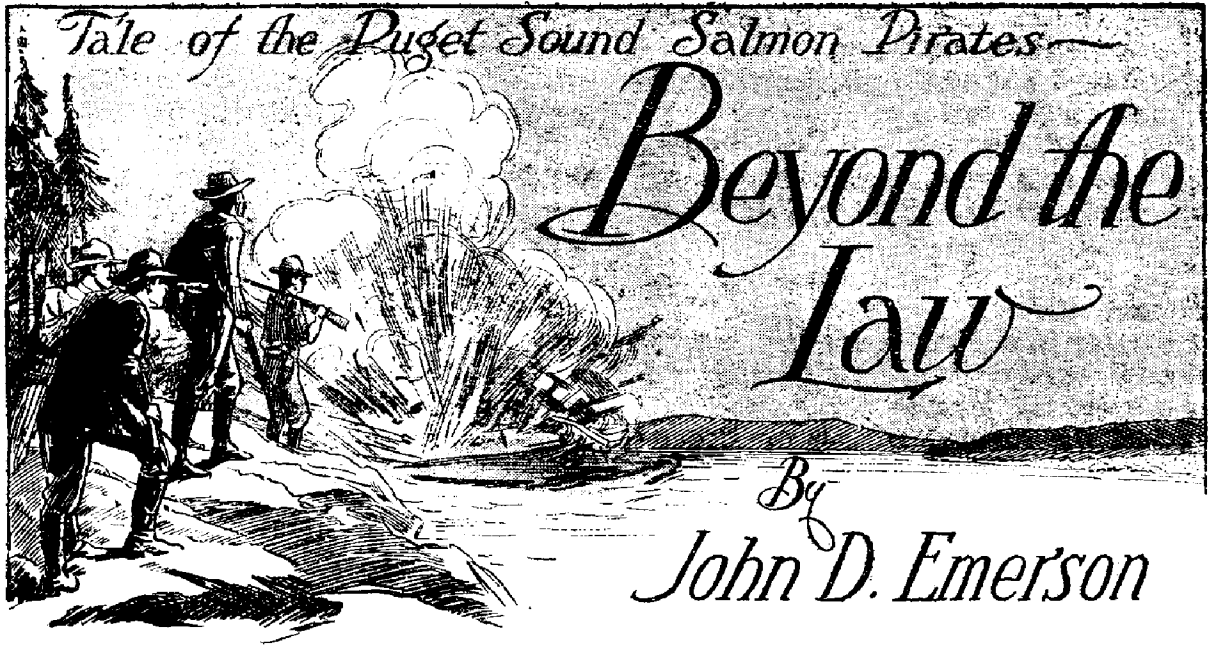
"That's fine," he said to a gardener. "How do you manage to get it?"

"Oh, that's quite simple, sir," was the reply. "You've only got to roll it for three hundred years."

There is a story, too, of Bismarck and Von Moltke, which illustrates the character of the latter in a very striking manner. It was in 1864, when the Prussians invaded Jutland and were taking possession of Fredericia. Von Moltke had strongly disapproved of the war, so that it was much against his will that as a conquering warrior he was obliged to enter the city which had sheltered his boyhood. He knew every street and house in it; Bismarck had never seen it before and looked around him curiously.

"That is a fine house," he remarked, pointing to a large, imposing building which cast all the others into the shade; "I will take up my quarters there."

"Very appropriate," replied Von Moltke dryly. "That is the state prison!"



Tale of the Puget Sound Salmon Pirates—

Beyond the Law

By
John D. Emerson

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Read them here in this abridged form, then enjoy the rest of the story.

CAPSTAN CULBERTSON, a young salmon pirate of gigantic stature, caps many deeds of daring by stealing a whole snowload of fish from the Melton cannery. Old Bill Melton, veteran salmon fisher, who has become the millionaire president of the great canning company, declares that his son, Dick, who is coming home from college, shall be the man to go after the pirate and capture him; and he purchases a fine motor-boat racer and presents it to Dick, with a deputy sheriff's badge and all the equipment necessary for pirate hunting.

Dick Melton loses control of his motor boat while cruising about the small islands, and is saved from disaster by Chatla, a young half-breed Siwash Indian girl, who tows him to safety with her light skiff. Struck by her unusual beauty, he talks with her and learns that she is the daughter of Iotte Montana, the chief of the salmon pirates, and lives with him, her old Uncle Sky, and Capstan Culbertson, on the island. She tells him how the wealthy old pirates have bought her a fine pipe organ, upon which she has learned to play a little. Dick offers to go home with her and play upon the organ, and she tells him that when she decides to invite him, she will place a sprig of the evergreen madroña bush on a high rock which he can see from his boat. He promises to respond to the signal.

The girl tells her father and friends of the incident, and Capstan Culbertson, bitter with jealousy and natural enmity, steals to the rocks and displays the madroña-bush signal. Chatla catches him at his treachery, but too late to prevent Dick Melton from

coming. He brings, however, a young Boston society girl, Ada Reese Proctor, and they pay a formal call upon Iotte Montana, and Dick plays Handel's "Largo" on the organ, enchanting all but Capstan with his mastery of the instrument.

Capstan and Iotte plan to raid Bill Melton's fish trap at Hale's Pass, but Chatla thinks they are going to the trap at Point Roberts. Dick Melton visits her again, and when he tries to get information from her about the pirates, she attempts to mislead him by saying that her people are planning to raid the trap at Hale's Pass.

Capstan and Iotte proceed to raid the trap at Hale's Pass, but Dick Melton interferes and a fight ensues. Dick leaps aboard the pirate launch, but before any of his men can follow, Iotte disables the Melton motor boat by driving a spike through her side. Dick tries to place Capstan under arrest, but the big pirate seizes him about the waist and hurls him far out into the dark waters.

CHAPTER VII.

CHATLA'S PERILOUS VOYAGE.

CHATLA moved about the house attending to her simple duties, pondering Dick's protestations that he desired to become better acquainted with her people, that he would put many a dollar into the pocket of Iotte if she would but let him. Every lesson of her lifetime among the pirates—men ever hunted and spied upon—had taught her

caution where strangers were concerned. She suspected that Dick's motives were not of the best, although her fealty to her people, and the young man's relationship to Bill Melton, rather than any tangible act, gave rise to this. The more she thought about the situation, the more she caught herself trying to believe no ill of the handsome young stranger.

Many times, passing from the kitchen to the living room, she paused beside the precious organ. Her Papa Iotte, wise, esteemed, and venerated by all the fisherfolk of the Sound, had told her that the organ, under an inspired hand, pealed forth the very spirit of God's love.

How gloriously Dick played. Could a mind, bent and warped with evil, wicked thoughts, still keep mastery over all the subtleties of this noble instrument? Her simple faith, founded upon the syllogism that music is good, and that he who makes music cannot, therefore, be bad, began to writhe in the first painful throes of unbelief.

But if Dick meditated treachery toward Capstan, and Papa Iotte and Uncle Sky—and her instinct insisted that he did—she had played him nicely. A trace of a smile rested upon her face as she pictured the lonesome, midnight trip to Hale's Pass, a part of the bay remote from where she had heard Capstan say he intended to go.

The afternoon wore away more rapidly than she realized; and the long, slant shadows of the tall firs, paying their good-night visit to the clean, shiny floor of her kitchen, started her to wondering where her father could be.

Capstan, she surmised, from her knowledge of the manner in which the crafty pirate waged his campaigns against the traps, in all probability had started hours before, headed ostensibly for some point far distant from the real object of the night's attack.

Darkness came on, and she laid the dishes for the evening meal. Still Iotte did not come. A dozen canoes laden with Lummi Indians, whose reservation lay a short distance back of the fish camp, landed on the beach. She

could hear the natives, with sacks of clams upon their backs, chattering in the trail leading into the forest.

Several times she stepped to the door; and when, finally, a match flickered and a candle was lighted in the cabin of Uncle Sky, a dozen rods distant, her heart gave a sudden bound, and fleetly she ran down the path to the old man's hut.

"Uncle Sky, you did not go with Capstan?"

"No. That there Capstan is a-gettin' too all-fired fol-de-rol-dy. He figgers that he's perter than I be. He even figgers that Iotte is perter than I be. He wouldn't let me go; he took your father instead." Working his countenance into the terrifying rage which he pretended to feel, the old man declared that as soon as the young giant returned he fully intended to take him across his knee and "belt him a couple just for luck."

"Did Papa Iotte go, too?" demanded the girl anxiously, Uncle Sky's humorous blandishments for once lost upon her.

"Yes. Why, that ain't nothin'—"

"But it is far to Point Roberts. The nights are chill. There is the danger."

"Now, now, Chatla baby, don't you worrit. To begin with, they didn't go to Roberts nohow. Capstan heered something. They changed their minds. They've went to the Pass."

Mumbling something, she knew not what, Chatla turned away from the old man's door, and stumbled home. There upon the threshold she sank, and gave a loose rein to the fears and uncertainties which assailed her.

Her father and Capstan had gone to the Pass. There also she had directed Dick Melton—Deputy Sheriff Dick Melton—to go.

When she had supposed that Capstan and Uncle Sky were out upon the desperate venture—though she loved them both dearly—she had felt but little anxiety. With her father it was different: now that she knew he had gone forth with Capstan, the situation assumed an aspect of threat and terror.

The arguments in Dick's favor into which she had tried to beguile herself she now completely abandoned.

She had told him that Capstan was going to the Pass that night. In her bungling attempts to play tricks with the handsome young stranger, she had sent him, she had supposed, upon a wild-goose chase, but in reality to the very trap which her father and Capstan proposed that night to raid.

"I told Dick Melton that Capstan and Uncle Sky were going to Hale's Pass," she thought bitterly. "And they have gone, Papa Iotte instead of Uncle Sky. They will be arrested. No, Capstan will not be arrested. Often I have heard him say so. They must kill him to get him. He would protect Papa Iotte to the death. But if harm should come——"

She took one hurried glance at the tiny clock ticking upon a shelf, pulled herself together, and fled down the trail straight to where her own light, cedar skiff lay hauled above high-water mark on the beach.

She seized the boat by the gunwale, ran it into the water, and sprang in. Drawing her breath sharply, she drove the craft rapidly through the choppy sea which the land breeze had begun to raise.

"Nine o'clock! Nine o'clock!"

Nearly ten miles she had to go, part of the distance favored by the tide, the remainder dead against it. Midnight, she knew, was the hour when Capstan and her father would lead the attack upon the trap. She must get there before that hour and warn them.

She slipped her simple calico waist from her arms and shoulders to give her freedom, and bent to her oars, recovering her strokes easily, unhurriedly, as Capstan had taught her, but throwing every ounce of her supple strength into the pull when she dipped the blades.

So long as the shore line remained visible, she laid her course by a lone fir upon the bank, keeping the middle of the stern of the skiff in a line with this majestic sentinel.

When she had gone about two miles,

the shore line pulled away sharply; and, trimming her course anew, she ran into the heavy head swells that swept in from the open. Her frail bark pitched and reared alarmingly in the heavy sea; but, to save both time and strength, shaking the salt spray from her naked arms and shoulders, she pulled fearlessly into the trough of the wave.

A mile of such perilous going, and she came again into tranquil water. When her muscles cramped, she shifted her position and sculled the boat, thrusting the sweeps away from her, fisherman fashion. By this maneuver she lost some time, but it rested her, and again she bent to her work.

At the lower end of Lummi Island, the water, she knew, would again be rough. In preparation for this last and most dangerous lap of the race against the sinister fate which she feared she had brought down upon her father and her suitor, she rested a moment, permitting the boat to forge ahead under its own impetus. When, finally, she felt the first swells of the rougher water beyond, she swung into the teeth of the waves, and rowed as never before.

A dozen times the skiff shipped a sea. The water in the bottom of the boat, halfway to her shoe tops, made the craft loggy and unmanageable, but still she kept on. She dared not turn back now, even if she would.

Flirting the spray from her eyes by a quick jerk of her head, she turned every minute and looked over her shoulder. At last, the dim outlines of the trap appeared. Fatigue had begun to tell upon her; at each stroke she was dipping her oars deeper and deeper. Still she floundered on, the sight of the goal eking out the strength which was all but gone.

Her benumbed grasp tore loose from one oar. Strive as she might, for several seconds she could not open her fingers sufficiently to grasp the handle of the sweep. The tide rips had seized her craft, were bearing it away, back over the course whence she had come, when she heard the faint sputter of a high-powered engine. A second later, the hoarse bark of a second launch sounded out, and a clumsy power yawl,

its lines familiar even in the darkness, plowed by her. Then a searchlight began to sweep the bay.

In an instant, it seemed to her, the two launches had come together. There was a shout. Sounds of a terrific fight, oaths, shouts, and she sank to her knees in the water which covered the bottom of her skiff.

"Too late! Too late!"

The tide bore her boat along unheeded. In a moment, she heard again the familiar exhaust of the *Dolly Varden*. The power boat was making in an opposite direction for the island.

"They didn't get them! They didn't get them!" she fairly screamed.

Capstan, she well knew, would never leave her father a prisoner. Unless a bullet had done its deadly work, Capstan had added another victory to his desperate record.

Joy and thanksgiving, that her blunder had not cost the lives of her loved ones, welled up within her breast. Then she realized that she was cold. She slipped on her waist and picked up the oars for the long and dangerous homeward pull. She had just dipped the blades, when a gasping, terrible gurgle of a drowning man sounded right beside her.

She flung out her hands in terror. There, an oar's length away, a human hand lifted itself feebly from the salt chuck, and fell back. Then a head appeared. A face, deathly white in its last agony, upturned itself and looked at her, then sank from view.

She gave a tremendous pull upon the starboard oar, leaned over, and grasped a handful of human hair.

Hauling the body to the surface, she gunwaled it as Capstan had taught her to do, by linking the helpless arm and leg over the rail of her skiff. Holding the hand and the foot of the senseless body in place against the side of her boat by crushing them beneath her own feet, she flung herself backward with all her strength. Slowly the skiff settled to an even keel, and she fell forward across the dank, insensate heap lying in the bottom.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MUSATCHIE HAND.

THE roof pitched steeply over the house of Iotte Montana. The round cedar joists, covered with hand-hewn cedar shakes, gathered snugly about the tiny attic room, impregnating the air with a pleasant balsam. Upon the low walls of this, Chatla's room, were hung resplendently beaded war bags, prototypes of the leather and plush chatelaines carried by the pale-face sisters; and baskets of the thinnest and toughest grass fiber, woven so closely that one might carry water within for a three days' journey, the brim and upper portions ornamented in blue, and yellow, and red pigment, with the good-luck sign and the totem bird of the Lummis. Upon the floor were the skins of deer, hand-tanned, as soft and as white as chamois.

The sole concession to modern innovation in the room was a white iron bedstead, relieved from the garishness of department-store splendor by a hand-woven counterpane of wool which was draped to the floor.

The ladder stairway creaked, and, as the head and shoulders of a girl appeared through the trapdoor in the floor, a pale face turned wearily upon the pillow, but brightened at the presence of the girl.

"Better?"

"Yes, Chatla. I'm not much of a success as a policeman, am I?"

The girl gazed down upon the young man's face. After a moment, with the tactless abruptness of her people, she answered:

"No, you're no good as a policeman. You know Capstan, now."

Yes, he knew Capstan. The reputation bestowed upon that worthy had not, in the light of a recent personal experience, been lightly or inconsiderately estimated.

"We will not talk of it," said Chatla, sinking with graceful ease to a position upon the floor. "You are here. I bring you here. It is because you are sick. No harm comes to you while you are under the roof of Papa Iotte. Capstan

knows it but too well. He goes away, mad—no one knows where—mad, very mad."

"I'll be all right, very soon," expostulated Dick, lifting a hand tentatively. "As soon as I am able, I shall go home; but never, never to forget what you have done for me."

He permitted his hand to fall weakly in her direction. With head and eyes averted, she laid her own brown fingers in his wan, white ones. Thus they remained for some minutes, until, by telepathy, perhaps, he read her thought and asked about the music.

"You acted so strangely, Chatla, that day, the first day, when I came with Miss Proctor and played for you. What was it I played? Ah, yes, the 'Largo.' I had forgotten the piece, but not the look that was upon your face when I finished. What did the music say to you, Chatla?"

She withdrew her hand from his grasp, and folded it within the other in her lap. Away among the verdant arches of the pines whose vista showed through the tiny, many-paned window of her room, were the friendly little spirits, with whom of late she more and more frequently communed. Now, at Dick's word, the longing of her smoldering brown eyes brought them to her, and from without the windowpane they waved their secrets to her with their eerie hands.

"The music spoke to me—here." Chatla laid her hand to her breast. "It is easy to say: 'I go; you come. The day is done; night hastens.' But to say whither the day goes, or whence the night comes—is hard."

Dick studied her a moment. Then, gently, encouragingly:

"Tell me what the music said. Don't be ashamed, Chatla. I tried, that day, to make the pipes talk. What did they say? Tell me, Chatla."

"The music says to me," she began so faintly that he could hardly hear; "it says: 'Some one is lonely, suffers, is hungry.' Several are speaking in the music. 'Where shall I go?' says one. 'The trail is blind and dark. I stumble, and I am hungry. Whither shall I go?'"

Two hands point out. The ways are different. Both hands are white, and good to look upon. Then a tender voice whispers: 'Wait! Wait!' The other voice, louder and stronger, says: 'Come where it is gay, away to the white man's world.'

"Confused, I wait, and suffer, and hunger, but, by and by, the pain grows less, and I know that the voice that whispers 'wait' is not the voice of evil. Ah, yes, then I know; the music tells me. One hand, pointing, is the hand of duty; it is fair. The other hand, the hand of sin, turns black, the *musatchie* hand."

Rapt, entranced, Chatla continued to gaze through the narrow window, while Dick reached out for her hand.

"How good it is, Chatla, when we clear away the artificial, the false, and all shamming. This is a sacred moment, Chatla. You show me your heart, a corner, at least; and it is a simple, good, trusting heart, and white."

Angrily, with cheeks flaming, she drew away her hand. "I am the daughter of the Tyees," she exclaimed proudly. "When your kind toiled, and slunk about like hutch rabbits, my people, in a cedar canim, sailed seas that the timid sons of Boston men dared scarcely cross in a cannon ship. When my people wanted meat, they slew the deer; when they wanted skins to cover them, they hunted to the den, and killed the great north bear. Partly I am the flesh of Iotte Montana, white; but within, I feel, I know, I am the daughter of the Tyees."

"Chatla!" he expostulated, astounded at her passionate outburst, "you do not understand. Why, Chatla, do you think I would twit you with your drop of Indian blood? No, no; I meant that your heart was white, was good."

The savage glint in her eyes faded away; impulsively she thrust her hand into his. "It is good," said she simply.

"I was starting to say, Chatla, that when your heart yearns for something, when you are fearful and undecided, when you do not know whether your message will meet with acceptance and understanding, or derision and rebuff,

how good it is to have some one come into your life, utter your own thoughts and hopes, as if they were living them, and feel them with you. If you and I could live just one whole day, thinking, seeing, as if with but one brain, one heart, one pair of eyes, why, that would be—that would be love, the love we all dream about, but never experience, except for some such fleeting moment as that which you and I just lived through. Some day, when I am recovered from this foolish, cracked rib, you will let me come to see you, won't you, and walk in the woods with you, in your bower, where we both may hear the fairies speak? May I come?"

The girl clasped her hands to her face, her breast rose and fell like a troubled sea, her cheeks, he could see between her fingers, were wet.

"May I come, Chatla? Shall we talk, and think, and commune together, hunting for the spirit of the pipes?"

He laid his hand upon her head; and, as she started to arise, he put his arm about her waist and drew her to him. Her eyes shining gloriously, a flush covering the natural dusky hue of her skin, she sank upon his breast. A moment thus she lay; slowly, gently he turned her face until her lips met his.

A scream shattered the tense stillness of the attic room. Backward sprang the girl, her eyes starting in horror, a finger pointed at him dramatically.

"See! It is the *musatchie* hand. It beckons Chatla to be bad, to be miserable, to perish. I see it! I see it!"

Fleeing, as if from some noisome presence, she lifted the trapdoor in the floor and rapidly descended the ladder.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CULTUS KLOOTCH.

DICK, by his express wish, although the girl expostulated against his removal until he had completely recovered his strength, was taken from Iotte's house to Uncle Sky's cabin. Constrained, embarrassed, yet evincing every desire to make him comfortable

and to hasten his recovery, Chatla continued to prepare the meals for the involuntary guest, smoothed his pillows whenever she came to the house, and made his surroundings as homelike as she knew how.

While Dick remained in Sky's cabin, never once did he and Chatla exchange a look which did not bring a flush to their faces, restraint and awkwardness to their conversation.

His own position, however, was not as difficult as Chatla's, a fact which he came to understand forcibly one afternoon when, the old man's voice pitched louder than usual, he heard Iotte Montana, in his own cabin, admonish his daughter not to remain an instant longer in Sky's cabin than was necessary to give young Melton his meals.

"But, Papa Iotte," he heard the girl say in expostulation, "it means nothing. You know that Capstan——"

The door of Iotte's cabin slammed shut, leaving the remainder of the sentence to conjecture.

Not until Dick had been at the fish camp nearly a week did his father, Bill Melton, come to visit him.

The deputies, who had just managed to beach the *Narcissus* on the rocky isle, the night of the ineffectual attempt to arrest Capstan and Montana, sent frantic word to Melton senior that his son had either been captured and spirited away by the gigantic pirate, or had fallen overboard and drowned.

A sheriff's posse was sent posthaste to the fish camp, where they were met at the landing by the majestic Iotte Montana.

"Young Melton is here, in my house. He is hurt, not badly, but will require quiet and rest. Is it so bad that an army must turn out when Montana is honored with a visit?" asked the old man sarcastically, fixing the chief deputy with a cold look.

He was glad, "all-fired glad," to hear that Dick was all right, said the deputy, and he would convey the information to Mr. Melton at once.

When, a few days later, Bill Melton, in company with Miss Proctor, landed at the fish camp from one of the can-

nery tugs, all of the pomp and circumstance of the millionaire's habitual presence left him; he was about to meet two old companions, men whom he had not seen twice in fifteen years, but with whom, in the old days, he had joined in many a desperate venture.

Pretense, the insolence of wealth and power, would not pass current here, he knew; so, to Uncle Sky, he extended an obtrusively friendly hand, attempting, rather dismally, to return in kind the facetious salutation of that ubiquitous humorist. Iotte Montana bestowed a stately bow upon his visitors, which was acknowledged by Miss Proctor with a pleasant nod, and by Melton with a conscious bob of his pudgy figure.

"My boy here, Iotte? Where is he?"

Montana pointed a long, knobby finger along a trail which, once upon a time, Bill Melton had known as well as any Indian on the island.

"I'd like to see him, Iotte; so would Miss Ada, if you don't mind."

Montana, without returning any answer, led on toward his own cabin, followed by Bill Melton. Uncle Sky, loitering behind, was proffering Miss Proctor some rather crude and perplexing gallantries on the strength of the fact that the young lady and himself had both been born in Boston, the trifling period of half a century or so only having intervened between those interesting events.

"Boston. Well, well. Miss Ada, I come from Boston town myself. As I told you before, I went to sea as a boy, in the days of the clipper ship. Around the Horn, Frisco—then here. Say, I helped old man Puget dig the Sound. Mount Baker, there yonder—well, that was a hole in the ground when I come. I helped tote the dirt to fill 'er up. Boston; well, well!"

Miss Proctor, awaiting her polite and well-bred opportunity to interpolate an insistent question which had been bothering her a great deal, managed finally to stop the old man's clatter long enough to ask him, rather pointedly, just exactly what had happened to Dick.

"I am at a loss to understand the providential manner of his escape," she

said suspiciously. "Tell me, what miracle saved our dear Dicky."

Uncle Sky, suddenly become cadgy, swore that he disremembered just how Dick got fished out of the water. "They was a fight, I know that," said the old man, cocking his head comically; "a tearing, rippin' fight.

"But I'll inquire, I'll inquire," he promised, his eyes twinkling mischievously. "I know you young girls is a little delicate about asking after them matters yourselves, and showin' too much interest in a young feller. But I'll find out all about it, and you—you meet me here on the trail and I'll tell you all about it."

Miss Proctor protested that the matter was not of sufficient moment to justify such ample and mysterious arrangements, and walked on.

Arriving at his cabin ahead of Bill Melton, Iotte swung the door open and invited his old-time partner to enter. Uncle Sky and Miss Proctor were just coming into sight around a bend in the trail.

"Dick is in Sky's cabin," explained Iotte, "but I wanted just a word with you."

"Not now," replied Melton sharply. "I want to see Dick. Where is he? Take me to him."

The millionaire moved toward the door just as Chatla entered from the rear, and Miss Proctor and Uncle Sky from the front. The Boston girl rushed toward Chatla with her fashionable handshake, while Melton, his gaze wild and staring, looked upon Montana's daughter as upon one risen from the dead. In answer to a tug at his sleeve, and the word that they would go to Sky's house, the cannery man demanded to know of Iotte who the girl was.

Uncle Sky answered instead:

"Why, Bill, don't you remember her when she was just a handful? 'Course you do. That's Chatla baby. You know."

A vision from out the long ago blurred the eyes of the salmon king, and he stumbled along the path leading to the old cripple's hut.

The greeting of father and son was brusque, but kindly. Ada Reese Proctor presently tiptoed in, and laid her hand in Dick's, where it remained for some seconds.

"Your recovery, Dicky dear," said she, "I trust will be uneventful, and rapid. This extraordinary dénouement has given a sad twist to our vacation plans. No matter, though, if you'll hurry like a good, dear Dicky boy, and get well." She leaned and whispered a word in his ear, and was gone.

Iotte and Uncle Sky, out of a rigid sense of what was due a guest, remained a moment, then departed, leaving the Meltons, father and son, alone.

"You sheer off this Siwash squaw, Dick. Do you hear?"

"Why, father!"

"Now, Dick, your old dad has mixed with 'em in his day; I know what I'm talkin' about. It won't do. It won't get you nothin' but trouble. I—I don't like the look in her eye. It ain't as it used to be, Dick, when, if a man got himself into a tangle, he could slip the klootch a couple of twenty-dollar pieces, and ship her back to her tribe, and nothin' more was said. I know what I'm talkin' about. Anyway, this girl, Dick— But no, it can't be. You listen to what I say; play safe and let her alone. It's dangerous. We're up in the world now, my boy; we've got a social and a business position to keep up."

The countenance of young Melton was very grave, very earnest. "Father, this girl is a half-breed, but she's—she's all right. She saved my life.

"Why, father, it was she who told me that Capstan was going to raid the other night, and where I could nab this cutthroat, and this grayheaded fox."

"She piped off her dad, old Iotte, did she? If she did, she's *cultus*. If she's that kind, she'll trick you the first good chance she gets. Now, Dick, I know, when a feller is kind of lonesome, and is roamin' the woods, that it's kind of a novelty to flirt with the klootchmen. But it ain't a good idea, with this girl especially. I've got a good reason for

sayin' that; some day, maybe, if I see where I can, I'll explain it all to you. In the meantime, take your old dad's word for it."

"If you mean, father, to warn me not to take any unfair advantage of this unsophisticated, this innocent half-breed girl, you—you have insulted me. If that's what you mean, I'll give my promise readily enough."

"Hity-hity, son. Not so lofty. I've lived in these parts thirty year, my boy, and I've seen wiser men than you tangle themselves for good and all time. But I didn't go to hurt your feelings, son. When will you be up and about again?"

"I could go home now, father, if necessary. I'm feeling pretty shaky, but I guess I could stand the trip. This thump on the head has made me pretty weak."

A look of genuine affection stole over the knobby, rugged features of the canner king. "No, no," said he, in his decisive, commanding manner, "we'll take no chances. A few days, more or less, don't matter. Uncle Sky—for old time's sake—will keep you a while longer. I think you'll be as good as ever in a week. This here little episode ain't goin' to make any difference in the original plans. As soon as you're fit, I want you to jump right in again and clean out this pirate outfit for good and all. There's a truce on, now. That's all right. The minute you plant foot in the *Narcissus*, the war's begun again. I've fixed the boat up good as new.

"Now, good-by, Dick. I'll have the tug stop every day, and somebody inquire. Come home just as soon as you can. And remember what I've said to you for your own good. A tangle with a klootch, and good-by to Miss Ada Proctor, of Boston, good-by money."

Dick did his best to conceal a look of hearty disgust as he reached out a rather limp hand to bid his father adieu.

Halfway between the two cabins, Melton encountered Chatla. Leaning forward, he thrust his face insolently into hers; and, as she started to draw back, he seized her by the chin and tilted her head this way and that, studying the

features which recalled something, somebody vaguely to his memory.

When Chatla, her face burning angrily, had passed on, Iotte Montana stepped from the underbrush.

"I see you remember Chatla, Bill."

"She ain't a bad-lookin' klootch, Iotte. Where——" Melton, struck suddenly dumb by the look of rage on Montana's face, paused, his lips parted, showing his teeth.

"You know her, Bill. No use to try and fool me. And I want to say just a word further, Bill. She and your boy are friendly, altogether too friendly. You've got to put a stop to it. I can't, as you know, explain to the girl."

"What are you lungin' at, Iotte? I don't know the klootch from a horse clam."

"Yes, you do, Bill. Don't try to lie to me. Come with me; we'll go and have just a word with Sky."

In answer to a call, Uncle Sky came tottering down the path, and the three old men stepped aside from the trail. Melton soon left the conference, however, and, calling Miss Proctor, boarded his tug and sailed away. Uncle Sky, as he and Montana emerged from the shadows of the trees, was laying down the law, slapping his knobby forefinger vigorously into his palm.

"You're a durned old fool, Iotte. You're a-reachin' out after trouble, sure."

"It's the girl's welfare, partly, Sky, that I am thinking about, but more the cause of the people. I've planned it, and prayed over it ever since Chatla was a *tenas*."

"Oh, it ain't that, Iotte," replied Uncle Sky impatiently; "I don't never question what you're drivin' at; it's the way you've got of goin' at it. This figgerin' so far in advance, and layin' out plans that somebody else has got to trim their happiness to fit, ain't sensible, and, what's more, it ain't fair."

Still disputing, the two old men entered Iotte's cabin.

Bill Melton, as his tug drew away from the island, swore loudly and viciously, despite the presence of Miss Ada Reese Proctor, of Boston. "Them

old devils is plannin' to grab me for a piece of hush money," said he bitterly, pacing the narrow deck. "The devil of it is, when they state their price, I guess I'd better come up. I wish Dick was out of there. I wish I'd brought him with me, and took the risk of settin' him back. As soon as that boy is home, I'm goin' to make the Sound too hot to hold them old mud sharks."

CHAPTER X.

EAGLE AND GULL.

TO those who live near to Nature, she gives prodigally of her secrets, teaches them the subtleties of her hidden lore, endows them, at least in part, with the instincts of the birds and beasts. Thus Capstan—no man or woman having conveyed to him the tidings—knew when Dick Melton, pronounced sufficiently recovered to attempt the journey home, had embarked upon the tug which bore him, still pale and weak, to the home of his father.

Capstan, the evening following the departure of Dick, his blankets rolled into the habitual "turkey" of the fisherman or logger, walked into the fish camp.

He beckoned Chatla aside. "What you tryin' to do, Chatla? Tryin' to throw me for that dudish Dicky bird? Watch out. I ain't to be fooled with."

"Why, Capstan! You know better. My music——"

"Vast on that, Chatla. You're p'inted wrong. Look to your reckonin'. You hain't goin' to fool one minute with me. Understand? I want to know, once and for all, just what's what with this here Dick Melton. I and you, Chatla—— But I ain't goin' to do no reviewin' of the story. If what's been between I and you ain't meant nothin', ain't been clear, all right; then there ain't nothin' more for me to say. But I ain't goin' to be fooled with. You ort to know me better than to try. You've got some fool idees lately, and you've got to get over 'em. You ain't Miss Ady Proctor, you don't want to think, and I ain't Dicky Melton. I'm a fish pirate; you're a Lummi Siwash Indian

squaw, a klootchman. Don't forget it, and make yourself or me out plumb rediculous."

Chatla's eyes glinted ominously. A dusky flush burned upon her cheek as she drew herself proudly erect and gave the giant one contemptuous look. Never before had he seen her exhibit such spirit, such independence. Flinging her head in a little characteristic toss, she turned, without a word, and started for the house.

The pirate grasped her by the sleeve, fearful that if he permitted her to go away this time, never could he hope to come to any understanding with her. His rage, dispossessed by sadness, suddenly abated. Still holding to her arm, his enormous body slouching contritely, his was a figure truly pitiful.

"I ain't went at it right to talk to you, Chatla," he began humbly. "That there talk was too raw, I know; but I was beatin' up to the goal the best I knew how. You know, surely, what I'm tryin' to say. Listen, Chatla baby. I and you is *tillicum*s. I packed you on my back when you was just a little, yelpin' kid, and I was a big-boned geek of a boy. Your Papa Iotte has been my dad, too, leastways, the only one I've ever had; and I and him has had lots of talks; it's been understood—between I and him anyway—about I and you. I wish I'd 'a' gone to school some; I wish I had Iotte's way of explainin' things, then maybe I could show you just where you're driftin' to. I'm up agin' a hard game."

Still Chatla stood, her head turned away, so that he could not see the expression which flitted across her features.

"You ain't goin' to throw down in one second what I and you has been buildin' on for twenty year, be you? Ever since you wasn't no bigger than a clam's foot, I've figgered ahead for us two. Let's not stand here like this. Let's I and you walk down the trail a piece like we've done a thousand times, like we done nearly every evenin' until, until—just lately."

The anger which had so inflamed her resentment all had gone. It was a tear-

ful face which she turned toward Capstan, a shaky hand which she placed timidly in his; and, as they walked slowly down the trail, she allowed her head to droop farther and farther forward upon her breast.

Beside the gnarled roots of a madroña tree they halted.

"We always ought to walk on together just like we done now," said Capstan. "And it's a-comin' out all right, I know it is. I and you from now on is goin' on together just like we always done. I don't blame you for gettin' notions from them outsiders. But we ain't like them. It ain't in the cards for you to live like this Miss Proctor, or for me to have forty-thousand-dollar boats like Dicky bird. I seen trouble comin' the minute young Melton's boat hove around the point. Why, Chatla, us wild fellers can tell when poachers is comin' just as plain as a she bear can tell when one of them Eastern tourists is huntin' her baby's pelt for a fireplace rug. It's plumb rediculous. You ain't fitten to be Dick Melton's wife. And, of course, he knows it, too. I don't have to talk no plainer, do I?"

On the bark of the madroña tree were carved two hearts, and two sets of initials, rudely intertwined to form the monograms, "C.M.C.C."

"There, Chatla; look there! You remember when I and you walked out here once, and I cut them letters? See how them letters is twined together, Chatla? That's just the way I and you has growed up. Nothin' can't never tear us apart."

Chatla stood for a long time without replying, gazing all the time at Capstan's handiwork upon the bark of the blood bush. Finally she answered, speaking slowly, choosing her words as one who has at heart a great conviction.

"We have grown up together, Capstan, 'tis true. So do the eagle and the soft-breasted gull make aerie upon the same rock, only, later, to fly their several ways. The rhododendron, Capstan, timid, and sweet in the brakes and underbrush, transplanted to a garden, free from weeds, blooms proudly, gloriously,

tenfold stronger than in its dark, native vales."

Capstan, catching instantly the thought which lay behind her metaphor, reached his great hands toward her supplicatingly. Still she spoke on:

"Then, too, Capstan, the blood bush is not enduring. Of all the trees of the forest, it first repairs its hurts. These letters you have carved, in a year they are gone, grown over with the madroña's new life. Of late, I have thought, and studied. Am I to drift, I have asked myself, or shall I take the oars and see if the ocean is not greater than this narrow bay? But I shall be fair with you, Capstan, and honest. Do not speak of this again, as we have talked to-day, for a long, long time. Let us wait, and see. Look in my face, Capstan. Of that other thing, that fear which you expressed, I lift my hand to the Saghalie Tyee, and swear it: No man of that other world, the world of Dick Melton and the Boston girl, shall make a toy, a plaything of Chatla. Now let us go. There, Capstan, take my hand."

Hot questions burned upon the giant's lips. How had Dick Melton known of the expected raid upon the Hale's Pass trap? How had Chatla happened to come so providentially to the rescue of the young cannery man? One glance at the girl's resolute face, and he knew that the topic would prove dangerous, might be forever fatal. With a despairing groan, he followed on after Chatla toward the camp.

At the door of Iotte's lodge they parted, Chatla instilling one tiny draft of hope into his desolate heart when she said: "Wait, Capstan. Whatever happens, I shall be fair with you, and honest with you."

Seated before Uncle Sky's cabin, Capstan whittled away savagely upon a stick with his huge, horn-handled knife. The softening influence of Chatla's presence gone, he again blew hot with rage and desperation.

Uncle Sky, poking his crooked forefinger into the abysmal bowl of a monstrous pipe, ambled from the house and greeted the pirate heartily. "Well, well,

Capstan, my huckleberry, where you been?"

Pointing a vague finger over his shoulder, the giant whittled on, but vouchsafed no other answer. Then, after a moment, he threw aside the stick and closed the knife blade.

"Say, Uncle Sky—and I want this straight—how did Dicky bird know we was goin' to the Hale's Pass trap that night? Nobody knew it but I, and you, and Iotte, and—Chatla. I want to know who told. I ast that same question of another party the other evenin', and when he didn't come through prompt, I hove him into the drink. I want to know who told. What's more, I'm goin' to make somebody tell, or——"

Uncle Sky, his attenuated, trembling figure transformed suddenly into a bundle of highly agitated nerves and muscles, lurched forward and shook a crooked, sun-cured fist under the giant's nose. "You try throwin' me into the drink, dern you! I'll make you hard to ketch. You cool off, young feller, or I'll take you acrost my knee and burn a hole in them pants of yourn."

With a look something nearer to genuine alarm than had flashed across his rugged face for many a day, Capstan hastened to assure the irate old man that he had meant no disrespect.

"No?" questioned Uncle Sky skeptically. "Then ketch a half hitch in your jaw tackle."

"But I want to know who told," insisted Capstan, returning cautiously to the attack.

Uncle Sky nibbled away sheeplike at the stem of his pipe for a while, and directed a perplexed look off at the horizon. "Now that you're talkin' civilized, my boy, I'm willin' to own up that maybe I'm the party that's to blame. I figgered that you and me was goin' to the Point Roberts trap, so I kind of—as a blind—let fall some idea around that we was headed the other way. Them was the plans, you recollect."

The storm began to gather again, and the young pirate's face became distorted with rage. Uncle Sky, with many rheumatic gestures, proceeded

to enact in pantomime just how he had told Brindle Pete, the towboat man, that they were planning on a little trip to Hale's Pass. "Brindle is gabby, dre'ful gabby. I figgered he'd talk around free—it bein' his nature—so I just loads Brindle up plumb, bustin' full of the information that I and you was goin' to the Pass. That must be the way that news got out. You can see how it happened."

"No," shouted Capstan, springing to his feet, and charging about like a bear in a deadfall. "Not by a damned sight do I see it! Chatla told Dick Melton where we was goin'. There ain't no explainin' to it. She went out—rowed ten mile—and picked him up, all in the dead of night, brung him here, and put him to bed."

The giant took an agitated turn in the path, returned, and whispered in Sky's ear, his voice choked with passion: "I'm a-goin' to start something. I'm goin' to make a fool of this Dicky bird. Then I'm goin' right over to old Melton's wikiup, right into the thick of 'em, and kill this young blood with my bare hands. Savvy that, Uncle Sky? It's Capstan Culbertson a-talkin'. You know me?"

CHAPTER XI.

CAPSTAN MOVES A TRAP.

A LETTER, written upon the office stationery of the Melton Cannery Company, and addressed to Iotte Montana, promised, in cautious, yet unmistakable, language immunity from arrest to Capstan Culbertson, and to certain of his associates, if they would discontinue all fish-pirating operations, and acts of violence and destruction directed against employees or property of the said canning company.

When Iotte, his face sadly grave, handed the letter to Capstan without comment, the giant, after an agony of spelling, eye blinkings, and empty, painful swallowing, angrily tore the paper, and frittered the bits through his fingers into the water. At this, Montana's face lighted up with a sort of savage adoration, and he seized Capstan's hand and

wrung it in the steel grip of his wiry old fingers.

"I'm with you, Capstan, my boy, unto the end. My counsel, my prayers, my hand are yours."

These words, to him, were a benediction; and the pirate bent his head, and stood in an attitude of reverence. Iotte walked on to his cabin.

There, the nestor of the camp addressed himself to Uncle Sky:

"Sky, Capstan is one with the vikings of old. The savagery, yes, the brutality of his nature— Ah, we need it in our struggle against the oppressor, as the cougar needs his claws and teeth when beset by the dogs. Chatla, on the other hand, is gentle and good, and has intellect. Graft the daring spirit of Capstan upon the stock of her gift of mind and soul, and we shall have begun the race of men who will set things to rights in this unequal, grasping world."

Uncle Sky was more than willing to subscribe to the good qualities of Chatla, the courage of Capstan.

"I know I am right," continue Montana. "It has been the ambition of my life to bring this thing to pass. What a mating! Capstan and Chatla! I am justified, even to the extent of employing means, otherwise not honorable, to fight off the conniving of the wicked who might endeavor to defeat this consummation. If I'm wrong, upon my head descend the vengeance."

"I ain't dead sure you're wrong, Iotte," placated Uncle Sky, "but I'm dre'ful afraid that you be. It takes time to tell. Iotte, go slow."

Again renewing the dispute which had brought the old men together time and again in excited, and sometimes acrimonious debate, the two entered the cabin.

Capstan, idly watching the bits of Bill Melton's letter float away upon the tide, began to breathe more deeply, more rapidly, as his simple mind transmuted into action that which he meditated.

"I'll make a fool out of Dicky bird first. I'll get the laugh on him from one end of the Sound to the other. Everybody knows he's wearin' a dinky little star under his jacket, and that he's

bragged he'll clean me up. I aim to make a fool out of you, Dicky bird. Then——"

Completely unaware that his methods were somewhat melodramatic, Capstan worked out a grievously scrawled, anonymous communication:

To huever is a-watchin Limmi trap number 4 I aim to descend onto number 4 durin the comin week and help myself to a dory of humpies. Yours in haste,
CAPSTAN CULBERTSON.

Swan Nelson, bad man of the Melton corps of watchmen, urged to the fore by the gibes of his fellows and the promptings of the Anchor Bar whisky, asked the trap foreman to detail him to watch No. 4.

When the tug hove in sight of No. 4 on the memorable morning, Mr. Nelson, his tongue, from four hours' contact with a piece of tarred canvas, swollen to the thickness of four or five tongues, his wrists striped by the cords which bound him to a pile, was discovered lashed helpless before the watch-deck cabin.

"Capstan, he bane coming, you see," explained Swan, after his much-augmented tongue had resumed, in a measure, one of its proper functions, "and he is yumping on me. Here be gude fight, I tell you that. Purty soon, Capstan is tying me to post, you see. If ever I catch this Capstan, I break his dam' eye."

A scowload of fish, tied snugly to the Melton cannery dock, was turned loose in the night, though a hundred men worked within ten fathoms of the iron bit to which the spring line of the scow had been tied. Not content with cutting the scow loose, and to show that he was capable of winding up the job in thorough, workmanlike manner, Capstan brought the craft to anchor with one end resting above a submerged pile. The receding tide, scooping fourteen feet of water from the bay, upended the scow and dumped the fish back into their native element.

Before dispatching the first of the long series of letters which preceded his most spectacular act of reprisal, the pirate had paddled his dory alongside

the No. 4 trap, where he made a critical examination of the web, spiller, lead, power brail, and watch deck. This latter he viewed, and voiced his profane disgust that the parsimony of Bill Melton had restrained the cannery man from equipping the tiny cook stove beneath the watch house with a sufficient number of pieces of stovepipe.

"It's disgustin', that's what it is," quoth the wrathful Capstan, "that that there stove ain't got enough pipe to give it a good draw. If Bill Melton is too poor to buy pipe for that stove that keeps the watchie warm, I'll kick in with a len'th of pipe myself."

In the half light of the summer twilight, Capstan was seen by a trap man to row to No. 4, alight from his dory, and mount to the watch deck, a length of stovepipe under his arm. With infinite pains, this joint of pipe, handled more carefully than any pipe had been within the memory of the trap boy, was affixed to the jagged and rusted end of the old pipe, where it emerged from the roof.

Surveying his handiwork, and pronouncing it good, Capstan climbed back into his dory and paddled away, turning, occasionally, to squint along the edge of the boat to see if the pipe were plumb.

"Don't you dast say I don't fight in the clear," ran one of the many letters sent to Bill Melton. "I don't aim to take no advantage, so I warns you that I don't like the location of No. 4. So I aims to move it."

At intervals of a day or two, the pirate sent forward other messages to the Melton cannery, all in the vein of protestation against the location of the No. 4 trap. The last letter Capstan intrusted to the hand of a Chinese fish sorter who, innocent of the contents, delivered it over to the addressee with many flourishes.

I been sendin purty plenty of word to you, Bill Melton, just so you can pull yourself together and get ready. I aint foolin. I'm comin a-runnin directly. Number 4 has got to be moved. You aint makin no sign to move it yourself, so I figger the job is up to me personal. That bein the case, I aim to come next Tewsday at 4 bells in the

mornin and move that trap myself. Stand off in a tug and watch the fun.

CAPSTAN CULBERTSON.

Something about the tone of the last letter impressed Melton as sounding a note of earnestness. To his general trap foreman, the cannery man gave notice that Capstan Culbertson was threatening to move the trap at No. 4 station. The foreman received the news with a measure of respect which greatly impressed Bill Melton.

"Capstan is playin' to the gallery," said Melton senior, "and might be big enough fool to try some dido just to make a name for himself. Take the watchman off, and leave the trap deserted for a day or two. Tuesday morning, station some men on the spit. Hide them in the brush. If this young buck tries any funny business with that trap, plug him full of holes. I'm sick of botherin' with him."

CHAPTER XII.

WAITING TO SEE.

TUESDAY morning, No. 4 was deserted; and the scow and trap men detailed for the purpose, speculating on what Capstan intended to do, lay hidden in the brush.

"He's foolin' the whole outfit, Capstan is," declared one of the men, rearing up on his elbow in order to facilitate access to a hip pocket in which he carried his plug of "Sailor." "Capstan don't intend to do nothin'. He's just a-layin' back and bustin' hisself laughin'."

"Do you know Capstan?" demanded another, reaching for the plug of black tobacco.

No, the owner of the plug of "Sailor" did not know Capstan except by hearsay. "These here bad men," he added gratuitously, "ain't never quite as bad as they let on, if a party will only crowd in clost to 'em and show fight."

"Oh, then you don't know Capstan personal?"

No, he did not.

"Well, shut up then. Just you wait and see."

"Maybe, now, Capstan figgers on bustin' up to the trap in a power boat," offered another, "throwin' a line and a tow hook into the key pile, and snakin' the hull works off down Sound."

"Well, he can't get away with no play like that," replied the chorus. "What do you s'pose we all would be doin'? No, that idee is plumb addle."

Three bells. As yet, no sign of Capstan.

From wrangling over what method Capstan was most likely to pursue in the event that he actually tried to inflict some damage upon the trap, the watchers in the brush fell to pondering what notion had seized the pirate, that he had expended two bits in the purchase of a joint of pipe to fit Bill Melton's stove.

Sawlog Stevens, all-around boom and towboat man, averred profanely that, for one, he had never heard the likes, and that, in his opinion, Capstan ought to have his binnacle examined by a hospital "sturgeon."

"The Apostle," a young man much given, in moments of excitement, to impious expression, in support of the position just taken by Mr. Stevens, asseverated upon his personal probity, and the reputation of his whole family, that a teredo must have eaten into Capstan's skull, and let all the sense out.

One fact the discussion made quite clear: No fish man present had the wildest idea of how Capstan proposed to rid himself of the obnoxious presence of the No. 4 trap.

Sawlog Stevens, hauling forth a ponderous silver watch made fast to his suspender button by a strand of gill net, whispered huskily that it wanted five minutes of four bells.

"Four bells. I bet Capstan ain't fur off. I got a feelin' down the marrer of my spine that Capstan aims to come through."

The band of men waited silently behind the shelter of dense brush, each ready, if need be, to try a hand grapple with death, and not ashamed that their hearts beat faster.

Suddenly, from a rocky point two hundred yards upshore, there rang out a hearty "Yo-he-ee-o." Outlined against

the clear blue of the morning sky was the giant frame of Capstan Culbertson.

Slowly Capstan raised his rifle to his shoulder. The glistening barrel described part of the arc of a circle as the marksman centered the tiny white bead of the front sight truly in the middle of the shiny joint of stovepipe surmounting the Melton watch cabin.

The rifle cracked. A terrible, deadened, sullen roar followed. The waters surrounding the trap parted, and piles, web, spiller, and all disappeared into the yawning hole, which closed as suddenly, flinging the spray and foam a hundred feet into the air.

For a moment no man of those who watched behind the bush said aught.

"I'm damned!" then exclaimed The Apostle.

"So be I," added Sawlog promptly.

"Capstan went and put a jint of pipe loaded with dynamite on top of the watch shack. Now, he's touched her off with a soft-nosed thirty-eight. Ain't that just like Capstan?"

CHAPTER XIII.

MISS PROCTOR LOSES PATIENCE.

CAPSTAN, taking for granted that his flagrant defiance of law and order would be accepted by the authorities in the same belligerent sense in which he had made it, became, after the blowing up of the fish trap, avowedly an outlaw. The fish camp where he had made his home for years, save for hurried, nocturnal visitations, knew him no more. Once or twice, when he had slunk into the darkened cabin of Iotte, he had encountered Chatla, but she always left the room, leaving him to talk alone with Iotte and Uncle Sky.

Iotte never mentioned the name of Capstan to Chatla; but his figure, stooping with an added burden of disappointment, showed plainly his realization that his nearest, dearest ambition had been thwarted.

Dick and the Boston girl came often to visit Chatla. Once Iotte, hot with rage, had determined to forbid Dick his house, but Uncle Sky, advancing some

potent argument, had prevented this. During the increasingly frequent visits of the young people, Montana treated them with a scrupulous, if somewhat chilly, courtesy.

Dick, sensing the situation to a nicety, at first forbore to mention Capstan to Chatla except to praise his desperate courage and Titan strength, or to express regret that his viking spirit refused to abide within the law which, in consequence of his stubbornness, was in duty bound to follow and prosecute him.

"You wouldn't have me shirk my duty?" asked Dick tentatively, when leading up to the subject of his recent appointment as a deputy sheriff.

Miss Proctor, standing aside with Uncle Sky, was listening graciously to that worthy's glowing account of Boston "as she was fifty year ago, in the days of the clipper ship."

"We don't see things alike, Chatla," continued Dick. Then, with a shade of tenderness in his voice: "But some day we shall. I am giving way a lot to your beliefs, more than you can understand; and I am happy in the assurance that, some day, you will give me a larger measure of your friendship and confidence."

Chatla sighed deeply, and lowered her glance. After a thoughtful minute, straightening her lithe figure, she declared proudly:

"Capstan is of my people; I of his. I never will say ill of him, or permit any one else to do so."

"I know, Chatla. I honor you for it. Never do otherwise than as your conscience and feelings dictate. If you understand me, if I make myself clear, you will know that, after all, I am pleading for Capstan's sake. And I am leading up to this very proposition: I want you to use your influence with Capstan. There is yet a chance to effect a compromise between him and father."

"Capstan is gone," replied the girl tersely.

"Yes, yes, I understand. But I thought that he surely must communicate with you, with your father. Some-

thing must be done, and at once, or we are going out to get him and put him in jail. There is no other way. Look at this. I feel like the leading man in a drama of the lurid West." Dick pulled aside the lapel of his faultlessly tailored khaki coat and exhibited his deputy sheriff's badge. Quite by accident, the butt of an automatic revolver, held upon his hip in a yellow leather holster, obtruded itself.

At sight of the badge, and this warlike preparation, Chatla glanced anxiously through the window and up the trail which led away into the forest. The look was lost upon Dick; not, however, upon Miss Ada Reese Proctor.

"My job is no picnic," continued Dick, "if Capstan is still determined to hold out. I know what I am up against. When it comes to a show-down, it's a case of get him, or—kill him."

Something about her look brought him to a realization that he was hurting her frightfully. "Chatla, surely I can make you understand. I am not playing the braggart when I say that I will welcome the conflict, if there is to be one. If I should avoid it, now that Capstan has made his defiance so flagrant, so insulting, way deep down in your heart, Chatla, you would despise me."

Chatla, subtly pleased by Dick's obvious regard for her good opinion, still maintained steadfastly that she was of Capstan's people, and that no man might count on her to assist in bringing the giant under the hand of the law.

Nodding absently to the prattle with which Uncle Sky was regaling her, the Boston girl, her cold, gray eyes alight with interest, took in eagerly every word that passed between young Melton and Iotte's daughter.

"I can't expect that you will turn against Capstan," Dick continued, searching his wits for a way to introduce the real intent of his discourse. "But I should like to feel that you will remain neutral, that you will not go unnecessarily out of your way to help him—or encourage him in his lawlessness."

"If I did help him," she said sar-

castically, "you would arrest me? You might be able, all by yourself."

The derision upon her face, the contempt in her voice, stung him to an angry reply. "I had rather do it peaceably; but, never fear, if force is required, we shall be able to recruit sufficient strength to put this man Capstan, as bad as he is, behind the bars. We shall not require the aid of—of your people. If the machinery of justice should prove lacking, I can assure you that Capstan has enemies, many of them, among the fishermen, who might feel safer if he were in jail. Such leadership as Capstan has usurped, has not been achieved without leaving many a smoldering fire of jealousy."

Not quite positive that she understood the drift of his argument, she still maintained stoutly that the pirate had no enemies except the Meltons and their lackeys.

"You simply will not understand me, Chatla," returned Dick impatiently. "I want to help you, and help Capstan. We are bound to get him, dead or alive, if he holds out against us, and I would enlist your aid in getting him to accept the liberal compromise which, I think, I will be able to offer."

"I can make no terms, no agreement for Capstan," she replied tersely, decisively; "even Papa Iotte would not dare. Capstan fights his fight alone. He asks no man's help, and wants no man's interference. But you said something of Capstan's enemies. Would any fishman betray him? Would any be so foolhardy?"

"Yes, now that you have asked directly. When we want Mr. Culbertson, and start in seriously to get him, I know of one who will lead us to him—for a consideration."

The quick, angry indrawing of her breath found its echo in the partially smothered, disgusted exclamation uttered by the Boston girl.

At this juncture, Uncle Sky ambled forward briskly, if somewhat rheumatically, and offered to pump the organ if Mister Dick would play. Rather thankful for a way out of a

painful situation, young Melton climbed upon the bench.

Miss Ada Reese Proctor, of Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts, her spirits not in the least attuned to the melody of the "Largo," and with a greater degree of anger showing upon her classic countenance than had, for many a day, there taken up habitat, moved to the door, and disappeared down the trail which led away from the fish camp into the dense forest. A dozen steps from Iotte's door, and a sharp turn in the path hid her from the cluster of cabins. Here the young woman stopped, lifted her countenance defiantly to the sentinel pines, and ejaculated the one un-Bostonian, un-Emersonian word: "Damn."

"Perhaps—and I don't care—I'm reverting to savagery," exclaimed she, half aloud; "but I think I have retained a decent sense of fairness. If they are determined to arrest that pirate, I should like to see them do it—on the square. There!"

Having indulged in one swear word and a colloquialism, Miss Proctor exculpated her firm but exceedingly winsome lips by a dab with a bit of lace-edged linen, and resumed her lonely walk. A step or two, and she was brought to an alarmed stop by a vigorous, masculine cough which sounded from the dense foliage right above her head. Startled, she looked up just as a great fist protruded and swept aside the boughs of the tree. Then followed the broad face of Capstan Culbertson.

A moment the two gazed at one another; then the girl recovered her sense of the proprieties sufficiently to admonish the pirate that no gentleman remained covered in the presence of a lady.

"I know it," admitted Capstan cheerfully, "but I'm a-holdin' back the branch with one hand, and a-hangin' onto a rifle with the other. How kin I?"

Certainly the preoccupation of both of Capstan's hands constituted an ample excuse for his seeming ill manners.

"Will you," invited Miss Proctor smilingly, "think it safe to walk a way with me down the trail?"

Safe or not, Capstan was more than glad to walk. Presently, very much as a bear descends from honey hunting in a hollow tree, the pirate lowered his ponderous form to the earth.

"There is—somebody," began Miss Proctor haltingly, "some fisherman whom, probably, you little suspect, planning to give you up, to betray you to the officers."

"No!"

"Yes, I am quite positive. Perhaps this person has made no move, has, perhaps, only indicated a willingness, an ability to put the deputies on your trail. I feel that that is not playing the game fairly. I had a suspicion that you were lurking along this trail somewhere, so I ventured out to give you a word of warning. No, no, it is nothing. I dislike this way of waging war against you. And I do not care particularly if my little part in the drama does become known. So there!" she concluded defiantly.

Capstan, his lips parted, half in a snarl, and half a smile, his large, strong, even teeth gleaming from a glint of sunshine which pierced the trees, slowly reached forth an enormous paw, into which, promptly, confidently, Miss Ada Reese Proctor laid five tapering fingers.

"You come from Boston, from Uncle Sky's old stampin' ground, didn't you, Miss Ady?"

Yes, Boston was her home.

"I just had a idee. I thinks to myself, now if some of Miss Ady's women kin had a-come around the Horn, fifty year ago, in one of them clipper ships with Uncle Sky, why, your kinfolks' grannydaughter might have done just what you just done for me, just exactly the way you done it. Shake again."

Still unresisting, the slender hand of Miss Proctor lay in Capstan's.

"When, after while, you go back to Boston," resumed the pirate, "and I'll hate to hear that you've went, just try this here little speech on some of them scholars: *'Hiyu delate skookum klotchman.'* That there speech is in Chinook. It's what Capstan Culbertson thinks about the girl from Boston town, and ain't got the crust to say to her in

United States talk. If ever you do find out what it means, remember that a pirate that never jollied, nor lied to no woman, said it, and meant it. Shake hands again, Miss Ady. I see why Uncle Sky is proud of old Boston town. Good-by, Miss Ady. *Kla-how-ya.*"

With a springing step, altogether more exuberant than the gliding ambulation of her habitual method of locomotion, and repeating to herself the four softly guttural Chinook words, Miss Ada Reese Proctor walked joyfully back to the cabin of Iotte Montana.

CHAPTER XIV.

TANGLING THE WEB.

CAPSTAN mounted again to the vantage point of his perch in the fir tree, and watched while Chatla bade Dick and Miss Proctor good-by at the boat landing. His piercing glance never left the *Narcissus* while she was in sight, although his muttered comments dealt solely with his surprise that the shipwrights had been able so perfectly to restore the speed boat after the vicious treatment she received the night of the fight at the Hale's Pass trap.

Sliding to the ground, the pirate, by an obscure and little-used trail, approached the cluster of cabins. When he had assured himself that no one was about, he emerged from the thicket and boldly approached Iotte's house. Without knocking, he opened the door and entered.

Chatla, a mingled look of guilt, surprise, and alarm upon her face, put forward a chair, and, as if he were a total stranger in the cabin, invited him to be seated.

"You're dre'ful perlite, Chatla; must a-been havin' a lot of visitors to practice on lately."

No, she had been rather lonely of late.

"Mournin' 'cause I've took to the bush, eh?"

Avoiding his disconcerting gaze, Chatla hastened to assure him that she was genuinely sorry that circumstances

seemed to demand his absence from the camp.

The pirate, bristling at what he took for a note of insincerity, planted himself squarely before her, and compelled her to look him in the face.

"Stow that talk. You've been havin' all kinds of good times. Me bein' away—so fur as you're concerned—ain't worried you thin. Don't try to put on no frills a-talkin' to me. Now see here. You had company, didn't you, just a minute ago?"

Chatla drew her lips firmly together, tossed her head imperiously, and started to brush past the pirate, but he reached out and seized her by the arm.

"Not so fast! Not so fast! I got a right to breathe, or ast a little question or two."

"You have no right to ask me any question whatever," she returned. "Whom I entertain in my father's house is my own affair. Let me go, please."

"Chatla, I and you ain't goin' to quarrel. You ain't passed me up so cold yet, have you, that I dassent come into the house, and just want to know who's been here?" The giant's voice grew husky; he released his hold upon her, and permitted his trembling arm to drop to his side.

Quick to sense the grief in the great, slouching body, Chatla stepped forward impulsively and, now quite unafraid and composed, assured him that she was glad to see him, and to learn that he was still safe and sound, but that she had resented his unwarranted, brusque, and dictatorial attitude.

"It was the way you said it, Capstan, rather than what you said, that offended me," she explained. "Of course, I will tell you who has been here. I know of no reason why I should not. Mr. Melton and Miss Proctor just spent an hour with us; Uncle Sky pumped the organ, and we had some music. I wish you could have heard it, Capstan. I cannot tell you how sublime, how moving it is, that Handel's 'Largo.'"

"Likely there ain't nobody in North Ameriky that can play like Dicky bird," was his sneering retort.

The situation, again threatening, was

restored when Chatla gently asked the pirate to be seated beside her on the organ bench. "It will be useless, foolish, for me to pretend, Capstan, that I do not understand you; you are jealous. And it is foolish— Oh, so, so foolish of you. If it were not so absurd, I should not venture to speak of it at all.

"Listen to me, Capstan; Miss Proctor and Mr. Melton are—are engaged, as they speak of it over there. Miss Proctor—one can see it plainly—has no interest in any man but Dick; he in no woman except Miss Proctor. I suppose, though neither have told me so directly, that soon they will be married. Mr. Melton comes here, never alone any more, but with Miss Ada, when they are boating; both know how Uncle Sky and I enjoy the music."

"So Dicky bird and Miss Ady are pledged?"

Yes, she had every reason to believe so. Miss Proctor, in fact, had practically said so.

"Miss Ady," said the pirate shrewdly, "wouldn't turn her hand to save a man from the gallows 'less the man happened to be Dicky bird; she just naturally can't see nothin' in the offing but Dicky bird? Is that correct?"

"Yes, I believe it is."

"Ain't it fine for a girl to be so faithful? I don't s'pose it would do any feller, no matter who it was, any good to shine up to her?"

"No, it would not. Miss Proctor is thoroughly wrapped up in Dick Melton."

"Is that so? Well, if Miss Ady was a-hikin' along in the woods, and if some party, purty near a stranger, met up with her, by accident—considerin', of course, that this party was a spry young feller—she wouldn't be apt to ask this party to come on and go a-walkin' with her, would she?"

"No, I am positive that she would not. She is absolutely infatuated with Dick Melton. I don't know the ways of the people over there, but I am a woman, and I know how she feels toward him. Miss Proctor tells me that it is well for a girl to hold herself

aloof from all save her affianced lover, and, toward him even, to be not too effusive, too complaisant. It cheapens one, Miss Ada says."

"Now, is that so?" returned Capstan sarcastically. "You've been altogether too free with me, then, all these years?"

His jeering tone, the insolence in his face and manner, angered her greatly, and she firmly resolved to make no further attempt to conciliate him until he was in a different mood.

For a long time both remained silent, Chatla realizing that into a feeling of anger toward the pirate there was creeping an element of disgust. Capstan, feeling positive that the facts which had actuated the warning given to him by Miss Proctor must be known likewise to Chatla, began clumsily to cross-examine the girl. He hoped that Chatla would seize upon the opportunity to warn him against the trap being laid for him.

"I s'pose Dicky bird figgers that I ain't got a minute to live."

"I don't understand; what do you mean?"

"I can't figger that Dicky bird would come here into my own wikiup, so to speak, without sayin' something about how he aims to ketch me, or what he's goin' to do with me when he does ketch me. I just wonder if Dicky bird knows what really is goin' to happen when I and him crosses up final?"

"He spoke very generously of you, Capstan. He sincerely regrets that it is going to be necessary to arrest you unless you agree to quit the pirating. He said it might be fixed up, even yet, Capstan. Is there no way?"

"Oh, he's a reg'lar Santa Claus, ain't he? He'd like to fix it up so he won't have to arrest me; is that it? The idee that I aim to break his back in seven places when I lay paw onto him don't have nothin' to do with it?"

"I believe, upon my soul, that he has no fear of you," said she rather vain-gloriously. "You may see the day when you will wish you had accepted his offer."

"Do you think so?" Capstan's face was livid with rage, and he clasped and

unclasped his great hands as if already their sinewy strength was closing down about young Melton's throat. "Did Dicky bird say how he was goin' to get me? He don't plan on rushin' in wild-eyed and slobber-jawed, and skin me alive, does he?"

Instantly the thought occurred to Chatla, that Capstan, relying always upon his own herculean strength, never imagined that Dick might use craft, and not brute strength and courage, to effect his arrest. She thought then of Dick's suggestion that a fisherman could be found who, for a price, would gladly betray the pirate. She must warn Capstan to beware of ill-placed confidences, and had opened her lips to speak when he said:

"You and Dicky is sure gettin' along fine. Don't you wish Miss Ady would fall overboard and drown herself?"

With one contemptuous glance, Chatla arose from the organ bench, walked haughtily past the pirate, and ascended to her little attic room.

Capstan, twiddling his great, awkward fingers nervously, sat looking blankly about the room. He realized that he had not said one single word which he had planned to say. By his jealousy, and his brutal speech, he had driven her farther and farther away from him, when the purpose of his visit had been to be gentle, kind, and considerate.

Angrily he turned upon the bench and cursed the pipe organ, symbol to him of that outer world, whose blandishments, in the person of Dick Melton, were weaning Chatla away from him, he feared, forever. He glared at the instrument as if it were some animate thing responsible for all the woes which had lately come upon him.

Above, he could hear Chatla pacing back and forth across her narrow floor. The impulse to call to her, to beg her to come to him, and give him one more opportunity to explain, to apologize for

his boorish conduct, started the tears in the giant's eyes, and he had lifted his face toward the ceiling to cry out, when across his soul, like a fresh cut, streaked the maddening thought that Miss Proctor, a stranger, and not Chatla, had warned him of the plot against him.

With no anger, with naught but grief, deep and unspeakable, pictured in his dejected mien, the pirate crossed the floor, opened the door, and departed. At his own cabin he rolled up a pair of blankets, filled his cartridge belt from a box in a cupboard, closed and locked the door, and made for the landing.

Chatla heard him when he left the room below. She must tell him that some one planned to betray him, that his enemies schemed to ensnare him by guile and trickery. But why should she subject herself to further insult? Capstan would not, in all probability, believe the warning. What should she do? One moment hot with resentment, the next tender with a memory of the days as they used to be, her judgment played, shuttlelike, bewilderingly back and forth.

But she must tell him. Never should she be able to forgive herself if she permitted him to go away without telling him to look out for false friends. Down the stair ladder she went, and out upon the trail before the door. Away off toward Orcas Island was a speck upon the water—Capstan sculling his dory.

"Capstan! Capstan!" she cried wildly.

Wind and wave, now veering strongly inland, bore back the cry unanswered.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The next section of this serial will appear in the March mid-month TOP-NOTCH, out February 15th. Remember that this magazine is issued every two weeks, and you do not have to wait a month for the next installment. Back numbers may be obtained of news dealers or the publishers.

Safer Prospects

HE: "What do you call a real typical modern girl?"

She: "One who prefers an heir in the castle to a castle in the air."

As You Please By William Edward Park.



(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

RISING from the supper table at Haynes' Excelsior Café, Hifalutin Beggs languidly plucked a battered cane from the hatrack close by, and, with this adornment, and his crippled hat in his left hand, sauntered across to the desk.

"My indebtedness?" he queried, in high-bred tones.

"Fifteen cents," returned the pronounced blonde behind the cash register.

"With pleasure, ma'mselle. Your ever-obedient servant kisses your hand. No, no—don't expostulate. Oblige me by keeping the change."

The girl eyed the coins protestingly.

"But there isn't any change!"

"Ah! Is it so? Then, I pray you, forgive the oversight." Beggs sauntered out. "And now," he mused, "to my library, where I may glance over the great molder of public opinion before retiring to my downy cot."

He turned into the reading room of the Wallacetown Exchange Hotel, and, settling languidly into the most comfortable of the horde of vacant chairs, picked up the Wallacetown *Evening Eclipse*. His eye indifferently scanned the headlines, one after another. And then, suddenly, for as much as three continuous seconds, he sat bolt upright.

"My, my!" he murmured, in shocked tones. Then, as he eventually collapsed into a posture of semirepose: "To think of it—my old friend, William Degrays! Too bad!"

And, with a faint touch of real interest, he reposefully read an item couched under impressive headlines.

CAN'T RAISE \$50. IS SENT TO JAIL FOR 30 DAYS.

William Degrays, Convicted of Disorderly Conduct, Receives Exemplary Sentence from His Honor.

"His honor!" mused Beggs. "That sounds just like Wallacetown. So Billy got into a scrap with a bird named Pete Glasscap, eh? It's just like Billy to use his fists. And couldn't raise fifty bucks to pay his fine? That's queer—decidedly queer." He reflected. "Good chap, that same William. He's helped me out of more than one tight corner. Looks as though reciprocity were fore-ordained—provided I have the wherewithal to recipross."

Rising, he turned his pockets, one after another, inside out. The inventory totaled two nickels, a Lincoln penny, and a quarter overweighted with too large a wad of lead. Beggs, replac-

ing the funds in the treasury, thoughtfully scratched his head.

"Now, that is too bad—too utterly bad," he muttered. "Guess we'll see Billy anyway, Hilliard. All right, Beggs—but remember"—the undertone grew sharp—"when you can't help financially, you mustn't sympathize. Sympathy is just charity turned shoddy."

II.

TEN minutes later found Hilliard B. Beggs seated with Chief Benjamin Magruder in the latter's private smoking room at the Wallacetown police station, where, to an obligato played by the shifting hoofs of the fire-hall horses on the farther side of the partition, they conversed.

"Friend of young Degray, are you?" questioned Chief Magruder. "Well, he's a fine young man."

"Fifty dollars' *fine* or thirty days," ventured Hifalutin.

The chief, disappointed, tugged thoughtfully at his scraggly mustache. "Oh, you kin go in and see him," he snorted, disgusted at the theft of his witticism. "He's right here in the cooler. I'm going to take him over to Carisford jail on Wednesday, on the noon car."

Rising, he unlocked the heavy cell door. Hifalutin, ushered into the cell room, by the faint light trickling in through the dingy, barred window, beheld a young man sitting with his head sunk under his hands. The chief, retiring, closed the door behind him.

"I say, Billy——"

The young man glanced joyously up at the cheery sound.

"A friend at last," he yelled gleefully.

Hifalutin, doffing his battered hat, bowed low. "Right you are, Mr. Degray. This is Hilliard B. Beggs, at your service."

"Aw, slush!" The young man's tone was bitter disappointment, and the sunshine fled from his face. "So they've run you in, too. Well, it means company, anyway, since I'm dead sure you haven't enough coin to pay your fine."

"Correct about the funds, William. Go up to the head of the class." Hifalutin nonchalantly seated himself upon the bench opposite his cell comrade. "I have just thirty-six cents, including a plugged quarter. Also, six nights' lodging paid for, which constitutes unusual affluence. But what's your trouble, anyway? Unburden yourself to an old enemy."

"It's all Pete Glasscap's doing," burst forth Degray, with angry vigor. "He trumped up this charge just to tie me up good and tight for a month."

"Then you didn't hit Pete, after all?"

Degray gazed down at the concrete floor. "I hit Pete all right." A faint chuckle escaped him. "You can just bet I hit him. Nobody who saw Pete in the witness box would ever dream of indicting him for perjury. But that was part of his game. He met me here, and we had a chat, and a drink or two, and the first thing I knew there was an argument—and you know just where I land in an argument?"

"In the other fellow's face?"

"Precisely. And after that I landed here. And Pete Glasscap——"

His fist vibrated vengefully.

"But why should Pete Glasscap want to lock you up? I thought you were friends?" Hifalutin's tone was suspicious.

"Can't you understand, you mutton-head? We have a bet on."

"A bet?"

"That's the real esperanto. We were down at the club one night, and Pete offered to bet me a thousand dollars even that I couldn't beat my way from Halifax to Detroit inside of a month. I started without a cent, and the stipulation was that I must not wire home for money. I have to be in Detroit by Friday noon to win the bet. There's a thousand bucks in it for me if I land there on time. If I don't, Pete cops the thousand. He's going to leave me here till he gets the money, and then he'll come tooting down with a bunch of fellows in motor cars to bail me out, and I'll have to treat them to a champagne supper into the bargain."

"But why should he——"

"Why? Why, you boob? He just thought I was a bit too near Detroit—that's all. He's been haunting me in a motor car ever since the start, and when he found me here, two days' walking from Detroit, and with six days to spare, he picked a quarrel, and—well, I smashed him. Perfectly fair, every bit of it, according to the bet—but I'm out a cool thousand. Nobody here knows me, the people won't believe my yarn, I can't wire home for funds—and so I'm stuck."

III.

I SEE—I see," mused Hifalutin dreamily. "But the saddest part of it is, nobody here knows me, either. Not that I'm hampered by that—possibly I'm better off. But I'm busted. I'm stalled. And so you've only four days left to reach Detroit. Pete certainly was on the safe side when he landed you for thirty."

Hifalutin's heart bled for his friend, but his pocket was bloodless. Had he possessed fifty dollars, he would gladly have given it. He did not possess fifty dollars. His assets consisted solely of sympathy, which was a commodity he scorned to bestow.

"Billy," he remarked wisely, "you are well off right now. At one thousand dollars, you bought this lesson on the bargain counter. I congratulate you—I envy you. If I had a temper like yours, I'd welcome such a lesson. A hasty temper does a man no good, particularly when he hasn't much brains. It——"

"Say, what are you trying to do?"

"To admonish you, Billy."

"Then you just make your exit while the exiting is good."

Hifalutin made his exit. On the way to the cheap lodging house where he was spending his few days in Wallace-town, he pondered the problem. Had he been in funds, he could have helped his friend win the thousand dollars. He was not in funds. He saw no means of raising the sum of fifty dollars except by honest labor; and to raise so large a sum by honest labor would require more like forty days than four. Even pro-

vided he lived on nothing, which he regarded as unlikely, it would be a colossal task. He dismissed from his mind the idea of honest labor the instant it occurred.

"My library again," he murmured, when, after a reposeful night, he dismissed breakfast from his thoughts and sauntered across to the hotel. "Possibly," he reflected, "the morning paper will contain the want ad of a millionaire desiring to adopt a young and promising specimen of mankind, and offering a liberal allowance. Shall we accept the job, Hilliard? We certainly shall, Beggs. What's more, we'll wire our application at once, and ask an advance on the allowance to tide Billy over his present difficulties."

Settling himself in a chair, he reached for the most convenient paper. As he did so, he became suddenly conscious that there were others in the reading room. One corner was shut off by a screen. From behind the screen came the muffled sound of voices. Above the hotel clerk's desk, at the farther end of the room, hung a small mirror; and the mirror, dangling at an angle, showed Hifalutin the farther side of the screen. A little, stout man with a very ruddy nose was leaning forward in a chair, evidently in anxious converse with another man but half visible, but whose extreme thinness in the half section was very impressive.

"But why did you do that?" snarled the ruby-nosed man, in a voice remarkably thick and soggy for so early an hour.

"Had to," rasped his companion. "This town's been so stung with subscription fakers that there isn't any other way. I lost three prospects before I got hep. Then I put it over right along, and they tumbled. Great stunt—*Merchants' Bugle*, regular three dollars a year for two dollars, and you don't have to pay a cent, Mr. Merchant, till the first copy arrives, and you know it's all right."

"And how the deuce are you going to get the first copy to them?" The fat man's soggy tone was thinned by a dash of irascibility.

"Easy as jumping off Brooklyn Bridge. I got the girl over there"—he nodded toward the public stenographer's little office—"to typewrite the list. Sent it in to the *Merchants' Bugle* with a request to mail sample copies to every one."

"They won't do it."

"I typewrote Joe Gollan's name to it. He's their western Ontario man. That will fetch them."

"And I have to hang around here till those papers come——"

"I have everything timed right to a second. This is Tuesday. The papers reach here to-morrow morning. You finish up the small towns to-day and to-morrow—cut the price all to pieces if you like, but get the cash. Then come in here on Thursday and collect: I'll move on to London and play the game there."

"How many orders have you?"

"Seventy-eight. Pretty good little town—eh?" The thin man's tone was hearty. "That means, at our cut price, one hundred and fifty-six bucks. Give me seventy-eight from the last haul, and take the list."

"A' right, Dobson." The fat man counted out the bills and passed them across to his companion. "Gimme the orders."

"Here you are, Cole. And here's a duplicate of the list I sent to the *Bugle*."

IV.

HIFALUTIN ruefully watched the currency disappear into the lean man's wallet. A moment later, the lean man vanished from the mirror. Hifalutin dropped his eyes to the news stand just in time to see Dobson cross his range of vision. Dobson, traversing the lobby, made his exit into the street. A few seconds later the carmine-nosed Cole, also crossing Hifalutin's range of vision, wobbled a trifle unsteadily toward the bar.

Hifalutin leaned forward, his attitude one of profound thought. Already he had forgotten Cole and Dobson; his thoughts were with Billy De-

gray, who would leave next day at noon for a twenty-eight days' sojourn in the county jail at Carisford. At the thought he was thrilled with a stoic sort of gladness that he had not demeaned himself to the common, ordinary level of offering sympathy where he could not contribute cash. He relinquished the paper unread, and, rising, hobbled wearily toward the door. As he did so, his quick eye glimpsed something lying on the floor, almost at his feet.

"My prayers are answered," he breathed.

Stooping, he picked up a bunch of papers held together by an elastic band. As he examined them more closely, a disgusted exclamation escaped him. Instead of the lean man's bills, this was the bunch of subscription orders, which the fat little fellow with the ruby headlight must have dropped.

Hifalutin turned involuntarily toward the bar. Halfway he halted, pondering. Then, quietly pocketing the orders, he retraced his steps, resuming his obscure seat and his newspaper.

After all, Cole was a shyster. Cole would use these orders, if he had them, to defraud each merchant represented on the list of two dollars of lawful money. In return, each merchant would receive one sample copy of a weekly trade paper, nominally worth ten cents. A few minutes earlier he, Hilliard B. Beggs, had mourned his inability, handicapped as he was by lack of cash, to bestow upon his friend anything warmer than sympathy. Here, without a cent of cash, he could, by the simple expedient of forgetting to return the orders, do a good turn to each of seventy-eight honest merchants, not one of them less deserving probably than Billy Degray.

The little fat man bustled frantically forth from the bar. Hifalutin, deeply engrossed in his paper, felt his cold, suspicious glance. Cole wobbled awkwardly about the big room, colliding with chairs at every turn, his eyes intent upon the floor. For a few minutes he searched behind the screen. When he came forth, Hifalutin, still ensconced behind his paper in his same old place,

once more felt the man's curious stare. Eventually, halting in his wobbly progress, the fat man fumbled in his pocket, and drew forth a paper. Hifalutin, glancing up, saw that he smiled contentedly.

"The duplicate list," mused Hifalutin; and he knew, from the smile of contentment encircling the carmine nose, that the fat man was mentally scheming to collect by means of the list instead of the signed orders.

V.

COLE, a trifle relieved, wobbled to the desk, evidently to report his loss to the clerk. A few minutes later he returned to the bar. Hifalutin sat a while in meditation, mourning the frustration of his plans for doing good and for preventing the honest merchants from being done in the same way.

Suddenly he started to his feet.

"Whew!" he whistled.

For an instant he mentally balanced chances. The sample copies of the trade paper were due next morning—Wednesday. The fat man, having toured the small towns round about, would commence his collection stunt on Thursday.

"I'll save them yet," chuckled Hifalutin, "and—well, maybe they'll be so grateful that they'll lend a helping hand to Billy."

At the post office next morning Mr. Beggs learned that no letters had arrived for him.

"Or papers?" he questioned, severely eyeing the girl behind the wicket.

"No papers."

"Ah, signorina, may I trouble you to look just once more? Is there not—I ask it with all humility—at least a copy of the *Merchants' Bugle* yearning for me to take it to my bosom?"

"There was a whole bunch of *Bugles* come in this morning, but they're all distributed," replied the girl. "And there ain't none for you."

Hifalutin sighed. "You could floor me with a bit of thistledown," he murmured.

That was 9:30. At 11:30 the cheerful vagrant called upon Chief Magruder.

"I want to save you that trip to Carisford," he remarked. "Here's the money for Billy Degray's fine."

The chief laid both hands on the cheerful vagrant's shoulders. "Honest, now, friend, do you think he's worth it?"

"Honest, he isn't. But I'll pay it just the same."

VI.

HALF an hour later Hifalutin parted from Billy Degray, far beyond the town limits, and safely on the way to Detroit.

"Thanks, a million times, old man," bellowed Billy, as he vanished in a cloud of dust. "I'll wire that money, sure, the minute I cash in on that bet."

At the post office Beggs mailed a letter to the *Bugle*. Then, on afterthought, he filed a telegram to the same address.

For nearly two days he dwelt in comparative luxury at the Wallacetown Exchange. On Saturday morning he caught his first glimpse of the previous night's issue of the *Evening Eclipse*. It contained a startling and shocking announcement.

Mr. A. G. P. Cole, representing the *Merchants' Bugle*, of Chicago, had been the victim of a unique swindle. Mr. Cole, who was collector for the paper, on making his regular rounds in Wallacetown, discovered to his surprise that an impostor had preceded him by a couple of days, and collected from the merchants upward of one hundred and fifty dollars, on the strength of a bunch of stolen orders for subscriptions which, doubtless, would never be filled. Mr. Cole had wired Mr. Peter J. Dobson, his fellow representative in the district, who was in the city trying to straighten things out.

Hifalutin dropped the paper like a red-hot coal. "Beggs," he exclaimed, "It's time for you to invest what is left of that money in a railroad ticket. Right you are, Hilliard," he added approvingly. "That's the time you hit

the nail on the head, old boy." Then, rising, in a slightly louder tone: "The grips, Aloysius. No—I prefer the open air. These hacks are stifling. I'll walk to the depot."

And, followed by an imaginary valet bearing a couple of ghost grips in his nonexistent hands, Hifalutin Beggs sauntered rapidly down Sydenham Street toward the depot.

Halfway he collided with a bunch of seething, vibrant, explosive anger, which gripped him by the sleeve.

"That's the man," hissed a shrill, rasping voice.

Hifalutin, gently releasing his sleeve from the determined grip, gazed reproachfully into the red, angry face of G. J. Watkins, hardware merchant. Accompanying Watkins was the ruby-nosed man, who gesticulated violently.

"Have him arrested at once," yelled Watkins, glancing nervously up and down street. "Hang that chump Magruder—he's never around when you want him. Here, Mr. Man, you just come along with me. I'll escort you to the cooler."

"With pleasure, Mr. Watkins," murmured Hilliard B. Beggs urbanely. "Come along, Mr. Cole. I'm only too glad to meet you."

Mr. Cole shrank.

"Dobson is here, isn't he?" demanded Watkins anxiously.

"He went to the station to give the chief a description of the swindler," faltered Cole. "But—don't you think, Mr. Watkins, it might be better if we settled this thing on the quiet and got our money back?"

"Money back," growled Mr. Watkins savagely. "Money back! This place has just been bled white by subscription swindlers. We merchants wouldn't take a thousand dollars each to settle this thing. Nothing but a penitentiary sentence for him will satisfy us."

They found the tall, thin man in nervous consultation with Chief Magruder. At sight of Hifalutin Beggs' placid countenance, he instinctively drew away.

"Good morning, Mr. Beggs!" said the chief, genially extending his hand.

"Beggs, eh? Steals, you mean," blustered Watkins. "Well, Magruder, I want you to arrest Beggs for fraud."

"Arrest me!" Hifalutin's eyes grew wide. "For fraud. Watkins, I accept your apologies right now, on the spot—you can offer them any time you're ready."

"He collected two dollars from me for a year's subscription to the *Merchants' Bugle*, and never turned in the money. He's the swindler you fellows are after. Go ahead, Mr. Dobson, and lay the information."

"I forgive you again, Mr. Watkins." There was not a trace of anger in Beggs' tone. "Yes, and I forgive you seventy times seven, if you persist in wronging me. I did collect the money. What's more, I turned in the subscriptions. They will be filled. I have paid the *Merchants' Bugle* company's draft to cover the amount, less my commission—here is the draft. And here——"

He handed Magruder a letter, and, with a quick movement, blocked the doorway. Magruder read aloud:

"CHICAGO, June 8, 1912.

"Mr. Hilliard B. Beggs, Wallacetown, Ontario.

"DEAR SIR: We have your kind order inclosing list of seventy-eight names of new subscribers to the *Merchants' Bugle*, and have entered these names on our list. We allow you the customary commission of one dollar and forty cents on each three-dollar subscription. Kindly honor our draft for one hundred and twenty-four dollars and eighty cents on presentation. We shall appreciate your further orders.

"As for these men, Dobson and Cole, regarding whom you telegraphed, they are undoubtedly impostors. We have received complaints regarding them in the past, and——"

Hilliard, standing in the doorway, blocked the wild rush of Dobson and Cole for the freedom of the outer world. An instant later Magruder's hands each gripped a perspiration-wilted collar.

"Please don't hurry away, gentlemen," he begged. "The letter goes on to say," he explained, "that there's a warrant out for these two birds, and that the company's posted a reward of fifty dollars for them. Just tell them, Mr. Beggs, that I've landed the chaps,

and to send along the fifty bucks. And if you call afterward, I'll make it right with you."

Dobson shook his fist. "Faker!" he hissed savagely. "You never canvassed a single one of those names. You stole our list——"

"Whatever I did, boys," remarked Hilliard B. Beggs soothingly, "was done unselfishly. I merely wanted to help a very dear friend who was in trouble. And, after I'd helped him, unlike you, he turned out honest and delivered the goods."

Veritable Horse Marines

PAEZ, who was the first president of the Republic of Venezuela, was perhaps the only man who ever fought a naval battle on horseback. It is a matter of history that he, to whom more than any other man, apart from Simon Bolivar, Venezuela owes her independence, actually attacked and captured with his cavalry a fleet of ships.

Bolivar was endeavoring to cross the Apure River in the struggle for independence, but was prevented from doing so by some eight Spanish gunboats, which moved up and down the stream as he did. Bolivar was in despair for a while. To Paez, who was second in command, he appealed for counsel, saying that he could never cross the river so long as the Spanish gunboats were there. "If only we could capture them," the revolutionary leader observed, "the rest would be easy."

Paez decided that he would have those ships or die, and he accordingly called on his regiment of cowboys to follow him. Paez himself had been a cowboy on the plains of the Orinoco, and was the idol of his men. So when he spurred his horse into the stream, calling on his men to follow, of the three thousand cowboys and their mounts, which are taught to swim as well as to gallop, there was not a single man to hold out in this unique assault upon the gunboats. It being night, the Spanish fleet were taken quite unawares. The cowboys wriggled from their saddles to the decks of the vessels, letting their mounts swim back to shore. Having thus cut off their own retreat, it was a question of win or die. They fought well, and every gunboat was captured.

Such Taking Ways

HE met her on the crowded shore; she said: "Have we not met before?" And soon he was enraptured for she had such taking ways.

He played the rôle of gallant beau; escorted her all o'er the show; it was expensive, but, you know, she had such taking ways.

With charming disregard for price, he paid for oysters, wine, and ice; and oh, he thought her awfully nice, she had such taking ways.

Her face to his he gently drew, and vowed forever he'd be true; it broke his heart to bid adieu, she had such taking ways.

But next day gestures quite insane accompanied angry words profane; for she had pinched his watch and chain, she had such "taking" ways.

Under His Hat

DURING one of the principal events at a race meeting, the cry of "Hats off in front!" was raised and obeyed. When the horses had passed, the hats were, of course, replaced.

A few minutes later a young man began wildly to lift the hats of the spectators around him, replacing them with savage expressions of annoyance. On lifting the hat of one of the spectators he was asked what he was "up to."

"Why," he exclaimed, "I bet five with a bald-headed man, an' I am trying to find him."



The Way of It

A Tale of the
Boxing Arena



By

Harold C. Burr.

CHAPTER I.

A HARD LESSON.

IF you had inquired of any member of the big circle that sat just outside the ropes in the smoke fog at the old Marquis A. C. once a week, as to the pugilistic worth of one Jerry Alsop, you would have heard a eulogy—with a reservation. One and all, they admitted that Alsop was fast with his fists. He was tricky and entirely capable.

He had an awkward way of bunching up his left shoulder and dropping his head behind the hard and bony rampart turtlewise. More than one zealous adversary had shattered his knuckles against that unique defense. Then, too, he would foxily permit himself to be driven back against the ropes, stretching them taut as a bowstring. He would brace his feet, then let go suddenly, and the result was the same as if he had been flung from a giant sling. He would catapult forward, arms swinging with tremendous momentum, with disastrous consequences to the overconfident enemy.

Add to all this a lightning left jab, a right with the kick of a blunderbus, the footwork of a dancing master, and you have the makings of a champion.

Yes, Jerry Alsop looked like very promising material. He was coming along slowly, unostentatiously, and was learning all the time. The old Marquis A. C., where he fought at the regular Thursday-night stags, was an independent organization, which wouldn't pay for space in the newspapers; consequently Alsop was a strictly local celebrity.

The Marquis A. C. was a good toughening school. It was made up of rough young artists of the padded glove, who labored hard to earn the meager pay the club could afford. The grizzled referee permitted no loafing inside the ropes. Everybody slaved and performed his best.

Jerry Alsop met with reverses, and it is those reverses that this story is chiefly about.

"Alsop copped the post-mortem championship years ago," old Patrick Palmer explained disgustedly in the cryptical language of sport; "that's what's the matter with that fellow. You can't beat him for his alibis. He splits straws, and he's keen for that moth-eaten might-have-been stuff. Nobody ever fairly outpointed Jerry Alsop yet according to his dope. Why, he'll entertain you for hours about the raw deals he's had slipped him! He always

raises the big holler. He always crabs the other fellow's victory by pulling yards of the baby stuff. I'm sorry for that kid, because he's awful good otherwise, awful, awful good! Do you get me, pal?"

What Patrick Palmer really meant was that Alsop was a bit selfish and egotistical. If he was beaten, he loudly proclaimed it an accident. He was chary of confessing defeat. He wouldn't bestow credit where it belonged. Jerry wasn't a good-enough sport ever to be wholly popular.

Such a man needed a few hard knocks to bring the real stuff that was in him to the surface, and he got them. To begin with, there was his affair with that divinity that masqueraded under the earthly name of Barbara Slosson. It was his first eye opener.

Miss Slosson was a woman in all the name implies. She worked in Warren's Homemade Kandy Kitchen eight hours a day, for eight dollars a week. Contrary to all standards of romance, she had no horde of small brothers to buy shoes for, invalid sisters to nurse evenings, or a shiftless father who beat her frail mother, to support. She was quite a prosaic sort of a girl. But Jerry thought her sweeter than all the candy she peddled over Warren's counter.

Barbara Slosson lived happily in a little hall bedroom under a skylight that let in the sun, and her most valued possession was a chafing dish which helped to keep down expenses wonderfully. The most exciting thing in her life was to fool her landlady's abnormally developed sense of smell. Boarders who dined in their rooms behind plugged keyholes were not wholly desirable in the mercenary eyes of Mrs. Greeley. For the rest, Miss Slosson adored the turkey trot, loftily ignored the cause of woman suffrage, and graciously allowed the grateful Jerry Alsop to call on her in the shabby parlor downstairs every Saturday night.

Sunday afternoons they strolled in the little park opposite Mrs. Greeley's select boarding place, like captive birds behind the tall, rusty palings. Not that Jerry wanted to escape from this thral-

dom, understand. That little spot of green in the heart of the steel and stone city was his garden of Eden.

She must know that he loved her, and when he got ready to take unto himself a wife, for better, for worse—why, he was going to justify her intuition. He was supremely confident she would accept the honor of going through life the consort of the future lightweight champion of the world—if he only could get a square deal. There were times when she walked demurely beside him, actually waiting for him to speak.

Then, one day when the birds sang of spring, he told her arrogantly, sure of his ground. He took much for granted, as a matter of course. He had waited, until his irresistible charms made capture easy. He spoke importantly of the future, of the ultimate confusion of the mighty lightweight champion, of the money he would make. He spoke of other things at glittering length. She would ride in automobiles and wear diamonds if she married him, he bragged. But that was before he asked her point-blank for her opinion about it, unfortunately.

"Jerry," she said, a bit hysterically, "you're too fresh for your age! You act as if I belonged to you already. And believe me, you're no king, conferring a favor upon a humble subject! That's not me at all. I don't like your swagger."

He looked aggrieved. "But you must care for me, some."

Womanlike, she temporized. "That isn't what we must settle between us—just yet," she said sharply, frowning to conceal her real feelings in the matter. "Jerry, you're not making good in your calling, somehow. You want all the plums, and when somebody takes one from you, you begin to yell for mamma. Harry Harrigan's given it a name; he calls you 'Alibi Alsop.'"

"Harrigan, hey!" he cried, with instant jealousy. "What's that fresh young cub reporter to you, anyway, Bab?"

"Nothing, except that I admire the clever stuff he does for the *Clarion*

Call," she countered, just as quickly. "He's picked out your weak spot, Jerry, and it's making you sore. I can't overlook the way you excuse your every failure to make good. Jerry, I'm a girl that thinks a whole lot about the future, perhaps more than is good for my peace of mind. The real men don't waste time in vain regrets. Go forth, everlastingly keep plugging to deliver the goods, and forget the spilled milk! That ought to be your motto."

But instead of spurring him on, her words only made him fume and fret. "I could have got you if that sneak Harrigan hadn't come butting in where he wasn't welcome," he wailed. "The breaks never did string along with me for two minutes at a stretch, anyway. I always have rotten luck!"

"Jerry, please stop," she pleaded, laying a tremulous hand on his shoulder. "I'm not quite equal to hear much of that kind of talk from—from you, just now, as things stand." She smiled up at him wanly. "It's the first time I've heard it from your own lips, you see, and it—it hurts!"

Eagerly he clutched at that unexpected tone of interest. "Well, I'm no quitter, anyway, Bab!" he cried impulsively. "We'll waive all the rest of it, little girl. Just tell me what I've got to do to get the decision from you."

"That's much better, Jerry," she said gently. "Don't you honestly think so yourself? Listen to the sound of it, and compare it with the howl you raised a minute ago. Sometimes I have strong hopes for you, that you'll work out your salvation. The real, blown-in-the-glass article's there, all right. If you only don't choke it to death!"

"What have I got to do?" he repeated doggedly, in a tone that made Bab Slosson's heart glad.

She looked him straight in the eye and issued her ultimatum: "You've got to take your beatings without a whimper hereafter; that's all."

"And what if I do?" he persisted impetuously, feeling that no sacrifice was too great to have and to hold such as she. "Suppose I do muzzle this unruly tongue of mine and let the other

fellow rub it in, with never a comeback; what happens next?"

"You'll learn to be a good loser, Jerry," she answered enigmatically.

"But that isn't what I mean, Bab," he said bluntly. "What I want to hear you say is, that you'll marry me if I learn to keep mum when the going's poor. That's what I've got to know before I go ahead with this thing you're asking."

"Perhaps I will," she returned, still evasively. "But, Jerry, you've got to learn something else: You've got to learn to take your chances. But I'll promise this much—no more: You come to me again, then, and if I'm still in the market——" She blushed rosily and concluded hastily: "Go away, you big, overgrown boy!"

"That's promise enough, Bab," he said thickly, between his teeth, striving to make this his first lesson in the manly art of self-suppression.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN IT HAPPENED.

BE it entered on the credit side of Jerry Alsop's ledger of life, that he did his best from that time forth. He returned to the profession that took him inside the ropes, grim-mouthed, well-nigh taciturn. He mounted the sporting ladder slowly, surely, and began to cast sheep's eyes at the lightweight crown itself. But he set less value upon these things now. At times he almost wished, morbidly, wistfully, that he would lose some important bout on the veriest fluke. Then, and not until then, he would be able to prove to Bab Slosson that he had come to think as she wanted him to think about some things. But it seems that the gods of the glove game were in whimsical humor. He had always been a good winner. No one had ever found fault with his conduct as long as things went his way. And he had forgotten how to lose, apparently.

Once he even conceived the wild idea of deliberately quitting. But to this there were many drawbacks. For one thing, it wasn't fair to his manager.

That little man had bargained shrewdly, jockeyed adroitly, to land Jerry on the top of the lightweight heap. He deserved the fruits of victory. Then, too, Jerry didn't want to get anything under false pretenses. She wouldn't approve, and he would ever after be ashamed to look at himself in the glass, if he tried to frame anything up on a girl like Barbara Slosson.

But one afternoon, in an open-air arena made of pine boards and pitched on the outskirts of a certain desert town not so very far from Nevada, he met the snag he had been secretly praying to run up against. Of course, "The Chimpanzee" didn't know anything about the aspirant's promise to a girl back East, who had quixotic ideas as to what her husband must be. All the champion knew that day was, that this Jerry Alsop was a dangerous rival, who must be eliminated. The challenger, through the medium of his manager, had dogged him, fretted him out of all patience for a year.

The Chimpanzee was cast in no symmetrical lines of classic beauty. His arms were too long for his trunk. He was bow-legged, and red bristles of hair stood up from his cone-shaped dome of meager thought like pins in a cushion. His face was fearful to behold. The features had been kneaded and pummeled by the gloves of over a hundred boxers.

He was a fighter from his canvas shoes up, even if he wasn't good to look upon.

In the early rounds, Jerry Alsop took up the work where the former crude sculptors had left off. He didn't exactly give the Chimpanzee a new nose, but he materially changed the shape of the one he had. Then he artistically closed the left eye.

Every time the Chimpanzee was hit he grunted phlegmatically. He took punishment as a sponge takes water. But his bright, vicious little eyes never overlooked an opening, and Alsop narrowly side-stepped many a hard blow that made his hair flutter.

"Just wait until Chip connects with one of those roundhouse rights!" loudly

prophesied the ring sharps lined up just back of the industriously scribbling newspaper men. "This Jerry Alsop's a nice little boy, but it's the sleeper out of town for his! Good night!"

Harry Harrigan let his pencil fly over the copy paper, making hen tracks, and talked to the telegrapher at his side out of the corner of his mouth. He hoped, for reasons strictly his own business for a while, that the kill-joys in the rear were calling the proper turn. He wanted to see Alsop done to a delectable brown. But he felt dubious in his expert's heart. The old dope might go askew to-day. The bout was limited to twenty rounds. The champion had been foxed into agreeing to that stipulation.

The Chimpanzee growled like a bear stung by bees, under Jerry's light taps. However, the challenger was piling up a big lead on points. What if the champion failed to land one of his justly famous knock-outs? Alsop was side-stepping and getting away beautifully. The passing of every round saw Harry Harrigan grow more and more restive, uneasy.

Sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty! The crowd stood up for the twentieth round, edging toward the exits, shouting excitedly. Another three minutes, safely weathered, would see a new lightweight champion acclaimed.

Alsop came out of his corner, stepping warily. He could almost feel the referee raising his glove aloft, his ears attuned to the bedlam to follow. But he didn't care much. Bab Slosson was just as remote as on that day when she had sent him forth to learn to lose like a gentleman. Then it happened.

All afternoon the sun had been hidden behind a solid canopy of gray. Now, at sunset, the curtain in the west had rolled up like a scroll, leaving a narrow strip of lemon-tinted sky near the horizon. When Alsop left his eastern corner the orb of day dropped squarely beneath that ragged lower edge of clouds like a diving plummet. The resulting sudden glare dazzled his eyes momentarily, made him squint, blinded. He could no longer make out the Chimpanzee. He lifted his gloves with a

pathetically helpless, futile motion. By instinct alone he felt the avalanche approaching. Then the daylight was blotted out, and it was all over for Jerry Alsop, challenger.

CHAPTER III.

THE WRONG TURN.

IN his dressing room Alsop waited expectantly for the reporters, peace in his soul. He knew what to say to them. Nor did he look like a man who had just lost a world's title by an eyelash. That was because the greater triumph would be his, once he got the ear of the gentlemen of the press.

He went briskly about his dressing, whistling an old-time melody reminiscently. Bab Slosson had liked that song. There would be no struggle. He would think of her approbation and say his little piece. He would give the Chimpanzee all the credit in the coming interview.

But the sporting writers were still busy at the ringside, wiring all over the country the details of that brief, sensational twentieth round. Jerry began to fidget nervously. Could it be that this championship bout was going to become ring history without a statement from the defeated boxer? It would be just his luck if they had forgotten all about him. But he bit his tongue on that. He was done with talking about his luck.

On the short walk to the curb, where a throbbing auto waited to take him away, however, Harry Harrigan buttonholed him. Alsop's dapper little manager was going before, forcing a path from the dressing-room entrance to the machine through the gaping crowd. Jerry was next in line, his face court-plastered, staring stoically straight ahead after the manner of the great of earth. Behind him filed the solemn coterie of seconds.

It was a grim little party that came from out the shadow of the high board fence that girdled the now empty arena. But Harrigan braved the snarls of high-strung, disappointed men and plucked at the sleeve of the disappointed chal-

lenger. The crowd craned necks curiously, but could hear nothing. Jerry stepped obligingly aside.

"You've got something to say about that lucky blow, Alsop?" prompted the young reporter under his breath. "I can see it sticking out all over you."

Jerry heaved a vast sigh of relief. "Of course," he said, as a mere matter of routine. "That Chimpanzee won to-day because he had the heaviest punch. That clip he fetched me on the chin in the last round was a beauty. He's the best man at the weight in the world, and I heartily congratulate him. I hope when I learn a little more about the game that he'll give me another chance at the title. That's all I'm saying for publication. Print that in your paper, Harrigan. Want a lift as far as the station?"

And Jerry Alsop heaved another sigh of relief, now that it was said beyond all recall. He was making good to his best girl this time.

The sporting writer cleverly concealed his own disappointment. "But the sun blinded you," he objected tentatively. "You couldn't have seen the champion coming at you with smoked glasses. That knock-out was purely accidental, Alsop."

But Jerry only smiled his skepticism. "Nothing doing, Harrigan. I'm through with all 'alibis.' We can't take anything away from the Chimpanzee. He ought to get all that's coming to him for standing up under punishment the way he did, and sending over the big wallop at the last. Are you coming with us?"

"N-n-no," said Harry, watching the hurried approach of other reporters bent on getting an exclusive interview with Jerry Alsop on that last, obliterating blow. The word had been passed that the beaten contestant was leaving the inclosure.

Alsop went on to the waiting machine as if walking on air. He even winked at his dapper little manager, who was nursing a black mood and a black cigar, as he climbed cheerfully aboard. In the morning Barbara Slosson would be reading with glowing cheeks what he had to say.

He took a world of conscious pride in that utterance. He couldn't have done better had she herself dictated it to him. He was a little sorry he hadn't waited to say the same thing, substantially, to the rest of the newspaper boys. But he was in a generous humor. Let Harry Harrigan derive the benefit from the scoop he had just engineered.

He glanced back. Some of the belated news mongers were giving frantic chase. He waved his hand in airy farewell. The crowd was eddying, fanning out into the street, trudging home in the gloom. The last chapter of the recent unpleasantness with the Chimpanzee had been written.

But there was an epilogue. Jerry Alsop didn't get wind of it until he reached home and bought up the newspapers of a date immediately following that on which the lightweight championship had been successfully defended by the narrowest of margins. The young boxer lacked those accounts to complete his highly prized scrapbook to date. As soon as he verified the momentous interview with Harrigan he meant to go to Bab Slosson with the clipping in his pocket. That little strip of proof would guard him beyond all fear of contradiction.

He opened to the sporting page in pleased anticipation of what he was to read. The rustle of the paper sounded good to him. He was about to see his vindication set forth to the world in never-fading type. The background would yellow with age, but the blessed words would still be there, brave, manly words that he would never read without a glow of suffusing satisfaction. Why, he would get Bab to have them framed and hung in their parlor in a place of honor!

The next second his eyes opened at least half again as big. There was the interview boxed off in a little space of its own at the top of the split column. But poor Jerry Alsop didn't recognize a single word of it. It was shockingly inaccurate, a libel on his regeneration. Harry Harrigan had basely put words into his mouth that wild horses couldn't have dragged from him. It was pre-

cisely like the stories he had pulled in the old days.

He flung the paper from him in disgust. He rather thought he had a word to say to this presumptuous reporter who could lie about him so glibly. But that grudge could wait. First of all, he must explain to his girl about this terrible mistake.

Miss Slosson came into the shabby little front parlor at Mrs. Greeley's select boarding place interrogatively. "Do you want to see me about anything, Jerry?" she inquired kindly, with just a touch of listlessness that escaped him.

He had been waiting impatiently on the edge of a musty sofa, worrying his cap with twitching fingers. "You bet I do, Bab!" he cried quickly, leaping to his feet. "I've just got wise to what the papers said about me after the Chimpanzee slammed me cold, and I want to tell you it's an outrage the way I've been misquoted! That friend of yours, Harry Harrigan, has got his harpoon all sharpened for me. I never said a word of it. Bab, I——"

Suddenly he stopped his tirade, mouth agape. The girl didn't seem to be listening.

"What, what's the matter, little girl?" he gasped, in surprise. "Don't you believe I'm spinning you the straight stuff?"

"Oh, I don't know! I don't know, Jerry! Why do you bother me with such things?" She had broken down and was sobbing in her handkerchief unrestrainedly. "Jerry, Jerry, don't you, won't you, can't you ever understand? The same old, old excuses I despise so you're offering me now, only they're dressed differently, to—to fool me!"

"But this isn't an excuse at all," he protested wonderingly. "I've been slandered."

Barbara Slosson dabbed at her eyes, unconvinced. "And you run to me with your troubles like a cry-baby, nevertheless! Jerry, you may be absolutely in the right of it this time. But please, please see what a spectacle you're making of yourself. Why, I'm not quite

sure that this isn't the very worst behavior you've shown. If Harry Harrigan's been printing mean things about you, you should go to him, not me. You don't want to hide behind my apron strings, do you, Jerry? Make him retract, apologize."

"I'm sorry," he said, in an altered voice, very humbly. "Bab, I'm beginning to get the whole of your point of view. I'm learning all the time. The next thing I'm going to do is to button my coat and hustle around to the *Clarion Call* office, sporting department. You've tipped me off swell. I know my little book hereafter, you bet."

CHAPTER IV.

BY WAY OF REPRISAL.

JERRY ALSOP was as good as his boast, but it was the wrong time of day to catch a reporter at his desk. Harrigan was somewhere up in darkest Harlem, innocently asleep. The avenger got the location of the flat down pat, and went intrepidly uptown.

He rang the bell in the vestibule many times, and the door failed to click, but Jerry wasn't disheartened. He routed out the janitor's wife, and together they marched up the stairs. There followed a prolonged pounding on the young reporter's hall door. The buxom queen of the dumb-waiter domain explained superficially that the young gentleman was a sound sleeper. But at last a drowsy hail sounded from within, and a shuffling step came along the hall.

The door opened a crack, into which Alsop thoughtfully inserted his boot. Harrigan, eyes full of morning glories, peered forth and yawned rudely in his caller's face. Then he greeted the young boxer he had maligned perfunctorily, and the door opened wider. Evidently he was no coward. Jerry saw he was dressed only in pajamas and a pair of flapping carpet slippers.

"I've got to see you, Harrigan," he announced, with a certain grimness that couldn't very well be lost on the other.

Harrigan blinked foolishly like a man barely awake. "All right," he said, not

very cordially. "You're looking right at me."

"Cut that out!" said Alsop irritably, pushing his way determinedly toward the interior of the room, uninvited. "You know what I mean, Harrigan. I want you to take back something you wrote about me."

The reporter frowned. "Something I wrote about you?" he repeated musingly, as if trying to recollect the really trivial matter. "You'll have to be more explicit. I've forgotten."

"Harrigan, you're lying!" accused Jerry bluntly. "Then you won't take it back, I suppose?"

The cornered sporting writer temporized. "Why should I, Alsop? That little difference of opinion out West is stale news by now. The public wouldn't be interested in a brand-new post-mortem from you, even if I had pull enough to jolly the old man into giving me space for it. You see, it's all too ancient for a live sporting page like ours to handle. I'm sorry, but you ought to have come sooner. I might have been able to fix you up last week."

With difficulty Jerry Alsop held himself physically in check. "Say!" he said suspiciously, "what's eating you, anyway? Are you stuck on Barbara Slosson yourself?"

"Oh, she's a nice little girl," confessed Harry banteringly. "She's still eligible to the matrimonial stakes if we care to take her word for it, too. I'm not saying for sure, Alsop, but I might be coaxed into doing something foolish. What do you think of doing about it?"

Jerry Alsop was fighting another sort of a battle for self-mastery now. "Why, nothing much," he said, in a strange, choked sort of a voice. "Harrigan, I don't intend doing anything this minute, except to borrow the coat of those pajamas you're wearing, if you'll lend it to me."

"What's this nonsense?"

"I'll explain in a minute," the aroused young boxer promised queerly. "I'd prefer a rope, but you haven't got one handy probably. Harrigan, I just want to tie one hand behind my back for a little while. I want to take something

out of your hide. It wouldn't be fair in me to thrash a novice like you with both hands. It will even up the odds considerably to do the job with one. Would you oblige by tying the knot?"

Harrigan flushed, then paled. "I'll call your bluff!" he shouted back shakingly. "You'd better let me fasten your feet, too. That would provide you with one of your magnificent excuses. Because, Alsop, there isn't a man in the world of my inches who can beat me up with one hand in a rough-and-tumble. Come on, you little mucker, and don't forget I'm about twenty pounds heavier!"

Jerry said nothing more. That tongue of his had got him into a peck of misunderstanding with the girl he loved already. The preparations for the handicap grudge bout went on apace. The enraged sporting writer tremblingly divested himself of the upper portion of his pajamas. Viciously he knotted it around the professional boxer's slim waist, rendering his mighty right arm rigid, useless. Then the furniture of the dining room was shoved against the wall, and they went at it uncompromisingly.

Harry Harrigan was a bachelor, so there were no tearfully hysterical relatives to interrupt the festivities. The young sporting writer opened the ball by attempting to rush his experienced antagonist off his feet. But Jerry used his free arm as an expert fencer wields his rapier. With catlike agility, he parried and jabbed.

Harrigan was thrown into confusion by the precision of those tapping blows. At times he would have made affidavit that Alsop had a dozen hands working for him.

The one arm that Jerry elected to bring into play did triple, quadruple duty. Harrigan's face was soon sliced raw by the professional boxer's hard knuckles. It was pitiful.

At last Harry, staggering, weak, helpless longer to defend himself, cried quits through thick and swollen lips. He tottered feebly to a chair and slumped into it, groaning. The chastened reporter sadly watched the capable avenger of

his honor unknot his bonds and toss the wrinkled pajama coat across the room to him.

Harry fumbled in the breast pocket and extracted a much-needed handkerchief, which he held to his bleeding nose. Jerry Alsop followed the pajamas across the room and stood staring down at his handiwork thoughtfully.

"Harrigan," he blurted unexpectedly, as if he had determined upon something suddenly, "are you going around to see Bab Slosson soon?"

"Yes," replied the other defiantly. "You can't bully me into staying away!"

Alsop nodded as if pleased. "I suppose if I gave you a little note to deliver to her, you'd throw it into the first convenient wastebasket, wouldn't you?"

"Perhaps."

"All the same, Harrigan, I'm going to take a chance on your sheer cussedness," declared the victor lightly. "It really doesn't matter if you deliver the message or not. I can easily send a duplicate through the mail. So you see, you won't gain anything by acting badly about it. You'll pardon me for a moment?"

With exaggerated politeness he drew forth a memorandum tablet and pencil, and wrote swiftly on his knee. He read over the note with great relish, and carefully folded it. From another pocket he fished an envelope none too immaculate. It was the task of only a second to address it, insert the briefly scribbled communication, and seal it.

The note was without formal beginning or end. It read as follows:

He couldn't prove an alibi, so I'm returning him to you herewith slightly damaged. It's up to you, Bab, whether this sort of a guy ought to have the can tied to him or not. I'm not saying a word any more, not a word!

J. A.

Jerry laid his letter on the table and left the flat without more ado, for a long, rambling walk. It made him hot and cold with apprehension to think that a fine girl like Bab Slosson might hitch herself to a four-flusher like this Harry Harrigan. But he couldn't quite see what more he could do to prevent

such a catastrophe. This trailing a skirt was a one-sided game. She always had the privilege of changing her mind. Jerry sighed plaintively from sheer disillusionment. If women only would act sensible, rather than from impulse, there would be some getting along with the difficult things!

CHAPTER V.

ANOTHER FRAME-UP.

THE lightweight passed three restless days and sleepless nights in waiting. No word from his very best girl arrived. The dapper little manager came to him, enthusiastic about plans for a whirl in vaudeville, but the harassed Jerry meant to stick to the city like a leech until he heard—something.

He evolved the cunning plan of sauntering daily around to Warren's Home-made Kandy Kitchen and lazily purchasing great boxes of sweets for a mythical rival for his manly affections. Then, too, she might drop him a word of encouragement. But he abandoned the threadbare ruse. If she cared for him at all it might make her unhappy, and he would have cut his hand off at the wrist any day if that sacrifice would prevent her crying about him—or anybody else.

And one day he thought, for a moment, that he was rewarded for his patience. Boldly she ventured to his home to see him, unbidden. Jerry Alsop lived in a flat that he shared with his manager. That smart little man was absent at the time, no doubt tearfully bewailing his protégé's inexplicable obstinacy in hanging around the big town when the fabled goose was laying the golden eggs off there in the provinces.

Jerry took no interest in the servant problem, so he opened the door himself. She stood in the dark hall hesitatingly, waiting for his welcome, a half smile forming on her pretty lips.

Behind her hovered a shadow of male proportions. Jerry thought this personage looked very much as if he wanted to bolt down the stairs. It was none other than Harry Harrigan she

had in tow. That was Alsop's first surprise, but more were coming.

"Why, hello, Bab!" he cried, somewhat lamely, his heart thumping like a steel riveter. "What are you doing around this part of the world?"

"Looking for you," she said, with a sort of odd restraint, which he couldn't fathom. "If you'll invite us in, I'll explain quickly. We've got to catch a train in an hour from now—for Niagara Falls—our parlor-car seats are engaged."

Alsop was mumbling apologies for his rudeness and clumsily stepping aside. She swept past him with lowered head. Harrigan, behind her, was lugging a suit case. He glanced furtively at Jerry as he passed along the hall, but that wretched young man was shrewdly guessing the worst.

He had been afraid of this all along. Niagara Falls had a honeymoon sound he didn't like. And both of them surely had the hangdog air of a couple of elopers. That ominous suit case was corroborating evidence enough.

He piloted them awkwardly into the front room, which did duty as a parlor, man fashion, his world of bright promise going black before his eyes. For a second they all stood foolishly about, searching for words that would relieve the tension.

The girl took it upon herself to explain, and her first words confirmed his fears.

"Jerry," she began nervously, "I've stopped here to ask you if you'd mind returning my—my letters and things—the autograph picture I gave you, and that silver locket. It's only fair to Harry that you shouldn't keep them, you know."

Poor Alsop was licking his dry lips and thinking resentfully that she might have spared him this humiliation. But his pride came to his rescue, as pride will in times of stress, and he bowed ceremoniously.

"I'll get them for you," he said coolly, turning on his heel to comply.

Then he thought of something he was overlooking, and stopped in his tracks.

Six months before he never would have thought of it. Slowly he came back. Neither of the other two ever knew what that little trip across that stretch of carpet cost him. But he went straight over to Harry Harrigan, hand outstretched, palm open, smiling as bravely as he could.

"Congratulations, old man," he said, with his voice as steady as a rock. "This has got to make us bury the past. The little girl wouldn't want us to be enemies after this. It's her happiness we've got to consider first—both of us."

Then the very heavens fell, the much-advertised crack of doom sounded, and a veritable bolt from the blue almost laid Jerry Alsop low. He heard a delighted little gurgle from a quarter in which he hadn't dared look, and before he could dodge, a warm, palpitating little body was nestling close to him.

Barbara Slosson was crying, laughing, and babbling wildly on his manly shoulder. Jerry petted her foolishly, and strove to emerge from the chaotic impossibility of it all. Harrigan had sheepishly withdrawn to what the ring sharps would have called a neutral corner, and he looked upon the scene, grinning rather sadly. Alsop wondered how he could lose a wife without complaint.

But the girl was explaining that phenomenon hurriedly. "Jerry, Jerry, look at me, dear!" she commanded excitedly, shaking him tenderly out of his trance. "That bully speech of yours just now sounded good to your girl's ears. And I am your girl, too, if you'll have me. I'll marry you, Jerry, if you're really sure you still want me. I'll jump at the chance to get you."

"But—but Harrigan, over there—he might object," protested Alsop, seeing

visions of the woman he loved being arrested for bigamy. "We'll have to—er—buy him off."

She laughed happily at his obtuseness, and tweaked his ear playfully. "Wake up, Jerry, dear!" she cried. "Can't you see the joke? We never said we were married; we only just spoke of going to Niagara Falls—we had no idea of doing so."

"Oh, look here, I'll tell you all about it," said Harry Harrigan suddenly. "I'm the goat. You win, with bells on, Alsop. I wanted Bab just as bad as you do, and—well, I did my best to put you in wrong, Alsop. Bab always cared the most for you, and after you beat me up she liked you better."

"Oh, not because Jerry licked you, Harry," protested the girl.

"No, that's right," admitted Harrigan, "but she decided you were a man, after all. Well, she agreed to give me one more chance. She said if I'd make out we were married and come over here and put it up to you, she'd take me in case you acted like a yellow pup. You win; that's all!"

"Well, there's no yellow pup about you, either, Harrigan," said Jerry, in a burst of joyous good-fellowship. "I—I'm sorry I beat you up the way I did."

The girl, blushing rosily, turned to Harrigan. "Thank you, Harry," she said prettily. "We'll never forget what you've done. And now I think Mr. Alsop has something to say to me in private. Would you mind leaving us for a few minutes?"

"I get you," said Harrigan amiably. "You don't have to tell me how many it takes to make a crowd. Say, Alsop, if you're short of a best man, just look me up. Always glad to oblige."

Forfeited Liberty

IT was his first visit to America, and he was anxious to see as much of it as possible in a short time. In a brief visit to the South he met an aged negro who had been a slave.

"How interesting!" he remarked. "And after the war you had your freedom?"

The old man looked at him half sadly, half sheepishly, shook his woolly head, and said:

"No, sah. I didn't git no freedom—I went and got married."

Fresh-Laid Mystery in the State of Washington



Winged in Walla Walla

by
Bertram Leihar

(A COMPLETE NOVELETTE)

CHAPTER I.

THE CONUNDRUM.

MR. RUDOLPH GALLATIN was a conundrum to Walla Walla. He looked like a college professor; he dressed like the advance agent of a three-ring circus; he talked and deported himself like a New York drummer. That he was none of these certain inquisitive elements of the population had fully decided, but just what he was nobody had been able to ascertain, although he had been in town a week.

Even at Chris Wahman's High Class Tonsorial Parlor in Main Street, where he had been coming regularly every morning to be shaved, Gallatin was still a mystery. Chris held the world's championship for minding other people's business, but thus far all he had succeeded in finding out about the gayly dressed, breezy stranger with the lofty forehead and the dreamy eyes was that he had a two-dollar room with bath at the Dacres Hotel, was a liberal spender, hailed from New York City, and had never been in the Northwest before.

The very first morning Gallatin had dropped into the barber shop, Chris,

while applying the lather, had proceeded to cross-examine him.

"Stranger in town?" he began tentatively.

"I am," was the laconic response. "Only once over, please, and go easy. I've got a tender skin."

"How do you find it?" the proprietor of the High Class inquired, as he laid aside the brush and began to scrape.

"A little dull," groaned the man with the tender epidermis.

"I wasn't referring to the razor," said Chris, stepping back to strop the steel as he spoke. "I was asking you what you think of Walla Walla."

"Great!" exclaimed the man in the chair enthusiastically. "I don't wonder that they call it the Garden City. It deserves the name."

"Maybe you're thinking of settling here?"

"Maybe I am. I might do much worse, I think."

"You couldn't do much better, sir," Chris declared warmly. "This is a wonderful country. We are the center of the most fertile section of the rich Northwest. Our climate can't be beat. Our wheat and alfalfa crops are truly phenomenal. Our agricultural, horti-

cultural, dairy, and poultry resources are simply marvelous. And the best part of it is that the development of this section is still in its infancy. The rich soil of the Walla Walla Valley hasn't yet been made to give up more than a tiny fraction of what it's capable of yielding. "No, sir; take it from me, you won't be making any mistake if you decide to locate here." Chris had been flourishing his razor oratorically, as he spoke. Now he remarked, more quietly: "But maybe you're not interested in the agricultural possibilities of this section, sir?"

"Do I look like a farmer?" asked Mr. Rudolph Gallatin, with a smile.

"No, you don't. From your appearance I should say you were a professional man. Maybe a lawyer, an osteopath, or an actor."

Gallatin laughed. "You flatter me," he said noncommittally.

"But, then, appearances are often deceptive," the inquisitive barber persisted. "It really wouldn't surprise me at all, sir, if you were to tell me that you are in some commercial line."

"Very true," the other agreed. "As you suggest, a man might look like a lawyer, or a physician, and still be a soap salesman."

"Ah! So you sell soap?"

"I! Oh, no, indeed. I merely cited that as an illustration."

"Might I ask what you do sell?"

"I haven't said that I sell anything," observed Gallatin, with an exasperating smile.

Undaunted by these evasions, Chris stuck manfully to his guns. For six successive days he kept on probing his mysterious customer, but found to his chagrin that the latter was too much for him. On all other subjects Mr. Rudolph Gallatin was talkative enough, but whenever the conversation was directed toward his personal affairs he became about as loquacious as a clam. Chris was about ready to give up in despair when his pretty niece came back from a two weeks' vacation at Bingham Springs to resume her duties as manicurist at the High Class Tonsorial Parlor.

As soon as the mysterious customer set eyes on the fair wielder of the orange stick and cuticle shears, he decided that his hands needed attention. And then the conundrum was solved. Before she had finished trimming his finger nails, Mr. Rudolph Gallatin had imparted to her the secret which for a week had baffled her uncle and many other curious inhabitants of the Garden City.

CHAPTER II.

HIS STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT.

GALLATIN was much impressed with the charms of Chris' pretty niece, and lost no time in telling her so.

"Do you know," he remarked, as she lifted his right hand and gently ran a slender file across the edge of the thumb nail, "I've just discovered that I've made a tremendous mistake."

"How's that?"

"Since my arrival in this bully town I've been telling myself that the azure skies of the Walla Walla Valley were the most glorious shade of blue in the whole wide world. For that I owe you an apology."

"I don't quite understand," said the girl, with a frown.

"I have unintentionally slighted your eyes," he explained. "They are a much more glorious blue. Believe me, little one, I have never seen—ouch!"

The ejaculation was an expression of physical pain. The sharp point of the nail file had suddenly entered the flesh of his thumb.

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" cried the girl, a twinkle in the blue orbs which had just received such a glowing tribute. "It was awfully careless of me. But then I always get nervous when strangers call me 'little one' and pay me such extravagant compliments."

Gallatin, sucking his thumb, looked at her approvingly. "You're all right," he declared. "I deserved that jab for getting fresh. I'll be careful not to offend again."

"I hope so," she said demurely. As she spoke, she glanced toward the barber at the second chair, a good-looking

young man, whose face was at that moment disfigured by a scowl.

This young barber's name was Larry Bradley. He had been working for Chris Wahman about twelve months, and there were few of the regular patrons of the place who did not know that he was in love with the boss' niece, and hoped to marry her as soon as he had saved up enough money to quit the barber trade—which he hated—and buy a chicken ranch in the vicinity of Walla Walla.

As Larry's chair was situated close to the operating table of the manicure girl, he had overheard what Gallatin had said to her. Hence the fierce scowl upon his handsome face. And in addition to the scowl, his right hand shook so that only a miracle, it seemed, saved the man whom he was shaving from losing his off ear.

"Would I get another stab if I were to make so bold as to ask what your name is?" Gallatin inquired of the girl. "Honestly, I'm not getting gay again. I'm dead anxious to know."

The girl shrugged her shoulders. "Well, I've no great objection to telling you. It's not exactly a secret. I'm Spokane Wahman. Chris is my uncle."

"Spokane! How very extraordinary! That isn't a girl's name. It's the name of a city."

"It happens to be *my* name," the girl said tartly. "I'm sorry if you don't like it. Perhaps my parents made a mistake in not consulting you before I was christened."

"No, they didn't," he protested, with a laugh. "It is a very pretty name. I was merely remarking as to its oddity. Well, Miss Spokane Wahman, I hope that you and I are going to be the best of friends. I intend to be one of your regular customers, but I sincerely hope that our acquaintance is going to be more than a mere business one."

At which sally the scowl upon Larry Bradley's face deepened, and once more an ear of the customer he was shaving narrowly escaped amputation.

"Are you thinking of locating here?" the girl asked. Her tone sounded flatteringly eager; in point of fact her in-

terest was quite impersonal. But he did not know that all natives of Walla Walla, male and female, are loyal rooters for their city and State; that they are always delighted to hear of new settlers.

"Yes; I hope to remain here," Gallatin informed her. "I like the town, and I like the people. I have decided to establish my business in the Garden City."

"What is your business?" Spokane inquired. As she asked the question her uncle, who had stepped to the rear of the shop to get a bottle of hair restorer, stopped to listen, and several of the customers who were seated near by pricked up their ears.

"Give a guess," challenged Gallatin, with a laugh. "Everybody else in Walla Walla has been trying to solve that puzzle for the past six days. Let's see how good a guesser *you* are, Miss Spokane."

"Well, I should say that your business has something to do with chemicals," the girl answered readily.

He stared at her in astonishment. "Now, how on earth did you guess that?"

Spokane laughed. "By the stains on your fingers. One of the professors at Whitman College comes here to have his nails trimmed, and he always has the same kind of stains on his hands. He told me they came from experiments in chemistry."

"By Jove, you're a wonder!" exclaimed Gallatin. "Sherlock Holmes and Nick Carter have nothing on you. Yes; those stains on my fingers came also from experiments in chemistry. That is my line."

"What are you going to do in Walla Walla?" the girl asked. "Are you going to teach at Whitman College?"

"No, indeed. I am going to run a factory here."

"Oh! What kind of a factory?"

As she put the question Chris and his eavesdropping customers held their breaths.

"I am going to run an egg plant," Gallatin announced.

"A what?"

"An egg plant—a plant for the manufacture of eggs."

A frown of perplexity wrinkled the manicure girl's forehead. Then, suddenly, her face lighted up. "Oh, I understand. You mean you are going to make sugar eggs for Easter time?"

Gallatin smiled and shook his head. "No; I don't mean sugar eggs. I mean *real* eggs—the kind that you fry, poach, scramble, and make into omelets. That's the kind of egg we're going to manufacture, Miss Spokane."

The girl laughed. "What a funny way you have of putting things! I suppose you mean that you're going to buy a chicken farm?"

Again Gallatin shook his head. "No; I don't mean anything of the sort. I said I was going to *manufacture* eggs, and I mean just that. We shan't need any chickens at our factory. I have made a scientific discovery that is going to put the hens out of business. I have invented a machine that can turn out as perfect an egg as any chicken could lay."

There was no mistaking the speaker's earnestness. His eyes were ablaze with enthusiasm. Although he was addressing the manicure girl, unconsciously he had raised his voice so that it carried to the other end of the long room.

For a moment his weird announcement was received in silence. Then, suddenly, the tension was broken by a loud laugh of derision from Larry Bradley.

"Going to put the hen out of business!" he scoffed. "I'd like to see this wonderful machine."

Gallatin turned to him with quiet dignity. "You shall have that privilege very shortly, my friend," he said. "My apparatus is on its way here. I telegraphed to New York the other day to have it shipped on, and I expect it to arrive to-morrow or the next day. In the meantime, perhaps you would like to see a sample of my work?"

"A sample of your work!"

"Yes; I brought a couple of my eggs from New York with me. I have them in my pocket. They were made on the small model machine with which I have

been conducting my experiments, and the result is not quite as perfect as the product I expect to turn out with the more elaborate machinery I plan to install here. But they will serve to convince you that my invention is thoroughly practical."

He plunged his hand in his pocket and drew out a white oval object a trifle larger than an ordinary hen's egg. With a graceful bow, he handed it to the manicure girl.

"To you, Miss Spokane," he said solemnly, "shall be accorded the honor of being the first person in the State of Washington, and the first woman in the whole world, to inspect the latest triumph of science over nature."

CHAPTER III.

THE ARTIFICIAL EGG.

THE others crowded around Spokane as she stood, fascinated, staring at the white oval object which rested in the palm of her hand.

"It feels as if it was made of chalk," she said, running her finger over its rough surface.

"The shell is made of a plaster composition," Gallatin announced. "It is slightly thicker and much tougher than an ordinary eggshell. In that respect I think my invention is decidedly superior to the product of the hen. There is much less danger of breakage."

Chris Wahman took the egg from his niece and inspected it critically. "It is wonderful," he exclaimed. "Except that it is much whiter and a little larger, it looks just like a real egg."

"Pshaw!" sneered Larry Bradley. "Anybody can make a plaster-of-paris egg that *looks* like a real egg from the outside. That's too easy. But how about the inside? That's the question."

"You shall taste the inside and judge for yourself, my skeptical friend," said Gallatin. "Of course, I don't expect you to judge my egg by its shell alone. Have you any cooking facilities here, Chris?"

"There's the hot-water tank and some shaving mugs that have never been used," the proprietor of the High Class

responded. "But why not take the eggs to the little restaurant across the street, and have the chef cook 'em properly?"

"A good idea!" exclaimed Gallatin. "Friends, it has been regularly moved and seconded that this meeting do now adjourn to the little restaurant across the street. All in favor are cordially invited to come along and witness the test."

Passers-by stared in wonder at the procession which filed out of the barber shop, across Main Street, and into the Smart Set Quick Lunch Room. Chris and Gallatin were in the lead. The half dozen customers and Joe the bootblack followed in close formation, and Spokane and Larry Bradley brought up the rear, the latter's face still wearing a cynical sneer.

"Pete," said Chris to the proprietor of the restaurant, a stout, red-faced man with a head as bald as a pumpkin, "we want you to do us a favor. This gentleman here has made a couple of eggs——"

"Has done what?" the Smart Set's chef interrupted sharply.

"Has made a couple of eggs," Chris repeated, greatly enjoying his neighbor's bewilderment. "That's his business, Pete. He is a manufacturer of eggs—he makes 'em by machinery—and he is going to open an egg factory right here in Walla Walla. He's brought a couple of samples with him, and we want you to cook 'em for us so that we can try what they taste like."

The proprietor of the lunch room laughed ironically. "So this gentleman makes eggs by machinery, does he? Can he make milk, too, Chris?"

"No," said Gallatin quietly. "I cannot make milk, my friend; but if you read the newspapers you ought to be aware of the fact that milk is being made by machinery, at the present time, over in Frankfort, Germany. A German scientist has discovered a process by which he extracts milk from vegetables, and it is said to be so much like cow's milk that it is impossible for the layman to tell which is which. The newspapers published long accounts of the discovery a few weeks ago."

"Why, yes!" exclaimed Spokane Wahman excitedly. "What he says is true. I read it in the *Bulletin* the other day."

"Well, you can't believe all you see in the papers," muttered the presiding genius of the Smart Set. "Anyway," he added grudgingly, "even if they can make milk by machinery, you'll have a hard job convincing me that it's possible to make eggs. To my mind, that's going a wee bit over the limit."

Gallatin smiled and took one of his artificial eggs from his pocket. "Who's got the other one?" he inquired.

"Here it is," said Chris, producing it.

The man who was going to "put the hen out of business" handed the two eggs to the restaurant keeper. "Just take these into your kitchen, old chap, and break them open," he requested.

The lunchman stared incredulously at the white oval objects. "I suppose this is a practical joke," he grumbled, "but just out of curiosity to see if there's anything inside these lumps of chalk I'll be the goat. Come on, all of you, and have a laugh on me."

They followed him back into the kitchen, where he handed the eggs to the chef.

"How do you want 'em cooked?" he inquired, turning to Gallatin with an ironical grin.

"Any way, except boiled," the latter replied. "I must confess that in one respect my rival the hen at present has an advantage over me. My eggs are not good for boiling, on account of the thickness of the shell and certain ingredients it contains. However, I am now experimenting with a new shell formula which will overcome this defect. Later on I expect to produce an egg which can be boiled just as successfully as an ordinary egg."

"Beginning to hedge," muttered Larry triumphantly; but Gallatin only smiled.

The chef took one of the egg manufacturer's samples and struck it against the edge of a dish. The shell did not break, and Larry Bradley laughed derisively. "It is solid," he sneered. "I knew this wise aleck was playing a joke

on us. His wonderful eggs are nothing but lumps of plaster."

"Hit it a little harder," said Gallatin quietly to the chef. "As I have explained to the others, the shell of my eggs being thicker than ordinary eggs, are not so easily broken open."

The chef made a second attempt, this time rapping the egg more vigorously against the side of the dish. Everybody gave vent to an excited exclamation as the shell broke into two pieces, and a semisolid, yellowish substance fell into the dish.

"Jimminy Christopher! It looks just like the yolk of a real egg!" cried Chris Wahman.

"And it tastes just like the yolk of a real egg," boasted Gallatin. "Break open the other one, chef, and cook them both together so that there'll be enough for everybody to get a taste. Too bad that I haven't more samples with me."

Everybody watched intently as the chef opened the second egg, placed it, together with the first, in a frying pan, with the necessary amount of butter, and put them on the hot stove. A few minutes later they saw the sizzling, viscous yolks shape themselves into two firm orange-hued semiglobules, each fringed with a wide margin of white. They appeared to be as perfect a pair of fried eggs as had ever been prepared in the Smart Set kitchen.

"Who'll be the first to taste?" cried Gallatin, as the chef lifted the frying pan from the stove, and deftly transferred its contents to a plate. "How about you, Miss Spokane? Ladies first, if you're not afraid to venture. I assure you they wouldn't hurt you, even if you were to eat a hundred of them. I guarantee them to be every bit as nutritious and appetizing as the old-fashioned hen-made goods."

"But are they fresh?" the manicure girl asked hesitatingly. "You say you brought them from New York with you. It must be several days since they were laid—I mean made."

"They are about two weeks old," Gallatin admitted. "But what of it? That's quite youthful compared to most of the cold-storage eggs which are fed

to the innocent public. Besides, my eggs don't deteriorate nearly as quickly as the natural kind. They'll keep for weeks even without ice. That's another advantage I can claim over my esteemed rival, the hen."

Spokane took up a knife and fork, cut a morsel from the white border of one of the eggs, and put it in her mouth.

"Yum-yum!" she exclaimed, smacking her red lips. "It's awfully good."

"Me next," said Chris Wahman eagerly, taking the knife and fork from his niece.

"By Jinks!" he exclaimed, as he helped himself to a generous mouthful. "It certainly does taste just like the real thing. Any hen would be proud to lay such eggs."

Larry Bradley was the third to sample the product. The sneer disappeared from the young barber's face as he swallowed the dainty morsel. He was forced to agree with Spokane and her uncle that Gallatin's achievement was truly remarkable.

Then the proprietor of the lunch room made the test. He became as enthusiastic as his predecessors.

"You say you can turn these out in quantities?" he asked of Gallatin.

"Certainly."

"And what will the price be?"

"About the same as ordinary eggs, at first. - But later on I expect to be able to cut the price in two. It is then that I shall drive the hen out of business. My friends," cried Gallatin oratorically, "take my word for it that the chicken is doomed to become as much of a back number as the horse. Of course, fowl will always be in demand for eating purposes, but as producers of eggs they won't be able to compete with my machine."

"You can take my order, right now, for a crate of your henless eggs," said the Smart Set's owner. "If they are all as good as the samples I shall use no other kind in my business, from now on."

Hearing which Larry Bradley sighed. As has been said, it was his great ambition to quit the barbering trade and buy a poultry ranch. He had figured

out that he could make a living for two by selling eggs—hen-made goods—to the local market. Now he saw his ambition nipped in the bud by this latest achievement of science.

Any wonder that he began to hate Mr. Rudolph Gallatin?

CHAPTER IV.

THE WORLD TAKES NOTICE.

IT fell out that on the same day Gallatin gave his informal demonstration before the astonished group in the Smart Set Quick Lunch Room at Walla Walla, Doctor Paul Walden, of Russia, a scientist of world-wide renown, speaking before an assemblage of prominent chemists at Chicago, made a prediction that the time was not far distant when chemistry would be able to produce an edible egg identical with that laid by the time-honored hen.

Doctor Walden had never heard of Mr. Gallatin, and, as he subsequently stated when the coincidence was brought to his attention, had no idea that a device for manufacturing eggs had already been invented. He was speaking purely theoretically when he made his prediction before the body of distinguished chemists in convention assembled.

An Associated Press reporter who covered the convention, realizing that the Russian professor's speech was "hot stuff," sent it over the wire to his home office in New York. Thence the report was relayed to newspapers in all parts of the United States, so that the following paragraphs found their way into the office of the Walla Walla *Evening Bulletin*:

CHICAGO, Sept. 24th.—Doctor Paul Walden, of Riga, Russia, predicted here, last night, that the next feat of chemistry would be the making of eggs from air. Doctor Walden further predicted that a variety of nitrogenous food would be made from the air some day.

"I consider it practically certain that at no distant day we will be drawing our food supplies from the air," said Doctor Walden. "Formerly we were able to do very little with the uncombined nitrogen in the atmosphere, but now we are able to harness it, and the possibilities that achievement sug-

gests are wonderful. One of those possibilities is the making of eggs by chemical means. An egg, of course, is nothing but a complex compound of nitrogen, oxygen, sulphur, and hydrogen. There is no logical reason in my mind why the chemical processes of the hen cannot be imitated in the laboratory."

Having edited this copy and sent it to the composing room, the city editor of the *Bulletin* went out to get his lunch. On East Adler Street he encountered Mike Davis, Walla Walla's chief of police, whose unusually solemn countenance now wore a broad grin.

"Why the merriment, Mike?" the editor inquired. "Can't you let me in on the joke?"

"I guess I can," chuckled the police official. "It's really much too good to keep to myself. I have just come from Chris Wahman's barber shop, on Main Street. I found a lot of excitement going on in there."

"What was it about?" the *Bulletin* man demanded eagerly.

"A chap had been in there claiming he could make eggs," said the police chief, between chuckles. "He claims that he makes 'em by machinery, and that he's going to open an egg factory right here in Walla Walla."

"That's a queer coincidence," muttered the editor, thinking of the Associated Press dispatch he had just sent to the composing room.

"And the best part of the joke," the chief went on, not heeding the interruption, "is that Chris and all the others in the barber shop believe what this fellow told them. They assured me that they'd seen some of the eggs he made—seen them and tasted them, and that they're fully convinced that his story is on the level. Isn't that rich? Why, it's good enough to put in your paper."

The *Bulletin* man smiled. "Did you see the fellow, Mike?"

"Not to-day. He had left before I dropped into the shop. I know who he is, though. It's that mysterious chap from New York named Gallatin, who's stopping at the Dacres. I've been keeping my eye on him ever since he struck town. The fellow's acted sort of queer, and I've been suspicious of him."

"I guess I'll send a representative to interview him," said the editor. "He may be crazy, or he may have been merely playing a practical joke on Chris and his friends; at all events, what he has to say ought to make a funny yarn."

Half an hour later a reporter from the *Bulletin* called at the Dacres Hotel, and found Mr. Rudolph Gallatin lunching in the grillroom. His repast consisted of bacon and hard-boiled eggs.

"Did you make those eggs yourself, Mr. Gallatin?" the scribe began, stepping up to the table and pointing to the plate, with a grin.

"No, my son; I didn't. These are ordinary hen fruit, but they're almost as good as the kind I turn out. Who are you?"

The *Bulletin* man explained who he was, and the object of his call.

Gallatin frowned. "So it's got to the newspapers, eh? News certainly does travel fast in this town. I didn't intend to make public announcement of my discovery just yet. I preferred to wait until my apparatus was installed here. But that little witch of a manicure girl at the barber shop got me talking before I realized what I was doing. However, since the secret is out, I have no objection to giving you an interview."

"Then you are actually serious about your claim to be able to make eggs?" the reporter asked. "It isn't a hoax?"

"Certainly not. If I were seeking to perpetrate a hoax I assure you I shouldn't come to Walla Walla to try it. The people here impress me as being much too wide awake to be bunkoed."

The newspaper man was obviously gratified by this tribute to his fellow townsmen.

"What is your process, Mr. Gallatin?" he inquired. "Would you mind describing it in detail for the *Bulletin*?"

"I can't very well go into details, my boy. I've got to be careful for fear of imitators. All I can tell you is that my machine is a contrivance which imitates exactly the chemical processes of the hen. Every chemist knows that an egg is nothing more than a complex compound of sulphur, hydrogen, nitrogen, and oxygen. The only problem be-

fore me was to imitate nature in the skillful combining of these component parts. That problem I have solved."

Unconsciously Gallatin had used almost the same words which Doctor Walden had uttered in making his prediction before the Chicago convention of chemists. The reporter, who had read the Associated Press report before leaving the office, was much impressed by this fact.

"You speak of being afraid of imitators. Is not your machine patented?" he inquired.

"Unfortunately, no. My apparatus is not patentable."

"Not patentable?" the reporter repeated in astonishment. "Why not? It's a brand-new invention, isn't it?"

"Well, you see, the machine consists merely of a combination of devices which are not new—various pieces of a scientific apparatus which are already in general use for other purposes. Lawyers have advised me that on account of that I cannot get a patent. Seems mighty unfair, doesn't it? But as it's the law I have to submit to it. All I can do is to guard the secret of my invention so closely that nobody will be able to steal my idea."

"Then you don't intend to let anybody see the machine when it arrives?" the reporter asked suspiciously.

"Oh, yes; I shan't object to people coming to see it. On the contrary, everybody will be welcome to visit my factory and watch the eggs made. But I cannot permit anybody to examine the machine closely, nor can I answer questions as to the details of my process. I shall be obliged to protect myself to that extent. The public can't blame me for that."

"Of course not," the interviewer agreed. "Have you selected a site for your egg factory yet, Mr. Gallatin?"

"Yes; I am going to rent a private house on Catherine Street. I have decided that it will answer my purpose better than a business building. I saw the owner this morning, and came to terms with him."

"Will you employ many people?"

"No; that will not be necessary. I

have engaged two men who were my assistants in my laboratory work in New York and abroad. They are on their way here now. They are men whom I can thoroughly trust. I figure that for the present the three of us will be able to handle the factory between us. Of course, later on, when the business expands, I may be obliged to take on a larger force."

"And you expect to sell your eggs in the local market?"

"I expect to sell my eggs to the whole world, my boy, as soon as my factory is running full blast."

"Excuse me for becoming personal," said the reporter, "but would you mind saying something about yourself? Naturally the *Bulletin* readers will be anxious to get some biographical facts concerning the man who has made such an important discovery."

Mr. Gallatin smiled deprecatingly. "I hate to talk about myself. I am naturally of a very modest disposition. All that I am going to tell you is that I am an American, but have spent most of my life in Europe. I was educated abroad, and received my degree of doctor of chemistry over there."

"So you are a doctor of chemistry!" exclaimed the interviewer. "Would you let me see your diploma?"

Mr. Gallatin stiffened. "I consider that request exceedingly impertinent, young man. Besides, even if I were disposed to grant it, I could not do so. My diploma is in New York. I saw no occasion to carry it around with me."

The reporter returned to the *Bulletin* office in a puzzled frame of mind. "I can't quite make him out," he said to his editor. "I am pretty sure that he isn't a crank. He talks intelligently enough, and appears to be in dead earnest. In view of that A. P. dispatch from Chicago, although I've got my suspicions, I'm not prepared to say that he isn't on the level."

"He's probably a faker," said the editor. "However, the interview will make a good yarn. Write me a column of it, and we'll run it alongside of the report of Doctor Walden's prediction.

Our readers can form their own conclusions as to the legitimacy of Mr. Gallatin's claim to be able to make eggs."

The city editor of the *Bulletin* was not the only person in the Garden City who suspected that Mr. Rudolph Gallatin was a faker. After Chief of Police Mike Davis had got over laughing at what he had heard in the High Class Tonsorial Parlor, it occurred to him that it was more or less his official duty to visit the Dacres Hotel and have a talk with the man who was going to add an egg factory to Walla Walla's industries.

He found Gallatin in the hotel lobby, smoking a fragrant Porto Rico, which had been sold to him for an Havana.

"I hear you're going to make eggs," the police official began brusquely.

"That is my intention, chief. Hope you have no objections," rejoined the other dryly.

"Well, I don't know about that. What's the game?"

"The game!" Gallatin stared at his questioner in pained astonishment. "I am afraid I don't grasp your meaning, chief."

"See here, Gallatin," said the police official sternly, "if it's just a joke on your part, it's none of my business, of course; but if you've got an idea that you're going to work any kind of a flimflam game, I warn you that you'd better not try it in this city. You won't be able to get away with it while I'm on the job."

The egg man shook his head deprecatingly. "Chief, I must say that I am surprised—most disagreeably surprised. If this is the kind of treatment new settlers get here, I wonder that Walla Walla is such a flourishing city."

"New settlers have no reason to complain of the way they're treated in Walla Walla—if they're honest and respectable," was the grim response. "But we've no use for any other kind." The police official looked straight into Gallatin's eyes. "I suppose you're planning to sell shares in this wonderful egg factory of yours, eh?"

"Certainly not. I am planning to sell nothing but eggs."

"But if some rich member of this community wished to invest his money in your business, you wouldn't exactly object, would you?" The chief smiled ironically.

"You are entirely mistaken," Gallatin replied indignantly. "I am not looking for financial backing. I have all the capital I need. I resent these base insinuations, sir. Your tone is very offensive to me. I am a respectable citizen engaged in a reputable undertaking, and you have no right to offer me these gratuitous insults."

The police official shrugged his shoulders. "I am offering you no insults, Mr. Gallatin. If your business is reputable, well and good; but if it isn't—well, I consider it my duty to inform you that Walla Walla has one of the finest penitentiaries in the United States, and there's lots of room inside."

With this grim hint, Chief Davis swung on his heels and walked out of the hotel.

For some time afterward the artificial-egg man sat puffing at his cigar, decidedly glum, and pensive.

CHAPTER V.

THE EGG MACHINE ARRIVES.

MR. RUDOLPH GALLATIN, being a very sensitive man, was so discouraged by the unfriendly attitude of the chief of police and the reporter of the *Bulletin*, that he actually thought seriously of giving up the idea of establishing his egg factory in Walla Walla. He felt strongly inclined to go to some other city where he would be more courteously treated by the local officials and press.

After considerable reflection, however, he decided to remain, and carry out his project. "After all," he mused, "it is no more than natural that they should be suspicious of me. I didn't even have a sample egg to show them. But wait until they visit my factory, and see the eggs come out of the machine right before their eyes. I bet

they'll be ready to apologize for their unjust suspicions then."

He derived a great deal of satisfaction, too, from a news item he saw on the front page of that evening's issue of the *Walla Walla Bulletin*. It was the Associated Press report of Doctor Paul Walden's interesting statement regarding the possibility of making eggs by chemistry. This announcement was a great surprise to Gallatin. He regarded it as a very fortunate coincidence that the world-famous chemist had been inspired to make these remarks at Chicago at the same time that he, Gallatin, was preparing to open his egg factory in Walla Walla. He told himself that Doctor Walden's statement was going to help him a lot in his business.

"The public won't pooh-pooh what that professor says," he reflected. "He's too big a man to be ridiculed. Consequently the public will be prepared to take my eggs seriously, now. Even that chief of police ought to be convinced when he reads this evening's *Bulletin*."

The following day Gallatin's apparatus arrived from New York. There were three large packing cases of it. They were placed on a wagon and conveyed to the private house on Catherine Street, which the artificial-egg man had leased for his factory.

Simultaneously with the arrival of the apparatus came the two men from New York whom Gallatin had engaged to help him run his business. They were swarthy, foreign-looking chaps of almost sinister aspect. They had very little to say even to Gallatin, at least not in public.

They helped their employer lift the cases onto the wagon at the depot, and then accompanied him to the Catherine Street place, where they assisted him to unload the wagon and carry the boxes into the house.

Hearing that the wonderful egg machine had actually arrived, many curious persons flocked to the factory; for, thanks to the notice in the *Bulletin*, and the gossip which had emanated from Chris Wahman's barber shop and the Smart Set Quick Lunch Room, all Walla Walla knew by this time of Gal-

latin's contemplated venture, and was greatly interested. Nobody was allowed inside the building, however. The doors were locked, and all the window shades drawn. Gallatin and his aids went about the task of unpacking the boxes, assembling the various parts of the apparatus, and putting the factory into running order, with the utmost secrecy. A notice tacked to the front door informed all callers that a public demonstration would be given as soon as the egg machine was ready for business, but that until that time no person would be admitted to the premises. But the eager public did not have long to wait. Inside of two days everything was ready. Then Gallatin threw open the doors of his egg factory and invited the world to come and inspect his great invention.

The house which the artificial-egg man had leased was a six-room frame structure of the bungalow type. There were four rooms on the ground floor, and two rooms upstairs. The egg-making apparatus was installed in one of these upper rooms, the entire ground floor being used as an office and shipping department.

The machine itself was a weird-looking affair. Perhaps it is needless to state that, notwithstanding its capacity to lay eggs, it bore no outward resemblance to a chicken or any other kind of fowl. Just what it did look like it is difficult to describe. It was made of metal, glass, wood, and rubber, and was a queer conglomeration of wheels, pipes, valves, retorts, and tanks. It stood about four feet high, and covered a great deal of floor space.

One part of it bore some slight resemblance to an air pump, and another part of it was not unlike one of those patent washing machines which are supposed to enable the housewife to dispense with the services of her washerwoman. From the fact that splashes of plaster were visible on the outside of this particular section of the apparatus, visitors gathered that it was here that the shells of the artificial eggs were formed. They had to draw their own conclusions as to the functions of the

various parts, for the inventor positively refused to explain the workings of his apparatus. He repeated to his audience what he had told the *Bulletin* reporter—that he was obliged to maintain this attitude in order to protect himself against would-be infringers.

But whatever the secrets of its mechanism, there was no denying the fact that the machine could lay eggs with a facility calculated to cause the most zealous of hens to go mad with envy and despair. One of the first persons to visit the egg factory was Miss Spokane Wahman. Gallatin's face lighted up as he caught sight of the pretty manicure girl. He stepped forward eagerly to welcome her.

"This is, indeed, a great honor," he said. "Of all the people in Walla Walla—in the whole world, in fact—there is none whom I would rather see here than you, Miss Spokane."

Although he spoke in a low tone—for there were several other persons in the room—there was so much ardor in his voice, and his dreamy eyes looked into hers so intensely, that, in spite of herself, she blushed.

"Am I in time to witness the first demonstration?" she asked, seeking to turn the conversation into a less personal channel.

"Yes; I was just about to start the machine. I hope you believe that I meant what I said to you just now, Miss Spokane," he whispered. "I can't find words to tell you what a hit you made with me the very first time I saw you. It was a case of——"

"I wish you would hurry up and start the machine," she interrupted. "I am just dying with curiosity to see how it works. Besides, I'm in a hurry to get back to the shop."

The inventor walked over to a table on which were a lot of bottles and a rack of glass test tubes. He mixed some of the contents of several of the bottles in one of the test tubes, and then stepped up to the machine and poured the concoction into a funnel-shaped affair, which protruded from one end. Then he pulled a lever, and the eggmaker started into action.

There was a whirring of wheels, a wheezing sound as though air were being sucked through pipes, and a noise like the buzzing of a giant bee. These weird sounds continued for about four minutes; then, suddenly, a gong clanged, the machinery stopped, and from a brass spout which curved downward an egg dropped into a basket lined thickly on the sides and bottom with cotton batting.

Gallatin picked up the white oval and held it toward the group of amazed spectators. "Behold, ladies and gentlemen, the first henless egg ever laid in Walla Walla," he exclaimed triumphantly. "Now for a few more."

This time he mixed up a much larger quantity of the chemicals, and poured the concoction into the eggmaker. The wheels whirred again, the medley of weird noises was repeated, and presently the eggs began to drop into the cotton batting. Gallatin triumphantly handed them out among his visitors.

"Take them home and try them on your gas stoves," he urged. "Cook them any way you please, except boiling them. I regret to say, ladies and gentlemen, that at present my eggs won't boil successfully; but in all other respects I guarantee them to be just as good as natural eggs."

Then he stepped over to where Spokane Wahman was standing. "Well, what do you think of my machine?" he asked softly.

"It is marvelous," declared the manicure girl, her eyes sparkling. In a half whisper she added: "I think you are the most wonderful man I have ever met."

CHAPTER VI.

HIS RIVAL.

THE fame of Mr. Rudolph Gallatin and his egg factory quickly spread. The local correspondents of the news agencies and of the papers of the big cities telegraphed accounts of the invention to their home offices. Soon the press of the entire country—of the whole world, in fact—was talking about Walla Walla's wonderful eggs. Some newspapers treated the matter face-

tiously, and accused Gallatin of being a charlatan and a faker; others discussed the new eggs with the utmost gravity, and hailed their inventor as a public benefactor, who was going to solve the problem of the high cost of living.

Although it had been announced that the manufactured eggs could not, at first, be sold any cheaper than the natural ones, and although, in addition, it was pointed out that Gallatin's creations were no good for boiling, orders and requests for samples soon began to pour in by mail and wire from all parts of the world. Dealers found that the free advertising which the newspapers had given to the novelty had created a big demand for artificial eggs. The curious public wished to buy them, "just to see what they were like."

His correspondence became so heavy that Gallatin found it a physical impossibility to handle it all himself. The two men whom he had brought from New York to act as his assistants were not good at clerical work, so it looked as if he would have to hire a private secretary.

Then it was he made the discovery that, in addition to the trade she followed at the tonsorial parlor, Miss Spokane Wahman could use a typing machine and write shorthand. She had taken a correspondence-school course in these subjects recently, with the idea of quitting the manicure business and getting a place in an office as soon as her uncle could find somebody to take her table at the High Class emporium.

When he heard this Gallatin offered her a tempting salary to come to work for him at the egg factory. Chris Wahman was willing to let her go, and the girl herself was eager. The only person who strenuously objected to the plan was Larry Bradley.

The good-looking young barber was filled with despair when he heard that the girl he loved was going to work for Gallatin.

"Don't you let her do it, Mr. Wahman," he begged his employer. "It's no kind of a job for a refined girl like Spokane."

"Why not?" Chris demanded. "It's a much better job than the one she's got here. He's offering her a bigger salary to start with, and typewriting is considered more dignified than manicuring, although why it should be reckoned so is more than I can tell. Of course, I hate to lose her. The old shop won't seem like the same place without her. But as long as it's for the girl's good I'm not going to stand in her way."

"But is it for her good?" Larry contended. "I don't like that fellow Gallatin. I don't like his looks. There's something crooked about him, I'm sure. And those two foreign chaps he's got working for him look like a couple of cutthroats."

"Hah!" exclaimed Chris impatiently. "You're jealous. That's what's the matter with you. Gallatin is all right. Doesn't he come here regularly every morning to get shaved, no matter how busy he is? He told me, the other day, that he has never in his life shaved himself. I've got respect for a man like that. It shows character. You get busy honing those razors now, young man, and don't worry about my niece. She's a girl that's well able to take care of herself."

Of course, Larry appealed to the girl herself. "I wish you'd stay here," he urged. "It'll be miserable here without you, Spokane." He was diplomatic enough to realize that it would have been indiscreet to try to warn her against Gallatin, although he was really honest in his prejudice against the artificial-egg man.

"For some reasons I, too, shall be sorry to leave here," the girl said. "But the position at the egg factory is a much better job, and I feel that it is my duty to take it."

"But why do you need a better job?" Larry protested. "It isn't as if you're going to be working much longer. Aren't we going to be married soon, Spokane?"

"I think not," the girl replied coldly. "Even if there were no other reasons, you could scarcely expect me to marry a man who is barely making enough money to support himself."

"But I'm going to make enough money to support both of us before long," he urged. "You just wait until I've saved up enough to quit the barber business and buy that chicken ranch we've talked about so often, Spokane."

"I'm afraid that dream of yours is over, Larry," said the girl, with a pitying smile. "Mr. Gallatin's egg factory is going to put the chicken farmers out of business. Instead of making the fortune you expect, you'll lose your savings if you buy that ranch."

"No, I won't," he asserted doggedly. "He's charging as much as anybody for his eggs, and they're no good for boiling, so why shouldn't we be able to compete with him. I'm not afraid of Gallatin and his egg factory."

"But he's going to cut the price in two later on," Spokane reminded him. "And he is now working on a formula for a new kind of shell, which will make his egg boil just as well as natural eggs. You won't be able to compete with him then."

"Then I'll try something else," declared Larry confidently. "I'll raise alfalfa or wheat; there's lots of money in them, and, thank goodness, they can't make 'em by machinery. Refuse this offer of Gallatin's, Spokane, and stick to manicuring for a little while longer. It won't be very long, now, before I'll be in a position to get married, and——"

"Nonsense!" the girl interrupted sharply. "I'm not going to refuse Mr. Gallatin's offer. I'm going to take the job. And as for getting married to you, Larry Bradley, I don't know whether I'd be willing even if you were to buy a farm. I—I've been thinking that, perhaps, we're not exactly suited for each other. I like you a whole lot, but I—I'm not quite sure that I care for you enough to marry you."

"You didn't feel that way about it before that—before Gallatin came to town," declared the wretched young barber jealously. "I suppose you care for him more than you do for me, and that's the real reason why you want to go to work at the egg factory."

"How absurd!" exclaimed Spokane,

blushing vividly. "See here, Mr. Bradley," she added indignantly, "you've got no right to talk to me like that. Are you daring to insinuate that I'm the kind of a girl that would run after a man? You know very well that it's the position I'm thinking about."

But this angry denial did not convince Larry that she was not in love with the producer of scientific eggs. He had not failed to observe the blush which had come to her face, and he drew his own gloomy conclusions therefrom. His misgivings increased when, a few days after Spokane had entered upon her duties at the egg factory, Gallatin paid a social call, one evening, at the home of Chris Wahman, with whom Spokane resided. Hearing of this visit, Larry was not so simple as to suppose that his rival had gone there to enjoy the society of Mr. and Mrs. Chris.

The next evening he received even a greater shock. Gallatin took Spokane to a show, with her uncle's and aunt's permission. Not to the moving pictures at the Dime or the Arcade, mind you, but box seats at a dollar and a half a piece at the Keylor-Grand Theater, and supper afterward in the luxurious dining room of the Grand Hotel. On several occasions, before the advent of the artificial-egg man, Larry had taken Spokane to shows; but he had entertained her at the ten-cent moving picture houses, or, at the best, had treated her to twenty-five-cent gallery seats at the Keylor-Grand, with a dish of ice cream afterward. Any wonder that he was filled with despair when he learned of the luxury which his rival had lavished upon her? Only the fact that he didn't know how to swim prevented him from hurling himself into the depths of the Walla Walla River.

CHAPTER VII.

EGGS IS EGGS.

ONE of the specialties of the High Class Tonsorial Parlor was—and probably still is—an egg shampoo. This treatment, as its name implies, consists of rubbing the white of a raw egg into

the scalp, an expert having made the discovery that raw eggs have great hair-restoring qualities.

Prior to the arrival of Mr. Rudolph Gallatin in the Garden City, Chris had been using ordinary hens' eggs for this purpose. But since artificial eggs had been brought to his attention he had experimented and had satisfied himself that they were quite as effective as the natural kind for shampooing purposes.

So Chris laid in a supply of Gallatin's brand. Not that they were any cheaper than, nor in any way superior to, hen-made eggs, but they were a novelty, and the High Class, being a strictly up-to-date establishment, always had an eye peeled for novelties.

One morning, about a week after Gallatin had taken Miss Spokane Wahman to the show, a customer came into the barber shop and seated himself in the chair over which Larry Bradley presided.

"I want a shave, haircut, singe, and an egg shampoo," he announced.

"We have two kinds of eggs, sir," said Larry when the other matters were disposed of—"machine-made and hen-made. Which'll you have?"

He scowled as he asked the question. He hated to boost his rival's product. But Chris had ordered him to give all customers their choice, so as to display the resourcefulness of the shop.

"Oh, give me the artificial," the customer responded. "I've got a prejudice against 'em for eating purposes, but I guess they're all right for the hair. Seems a sin to waste a real egg if the other kind'll answer the purpose just as well."

Larry walked over to a cut-glass bowl on the marble counter, which contained both kinds of eggs, and selected one with a plaster shell.

He broke it open. Immediately he did so it became oppressively evident to him, and, simultaneously, to everybody else in the shop, that this particular egg was not like other eggs—not even like other artificial eggs. In other words, it was an egg with an individuality which impressed itself forcibly upon everybody within a hundred yards of it.

"Never mind the shampoo," gasped the customer, tugging at the apron in which he was enveloped. "I've changed my mind. Let me out of here, quick."

"Take it and throw it out in the street," spluttered Chris, addressing Larry. "Be careful, though, not to throw it in front of this shop or the store of one of our regular customers. Put it in the gutter in front of Hooper, the hardware man's, store. He shaves himself with a safety razor."

Larry carefully deposited the disturbance in an empty shaving mug, wrapped a towel around it, and hurried out of the shop. He did not, however, carry out the instructions which his employer had given to him regarding the disposition of the egg which was not like other eggs. Instead of placing it in the gutter in front of the store of the man who shaved himself with a safety razor, he carried it up Main Street, hugging it to his breast with as much ecstasy as if it had been a bouquet of fragrant and beautiful flowers. On his handsome face was a joyous smile—the first that had appeared there in two weeks.

He did not stop until he reached police headquarters. Arrived there, he entered the private office of Chief Mike Davis, and stepped up eagerly to the desk at which that official was seated.

"Chief," he cried excitedly, "I've got something important."

"If you don't take it away immediately," growled the head of Walla Walla's constabulary, rising hastily and throwing open all the windows, "I'll take you before Judge McKinney on a charge of assault."

"Chief," cried Larry Bradley vehemently, "that fellow Gallatin is a swindler, and I can prove it."

"Tell me about it over the telephone," the chief pleaded, going to the window for air.

"I've got the proof right here," the young barber exclaimed, triumphantly waving the towel-enwrapped shaving mug.

"It appears to be pretty strong proof—whatever it is," grunted the police official, beginning to realize that there was

no getting rid of this excited visitor and his exhibit.

"Gallatin's eggs are frauds!" cried the young man, with the frenzy of a fanatic. "His eggmaking machine is a fake! His eggs are nothing but ordinary eggs that were laid by a hen. I've come to demand as a citizen that you arrest that crook."

"You say that his eggs are ordinary eggs," said the chief sharply. "How do you know that?"

"Because I've got one of them right here." Larry started to remove the towel from the shaving mug.

"Never mind uncovering it," cried the other hastily. "It isn't at all necessary. So you call *that* an ordinary egg?"

"Certainly. It's an ordinary, hen-made egg, gone bad."

"How do you know that it isn't a machine-made egg gone bad?" inquired the chief dryly.

"Because," replied Larry joyously, "it's so very bad, chief, that *it's got half a chicken in it*. No machine-made egg could be like that. Let me show you——"

"Never mind," the other interrupted quickly. "I'll take your word for it. You look like a truthful young man. Just place that exhibit on the window sill and close all the windows; then we can talk more freely."

"You're right," said the chief, after his visitor had carried out these instructions. "Gallatin's eggs are fakes. They're nothing more or less than hens' eggs coated with plaster of paris so as to give them the appearance of having an artificial shell. His wonderful egg machine is the most preposterous fraud ever perpetrated in the State of Washington. But if you think you've brought me any news, young man, let me tell you that you're very much mistaken. I've known that such was the case ever since the day he opened his egg factory."

"You have!" exclaimed Larry, in astonishment.

"Certainly. When I heard him make the statement that his artificial eggs

could not be boiled I immediately guessed the answer. They *would* boil all right, if they were kept on the stove long enough, but he was afraid that the hot water would cause the plaster of paris to come off, and the fraud thus be laid bare, so he craftily cautioned the public against boiling them. I got hold of one of the first eggs that he handed out, and boiled it in spite of his warning. As soon as I saw the real eggshell beneath the plaster I knew his secret."

"You knew this all the time, and yet didn't arrest him or stop him from going ahead with his swindle!" exclaimed Larry reproachfully. "I am surprised at you, chief."

"Are you, really? Well, maybe you wouldn't be so surprised, young man, if you were to stop to think for a minute. You say you want Gallatin arrested. Perhaps you'll tell me on what charge?"

"For swindling, of course; obtaining money under false pretenses."

"How was he obtaining money under false pretenses?"

Larry looked his astonishment at the question. "By selling hens' eggs and pretending that he made them," he answered indignantly.

Chief Davis smiled whimsically. "I'm not so sure that that constitutes swindling in the eyes of the law. Suppose a man was to sell you a piece of glass and make you believe that it was a diamond; there's no doubt that you could send him up for that. But suppose he was to sell you a genuine diamond and claim that it was a piece of glass; do you suppose that the judge would hold that he'd done anything criminal? Now, it's the same way with eggs. Gallatin has been selling genuine eggs and claiming that they're imitations; but he doesn't claim that his alleged imitations are better than real eggs. I'm not sure that he's done anything unlawful."

"But why should he pretend that his eggs are imitations?" Larry protested. "There must be something crooked behind it."

"Of course there's something crooked behind it," the other agreed. "That Gal-

latin hasn't been making any profit by the sale of the eggs is evident. On the contrary, he must be losing money, for he has been selling them at cost, and charging nothing for the plaster-of-paris jacket. Yet he must figure that it's going to pay him somehow, or he wouldn't be doing it. He isn't in business for his health, you can be sure; and I don't believe he's doing it for a practical joke. That's why I've been lying low. I wanted to find out just what the game was before I made a move."

"I see," said Larry. "But how long do you intend to wait?"

"Not much longer, I hope. Just as soon as I learn——" Chief Davis was interrupted by the ringing of his telephone bell. He excused himself to his visitor, and went to the instrument. When he returned his face wore a frown.

"I suppose I'd better go around and put that egg factory out of business right away," he grumbled. "It's out of the question, now, to wait until I've got to the bottom of Gallatin's game."

"Why so?" Larry asked.

"Because the *Bulletin* is going to print an exposé of his fake-egg machine in its next issue. The editor just called me up to tell me. They've had the story in type for days, but, as a favor to me, they've been holding it until I was ready. Now they say they can't wait any longer. They're afraid of some other paper springing it first." The chief reached for his uniform cap. "Want to come along with me and interview Mr. Rudolph Gallatin?" he said to Larry.

And the latter accepted the invitation with great eagerness.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN INTERRUPTED PROPOSAL.

SPOKANE WAHMAN sat at her desk at the "egg factory," typewriting a letter to a big department store in New York, which had telegraphed an order for ten crates of artificial eggs to be shipped immediately. She wrote:

DEAR SIR: Replying to your wire we regret to say that it would be impossible for us to ship you any eggs until the end of next month. Our factory is now being worked to capacity filling orders already on hand, and we find it out of the question to take care of any new business at present.

Spokane did not have to consult her stenographic notes in order to write this letter. She knew its form by heart. She had written hundreds of letters of similar import since she had come to work at the egg factory.

A puzzled frown creased the girl's smooth brow as she took the page from the typewriter. She could not understand her employer's business methods at all. It seemed to her that he was deliberately turning down orders which need not have been turned down. For, being a bright and observant young woman, she had not failed to note that the egg machine was not being worked to capacity at all. On the contrary, it was idle for long stretches each day. It was only at intervals—mostly when visitors came to inspect the factory—that Gallatin's noisy apparatus became active.

Not that Spokane ever went to see the machine work. Her desk was on the ground floor of the private residence which Gallatin had converted into a factory, and she never had occasion to go upstairs to the room in which the eggs were manufactured. But she could hear when the machine was working, and when it was inactive, for the weird sounds it made when in motion penetrated to the room which Gallatin had fitted up as an office.

There was another sound, too, which sometimes reached her ears as she sat at her typewriter? This was a faint rumbling which seemed to come from beneath the house. She observed that this sound always came when the egg machine was in action, and at no other time; but she was quite sure that it did not issue from the room upstairs in which the egg making apparatus was installed.

Once she had questioned Gallatin about this mysterious noise, which seemed to come from below the house, and he had laughed and told her that

it was caused by the vibration of the machinery upstairs. She had observed, though, that her question made him nervous and uneasy. He seemed much provoked to find that her ears were so sharp.

These things would have worried Spokane; she would have felt sure that something very irregular was going on at the egg factory, if she had not had such faith in her employer. Every day she became more and more convinced that a man with the "lovely personality" of Mr. Rudolph Gallatin could not possibly do anything wrong.

"But it's very queer about those orders," she said to herself, now, as she finished the letter to the New York department store. "I wonder why he writes to tell everybody that he can't supply them with eggs when he ought to be glad to take advantage of this rush of business."

As she sat musing at her typewriter, Gallatin came into the room. His eyes lighted up as he caught sight of her pretty face. He stepped eagerly toward her desk.

"Little girl," he said ardently, "you look very charming to-day—even more so than usual. Do you know that you make more of a hit with me every time I see you!"

"Mr. Gallatin," she returned, "do you know that if you are going to talk to me like that I shall have to hand in my resignation? Have you forgotten your promise?"

"I want you to hand in your resignation," he rejoined. "I know I promised your uncle that if he'd let you come to work here I'd never pay you compliments or talk anything except business to you during office hours. But I can't help it, Spokane. I can't wait until after business hours to tell you what's on my mind now. I want you to throw up this job, little girl, because I've got a better one to offer you. At least, I hope you'll consider it a better one. I want you to become Mrs. Rudolph Gallatin."

What answer she would have made to this proposal, the egg man did not have a chance to learn just then; for the conversation was interrupted at this

point by the entry of Chief of Police Mike Davis and Larry Bradley.

"Don't listen to him, Spokane," cried the latter, who had stepped into the room in time to hear Gallatin's closing sentence. "This fellow has no right to talk to you like that. He's a swindler."

"A swindler!" exclaimed the egg man, advancing with much dignity toward his accuser. "You had better be careful, young man. That's not a pleasant name to call anybody."

"It's a name that fits you," Larry retorted hotly. "We know all about your fake eggs."

"Fake eggs!" Gallatin repeated, with a deprecating smile. "Say, chief, is this young friend of yours crazy, or just plain drunk?"

"I don't imagine that he's either," the police official replied dryly. "He's just a little excited by a discovery he made a while ago when he opened one of your eggs."

"Oh, is that it?" said Gallatin coolly. "What was the discovery?"

"He found a chicken in it."

"A chicken!" The egg man laughed incredulously. "You must be joking, chief. I can't believe that my eggs are as wonderful as all that. And yet," he added, staring pensively up at the ceiling, "after all, why shouldn't my eggs hatch? In composition they are exactly the same as natural eggs. I have always contended that some day science would be able to create life by artificial means."

He turned to Spokane, an excited look in his dreamy eyes. "Just imagine, my dear! If these chaps are really serious about that chicken, I have achieved the greatest triumph in the history of science. The name of Rudolph Gallatin will go down through the centuries as the genius who first succeeded in producing life in the laboratory. It is true that Loeb and some other prominent scientists have been making experiments in the same direction, and claim to have succeeded in producing by chemistry the eggs of the sea urchin. But their success is open to doubt. Anyway, what is their achievement

compared to mine? Even if their claims be true, they have produced only the eggs of the sea urchin—the lowest form of animal life, while I—I, Rudolph Gallatin, have made an egg which can be hatched into a chicken. Ah, what a feat!"

Chief Davis laughed ironically. "Gallatin, you're immense. Old Doctor Cook was a piker compared to you. But if you think you can get away with that bluff, you might as well come out of your dream. That egg was a cold-storage egg. The only part of it that you made was the plaster-of-paris coat you placed over the ordinary shell. And that's true about every other egg which has come out of this fake factory."

CHAPTER IX.

MR. GALLATIN EXPLAINS.

GALLATIN started to protest, but the chief of police silenced him with a peremptory gesture. "Hold on, there! Just listen to what I've got to say, and you'll realize how useless it is to keep up this bluff. I know that your eggs are nothing but ordinary eggs coated with plaster, because I've been experimenting with them by boiling them until the plaster came off and showed the real shell underneath. And, what's more, I know where you got the eggs. I've been watching all those barrels you've been receiving from Dayton. You pretended that they contained the plaster material you made your eggshells of. But I had my suspicions. It struck me that if those barrels contained nothing but plaster, it was kind of odd that they should have been marked 'handle with care.' So I investigated. I learned that you have a friend in Dayton who has been buying a lot of eggs lately—ordinary hens' eggs. I learned that this friend of yours has been packing these eggs in barrels and shipping them to Walla Walla, consigned to Mr. Rudolph Gallatin, of Catherine Street. I learned that——"

"I guess that's sufficient, chief," Gallatin broke in, with a grim laugh. "You've told me enough to convince

me that my wonderful egg machine has outlived its usefulness. As you rightly remarked, it would be foolish on my part to attempt to keep up the bluff any longer, under the circumstances."

He turned with a deprecating smile to Spokane. The girl's face was very white.

"Then it's true?" she faltered. "You really are a swindler?"

"That's a harsh word," protested Gallatin. "Chief," he inquired anxiously, "are you aware of the motive which inspired me to attempt this merry little hoax?"

"I can't say that I am," the police official replied candidly. An expression of relief flitted across the egg man's countenance. "But," Davis added, with a frown, "don't try to make me believe that you did it for a joke; because that won't go. I am quite certain that you expected to make money by your daring fraud."

Gallatin laughed almost jauntily. "You are quite right. I did expect to make money—big money. I don't mind admitting that if my scheme had gone through all right it would, in all probability, have made me a multimillionaire. Little girl," he went on, addressing Spokane, "please don't look so shocked. I have committed no crime. There was nothing wrong in what I attempted to do."

"Nothing wrong!" the girl cried scornfully. "You have just admitted that you were trying to work a swindle which, if it had succeeded, would have made you a millionaire."

"Not a swindle," Gallatin protested. "I object to the use of that word. My scheme was perfectly legitimate. All that I was trying to do was to establish a corner in eggs."

"A corner in eggs!" Spokane repeated, with a perplexed frown which was reflected on the faces of Chief Davis and Larry Bradley.

"Yes; I was trying to get control of the world's supply of chickens," Gallatin explained. "Don't you grasp the idea? It is really very simple. My plan was to throw a scare into the raisers of poultry by making them believe

that eggs were being turned out by machinery. I figured that when they heard about my egg factory they would be eager to sell their chicken farms at a sacrifice, fearing that the hen was doomed to become as much of a back number as the horse has been made by the automobile. Then, of course, it was my intention to send out agents all over the world to buy these poultry ranches at a bargain."

"But it would have required a tremendous amount of capital to do that," exclaimed Spokane, her eyes wide with wonder.

"It certainly would," Gallatin agreed, smiling. "But I have all the capital I need. Two of the biggest men in Wall Street have been backing me in this project. They were shrewd enough to realize what a paying game it would be. For with the world's supply of chickens in our control, it would have been an easy matter for us to boost the price of eggs to any figure we desired."

"And make the cost of living even higher than it is already!" exclaimed Larry Bradley indignantly.

Gallatin shrugged his shoulders. "Business is business, my gloomy young demagogue. We big financial operators cannot afford to be sentimental. At least," he corrected himself, as his gaze rested upon his stenographer's pretty face, "we cannot afford to be sentimental so far as the general public is concerned."

"Spokane," cried Larry tensely, observing the blush that came to the girl's cheeks as her eyes met Gallatin's ardent gaze, "surely you can't have any use for this fellow after what you have just heard? Just think what would have happened if his infernal scheme had gone through! Think of eggs being so high in price that only the rich could afford to buy them. Think of the poor having to go without cakes and custards! Men like this fellow are worse than murderers. I hope you feel that way about it, Spokane."

"Well, I don't know," the girl answered thoughtfully. "After all, as he says, business is business. While it seems heartless for anybody to try to

raise the price of eggs, I suppose things of that sort are being done every day in the business world by perfectly honest and respectable men. Anyhow, I am glad to find that Mr. Gallatin is not a swindler."

The look which she bestowed upon the egg man as she said this almost broke Larry Bradley's heart.

CHAPTER X.

A PURCHASE OF EGGS.

THE scene now changes from Walla Walla to New York City, and introduces Thomas Barry, more frequently referred to among his associates as No. 88. Barry was a stockily built man of middle age, with a pair of keen eyes and a physiognomy which somehow reminded one of a fox terrier. From the fact, above stated, that he was more often referred to by a number than by a name it must not be assumed that he was a convict. On the contrary, far from being a lawbreaker, he was one of the law's most zealous guardians. He worked for an old gentleman named Uncle Sam, and it was his duty to track down and bring to justice those who sought to rob or cheat his employer.

In the line of these duties, No. 88 became keenly interested in the movements of a certain flashily dressed man of prosperous aspect, who was known to his neighbors as John Broads, although that was not his baptismal name. Like Mr. Barry, Mr. Broads often found it convenient to assume an alias, although their respective reasons for doing so were entirely dissimilar.

So interested was No. 88 in the movements of Mr. Broads that he had been shadowing him persistently for three days. He had found out, already, where the latter lived, how he employed his time, where he spent his money, the social circles in which he moved, and a lot of other information more or less valuable. But No. 88 was not satisfied. There was still certain information concerning Mr. Broads which he wanted, and which, thus far, he had been un-

able to obtain in spite of his persistent shadowing.

On the day that Rudolph Gallatin was describing in Walla Walla his ambitious plan to corner the world's market in eggs, No. 88 was standing outside an apartment house in the upper section of New York, closely but unobtrusively watching the front entrance.

It was a nice-looking apartment house, with marble halls, gilded elevators, and uniformed hallboys; but it was not its splendor which attracted the attention of No. 88. The reason he was so interested in it was because it was the home of Mr. John Broads.

No. 88 had ascertained this fact three days previously. In his quiet, unobtrusive way he had elicited the information from the employees that Broads occupied a three-room-and-kitchenette apartment on the fifth floor; that his wife shared the apartment with him; and that there were no other occupants, not even a maid.

No. 88 had seen the wife. He had called at the apartment the day before in the guise of a book agent to make her acquaintance. It was for her, and not for her husband, that he was watching now. He had made up his mind that the information which he still lacked could be best obtained by shadowing Mrs. Broads.

Pretty soon Broads came up the street, walking with his usual jaunty stride. He was whistling an operatic air, and gayly swinging a gold-headed stick. As he reached the apartment-house entrance he glanced around him in all directions like a man used to being shadowed. But No. 88 had dodged into a convenient doorway on the opposite side of the street, and Broads went into the house without noticing him.

Fifteen minutes later Mrs. Broads emerged from the house. She was dressed for the street, and carried a marketing basket, which she swung ostentatiously by its handle as though she were anxious to have the whole world take notice that she was about to go out and get household supplies.

No. 88 waited until she was halfway up the block, and then he trailed along

behind her. He followed her around the corner to the avenue, and saw her enter a butcher shop. Taking care not to be seen by her, he peered into the doorway and saw her buy two pork chops. These she placed in her marketing basket and then came out.

"It isn't the butcher," said No. 88 to himself, as he once more swung into line behind her.

Mrs. Broads next dropped into a bakery and bought some rolls. Once more No. 88 watched her stealthily from the sidewalk.

"It might be the baker," he mused. "But I scarcely think so. I know that baker, and he's an honest fellow. However, if nothing more promising turns up I'll interview him later on."

The woman proceeded up the avenue a couple of blocks, and then swung into a side street and entered a small grocery.

"This looks more like it," said No. 88 to himself, as he glanced through the window and got a view of the man behind the counter, a swarthy, shifty-eyed fellow of decidedly foreign appearance.

Mrs. Broads made several purchases from this man. From the sidewalk No. 88 watched him weigh out coffee, sugar, and rice, and saw her place the packages in her marketing basket. Then the grocer mounted a stepladder and took a box from a shelf. From this box he drew a half dozen eggs, and handed them to the woman. These, too, she placed in her basket, and, paying for her purchases in cash, walked out of the store.

No. 88 no longer sought to follow her. He waited until she was out of sight, and then he entered the grocery.

"Got any eggs?" he inquired of the man behind the counter.

"Certainly," the latter answered, pointing to a crate of fresh eggs standing in front of the counter.

No. 88 shook his head. "I don't want that kind. I want some of those from that box up there." He pointed toward the shelf.

An anxious look came to the other's shifty eyes. He shot a searching glance at his visitor. "Those are artificial

eggs," he announced. "The new kind which that fellow out in Walla Walla is making."

"That's the kind I want," said No. 88 quietly.

"I shouldn't advise you to take them," the grocer exclaimed nervously. "They cost as much as ordinary eggs, and my customers tell me they're not nearly as good."

"Nevertheless I want them. I'm curious to see what they're like. Let me have a dozen."

The other shrugged his shoulders, and, muttering something under his breath, mounted the stepladder. From the box on the shelf he counted out twelve eggs with plaster-of-paris shells, placed them in a paper bag, and handed them to the customer. The latter took one from the bag and rapped it sharply against the edge of the counter. The plaster shell broke, and what looked like the yolk of an ordinary egg dropped to the floor.

No. 88 appeared to be disappointed. He took another egg from the paper bag and split it open, with the same result.

"Hey! What are you doing?" the grocer growled. "You can't make a mess like that on my floor. Are you crazy?"

"I guess, on second thought, a dozen eggs won't be enough for me," said No. 88 quietly. "I'll take all that's in that box up there. Just lift the box down and I'll help myself."

"There ain't any more in the box," the grocer said nervously. "I gave you all I have, mister."

"Oh, no; you didn't," No. 88 declared pleasantly. "Just bring that box down here and let me see if I can't find some more."

The other's face suddenly became distorted with fear and rage. His right hand went almost spasmodically toward his hip pocket, but before he could draw the weapon concealed there, his visitor had him covered with the automatic gun he always carried in readiness for such emergencies.

Five minutes later the grocer with the shifty eyes walked out of the store in handcuffs, escorted by No. 88. The

latter's pockets were filled with artificial eggs.

Half an hour later Mr. and Mrs. John Broads occupied prison cells adjoining that of the grocer.

Then No. 88 sat down and wrote a message which, although it was in cipher, was so long that it filled three telegram blanks. This message was addressed to the superintendent of the United States secret service office at Seattle, Washington.

CHAPTER XI.

JUST IN TIME.

IN spite of the failure of his egg factory, Mr. Rudolph Gallatin did not hesitate to urge Spokane Wahman to marry him.

"Even though my scheme has fallen through," he pleaded, "I am well able to support a wife in luxury. This egg venture was only one of many irons I have in the fire. Making money comes as easy to me as rolling off a log. If you are afraid that you'll starve if you marry me, little girl, I can reassure you by showing you bank books containing deposits of a couple of hundred thousand dollars in my name. And, in addition to that money, I can draw on my Wall Street friends to any amount up to a million. So please don't turn me down, Spokane, just because this little egg affair of mine has failed. I am a man of ideas, and with a wife like you for an inspiration, it won't be long before I'll be ranked among this country's great multimillionaires."

"It isn't the money," the girl replied. "I wouldn't be afraid to face the future with you, even if you were penniless; for I am confident that a man of your ability can always make a living. But I am not quite sure that I care for you enough to marry you; you have been so deceitful about this egg business. Even though you have done nothing legally wrong, ever since you have been in Walla Walla you have been acting one big lie, and I can't bear a person who tells lies."

"Lies are necessary in business," he replied. "A broad-minded girl like you,

Spokane, ought to realize that. In these days it isn't possible to make a big fortune without deceiving the public."

"But I can't help thinking that a man who would deceive the public would also deceive his wife," she declared severely. "Now, an honest fellow like Larry Bradley——"

"Bosh!" Gallatin interrupted her, with a contemptuous gesture. "Don't tell me, Spokane, that you are hesitating about marrying me on account of that young piker. A girl like you is much too fine for a barber's bride. You were born to be the wife of a multimillionaire, little one, and that's what you're going to be if you'll become Mrs. Rudolph Gallatin."

In justice to Spokane it must be said that it was not so much this alluring prospect as it was the fascinating personality of Gallatin which caused her to weaken. It was difficult for a woman to withstand the influence of those wonderful, dreamy eyes of his, and the almost hypnotic suasion of his voice.

"Give me a few days to think it over," she said.

"I can't. I've got to leave Walla Walla to-night. The collapse of my egg enterprise compels me to return to New York immediately to attend to some important business matters there. And when I leave, little girl, I want to take you with me. Think what a fine honeymoon trip it will be."

"But I must have a few hours, at least, to make up my mind," Spokane insisted. "Come around to the house, this evening, and I'll let you know."

"Very well," assented Gallatin. "But to save time, let's go now and get the license and the ring. That won't bind you, of course, in case you decide to turn me down. Another thing, instead of my calling at the house this evening, to learn my fate, suppose we meet outside the egg factory at seven o'clock. I don't think it would be advisable to take your uncle and aunt into our confidence. Think how much more romantic it will be to run off and get married, and then send them a telegram from New York, informing them that you are Mrs. Rudolph Gallatin."

At seven o'clock that evening Larry Bradley, happening to walk through Catherine Street, saw Spokane meet Gallatin outside the latter's place of business, and shadowed the couple to the home of a local parson. Being a young man of average intelligence, he did not suppose that the couple was visiting the dominie to discuss theology. He strongly suspected that matrimony was the object of their call. Although his soul was harrowed by the thought, he could not for the life of him see how he was going to prevent the knot from being tied. He knew that it would be quite useless to appeal to Spokane. He feared, too, that it would be equally futile to inform Chris Wahman; for, although he surmised that it was an elopement, he knew that, Spokane being of legal age, her uncle would be powerless to stop the marriage even if desirous of doing so.

Nevertheless he decided to adopt the latter course. It seemed to be the only thing that he could do. He told himself that, while Chris had no legal rights in the matter, he might be able to persuade the parson to refuse to perform the marriage.

Larry was hurrying in the direction of his employer's house, the gloomiest young man in the Walla Walla Valley, when he encountered Chief of Police Mike Davis. The latter was accompanied by a keen-looking man who was a stranger to Larry.

"Hello!" exclaimed Davis. "Seen anything of that fellow Gallatin lately?"

The tone in which he asked the question caused a sudden ray of hope to shoot through Larry's heart.

"Yes; I saw him a few minutes ago," he answered eagerly. "I know where he is now. Do you want him?"

"Do we want him!" exclaimed the chief of police excitedly. "Lead us to him just as quick as you can, young feller."

As they hurried toward the parsonage, Davis introduced his companion to Larry and explained briefly why they were so eager to find the artificial-egg man.

Meanwhile Gallatin and Spokane

were sitting on a horsehair sofa in the minister's parlor, impatiently waiting for the parson, who was detained upstairs by a visitor.

At length the reverend gentleman came into the room, smiling and rubbing the palms of his hands together, a mannerism often seen on the stage, but rarely affected by wearers of the cloth in real life.

"Good evening, young people," he greeted them. "Sorry to keep you waiting so long. However, as the saying is, better late than never. I understand that you wish to be married?"

"If you please, parson," said Gallatin. "And you'd be doing us a great favor if you'd rush the ceremony through as much as possible. We have to catch a train."

Just as the minister was turning the leaves of his prayer-book there was a ring at his doorbell, and a moment later three men, brushing past the astonished maid, entered the house and marched into the parlor.

The trio, of course, consisted of Larry Bradley, Chief Davis, and the latter's keen-looking companion.

"I hope we're in time," cried Larry anxiously, not being able to tell from the attitude of the group whether the ceremony was just beginning or just coming to a close. "Spokane, for Heaven's sake, don't tell me that you're already married?"

"Not yet; but we will be in a minute," the girl replied icily. "If you have come with the idea of stopping us, Mr. Bradley, you might as well go right out again."

"Thank goodness we *are* in time," muttered Larry reverently. "Spokane, you're not going to marry this rascal. You don't know what he is. He's a crook of the worst order. That fake egg factory of his——"

"Oh, what's the use of bringing that up again," the girl interrupted. "Really, Larry Bradley, your jealousy is making you ridiculous. Mr. Gallatin is not a crook. His scheme was perfectly legitimate. You know very well what his motive was for pretending that he could make eggs by machinery."

"Yes; I know what his motive was, but *you* don't," the young man declared tersely. He turned to Chief Davis' companion. "Mr. Glover, won't you please tell her who you are, and what you're here for?"

Mr. Glover edged nearer to Gallatin. "I'm a federal officer, miss," he announced. "I've come to arrest this man."

Hearing this, Gallatin shifted his feet and looked longingly toward the door. But he made no further move. He noted that Glover's right hand was thrust in the side pocket of his coat, and, although he could not see it, he knew that the hand held a revolver, the barrel of which was pointed toward him. He knew, moreover, that the federal officer could shoot in that position, without drawing.

"But what's the charge?" Spokane gasped. "Surely Mr. Gallatin was not breaking any law by running the egg factory?"

"I'm afraid he was," Glover replied dryly. "Counterfeiting is regarded by the United States government as a very serious crime, my young woman."

"Counterfeiting!" cried Spokane indignantly. "What nonsense! Do you mean to say that it's counterfeiting to make imitation eggs?"

"It all depends upon what's in the eggs," the secret-service man answered her. "When the imitation eggs contain imitation ten-dollar gold pieces it isn't exactly the pure-food law which has been violated."

CHAPTER XII.

A HINT FROM GALLATIN.

SPokane stared at the secret-service officer in incredulous astonishment. "But Mr. Gallatin's eggs did not contain imitation ten-dollar gold pieces," she protested. "They didn't contain anything except eggs. They were just ordinary eggs covered with plaster."

"Some of them were," Glover corrected her, with a deprecating smile. "But some were just hollow plaster

shells, in each of which he and his confederates placed a remarkably good imitation of a ten-dollar gold piece packed in cotton. Isn't that so, Gallatin?"

The egg man shrugged his shoulders. "If you are so sure, why ask me?" he sneered, turning his head slightly so as to avoid the girl's eyes. "I suppose you've located the plant?"

"Sure," the secret-service man informed him. "And we've got your two confederates locked up at police headquarters, too. They had the stuff all packed, and we nabbed them down in the cellar just as they were starting to carry it away."

"The cellar!" cried Spokane. "Was the counterfeiting plant down in the cellar of the egg factory?"

Glover nodded affirmatively.

"Then that accounts for the queer, rumbling noise I heard so often," said the girl, looking reproachfully at Gallatin, who still studiously avoided her eyes.

This remark appeared to interest the secret-service man. "Were you often at the egg factory, miss?" he inquired.

"Yes; I—I was employed there as Mr. Gallatin's stenographer," the girl answered, a pathetic break in her voice.

"Under those circumstances," said Glover, turning regretfully to Chief of Police Davis, "I'm afraid we'll have to take her, too."

"Don't do that," Gallatin pleaded. "She had nothing whatever to do with the scheme. I'll make affidavit to that. She took the job under the impression that I was running an honest business. She didn't have the slightest idea what was going on in the cellar. I was always very careful to keep her from catching on."

"Then why did you hire her?" Glover demanded incredulously. "It doesn't seem plausible that if she wasn't in on the plot you'd have run the risk of having her around the place."

"There were several reasons," the egg man explained. "In the first place, I had to have somebody to take care of the mass of correspondence that poured

into the egg factory. I was afraid that if I ignored all those letters and telegrams, it would soon arouse suspicion. In the second place, I figured that if I employed a young woman well known in Walla Walla, it would lend an air of respectability to my egg factory. And, in the third place"—Gallatin waved his hand toward the parson and smiled bitterly—"well, I think the fact that we are here now will suggest to you what the third reason was. I beg of you not to arrest the girl. She is absolutely innocent."

Chief Davis and Larry Bradley also interceded for Spokane, both of them assuring the secret-service agent that they knew her to be a young woman of exemplary character.

"All right," said Glover at length; "we'll give her the benefit of the doubt. We may need you later on, though, miss, as a witness against this counterfeiting gang. You'll be willing to testify?"

"If the government calls on me I suppose I'll have to," the girl answered, with a sigh. "I don't think, though, that my testimony would be of much value. As Rud—Mr. Gallatin—has told you, he did not take me into his confidence. He never breathed a word to me that might have caused me to suspect he was a counterfeiter. In fact," she added, glancing sadly toward the egg man, "I can scarcely believe even now that it is true. It doesn't seem reasonable that a gang of counterfeiters would deliberately attract the attention of the whole world toward themselves by making the startling claim that they could manufacture eggs. I can't imagine a man of Mr. Gallatin's intelligence doing anything so foolish."

"Foolish!" Glover repeated, with a laugh. "Gallatin is about as foolish as a fox. His bid for notoriety was the slickest part of the whole scheme. He was wise enough to realize that it is the criminal who shuns attention who is the quickest discovered. The crook who works with a brass-band accompaniment—figuratively speaking—stands much more chance of getting away with it. His neighbors are so

busy listening to the band that they don't pay any attention to what he's doing."

Chief Mike Davis nodded his approval of this figure of speech. "Sure," he acquiesced. "Now, if Gallatin had come to Walla Walla and pretended to engage in some ordinary business the chances are that I would have spotted that counterfeiting plant right off, for I was suspicious of his looks and ways from the first day he struck town. But when he claimed that he was going to make eggs by machine I naturally assumed that the swindle he was going to pull off would be along those lines; consequently it did not occur to me to be on the watch for an entirely different crime."

"Besides which," said the secret-service man, looking half admiringly at Gallatin, "those artificial eggs came in mighty handy as a means for distributing the coins. By shipping the counterfeits disguised as eggs to his agents in other cities, Gallatin himself was running a minimum chance of being caught. He figured that even if any of his confederates were nabbed while trying to pass the counterfeit ten-dollar pieces, the authorities would have hard work locating the source of supply—that they would not think of looking inside the eggs."

"Altogether," he added, "it was a mighty clever scheme—one of the slickest and best organized we have ever been up against. It is a good thing for Uncle Sam that we've got this gang rounded up. In another few weeks they'd have had the country flooded with counterfeit money."

Then he slipped the handcuffs on Mr. Rudolph Gallatin and led him from the room. Chief Davis went along to see that the secret-service man and his captive arrived safely at the local jail. But Spokane and Larry Bradley remained behind in the clergyman's parlor. The girl was weeping pitifully. The young man deemed it his duty to stay and comfort her.

"Spokane," he whispered gently, "I've got some big news to tell you. This afternoon I bought one of the

grandest little chicken farms in the Walla Walla Valley. There's five dozen Plymouth Rocks and three dozen Rhode Island Reds, and a whole lot of little chicks from four to eight weeks old. And the house, Spokane; you ought to see the house. It's the cutest, coziest little bungalow cottage you ever saw. I know you'll be tickled to death with it."

"Will I?" cried Spokane, smiling through her tears. "I'm so glad that you've been able to fulfill your ambition, at last—that is, of course, I'm glad on your account. But, Larry, how did you manage to raise the money to buy the farm?"

Larry Bradley chuckled. "It was that fellow Gallatin who gave me the hint—although, of course, he didn't intend to do so. When I heard him tell that fairy story about trying to corner the world's market in chickens, it suggested an idea to me. I went and saw the man who owns this chicken farm. I offered him half the price he wanted for the place, and I told him that I would pay on the installment plan. He accepted my proposition eagerly. He was glad to sell at any sacrifice." Larry chuckled again. "You see, Spokane, he hadn't heard of the collapse of the egg factory, and he was scared blue by Gallatin's artificial eggs."

The Din of Battle

THE sounds of a battle can be heard far beyond the scene of actual strife. The reports of the guns themselves go far out into space, and can be distinguished a long way from the point of conflict.

Professor W. F. Sinclair says that there is nothing unusual in the hearing of artillery at a distance of sixty miles. The Bombay time guns and salutes are often heard at the northern Mahim, a distance of over fifty miles. The guns are—or were at the time when the observations were made—very modest affairs, old-fashioned twenty-four or thirty-two pounders, loaded with four or five pounds of coarse black powder, not all of which was burnt.

The target practice of the forts and turret ships at Bombay was easily distinguishable from mere salutes and time guns, not merely as a louder sound, but by being felt in the chest when the others could only be heard.

The sound produced by modern powder is probably very different from that of the old black powder, so that an army in action at the present time may be relied upon to make its voice heard. The "din of battle" is not a figure of speech.

Distinguished Examples

WHEN charged with being drunk and disorderly, and asked what he had to say for himself, the prisoner gazed pensively at the magistrate, smoothed down a remnant of gray hair, and said:

"Your honor, 'Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn.' I'm not as debased as Swift, as profligate as Byron, as dissipated as Poe, as debauched as——"

"That will do!" thundered the magistrate. "Ten days! And, officer, take a list of those names and run 'em in. They're as bad a lot as he is!"

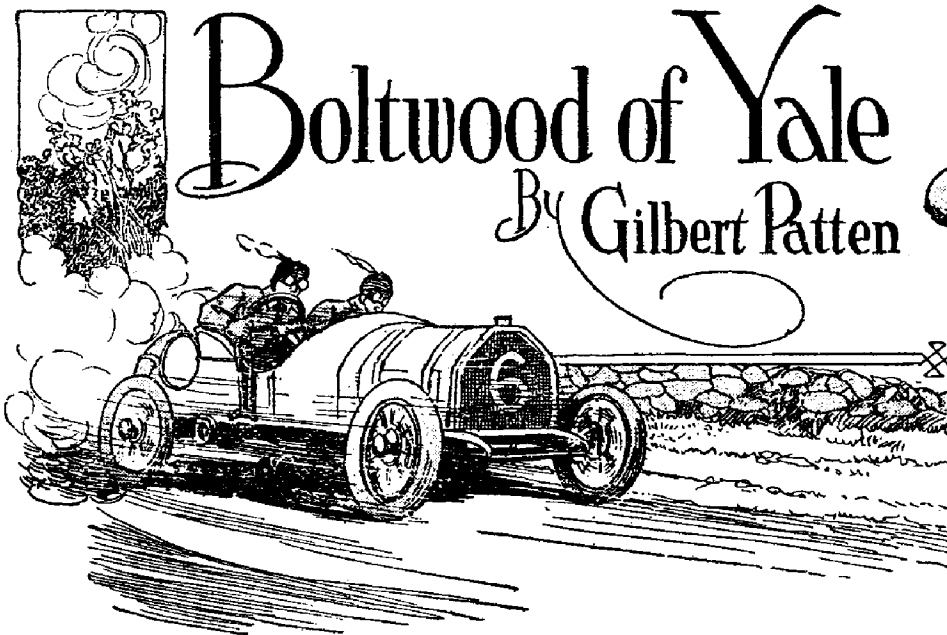
A Pertinent Question

FOR a long time the visitor to the great museum stood gazing at the Egyptian mummy swathed in bandages.

"Tell me one thing," he ventured.

"What is it, sir?" asked the guide.

"Was it a motor or aeroplane accident?"



Boltwood of Yale

By Gilbert Patten

FORMER CHAPTERS.

Read them in this abridged form, then enjoy the rest of the story.

ROGER BOLTWOOD, a Yale student, after many dare-devil escapades with more or less reckless companions, is involved in a serious automobile accident which, although he escapes with slight injuries, proves disastrous for him in the unpleasant publicity which it brings to him and his father, Henry Boltwood, the automobile manufacturer. Roger expects the incident to close with a stern reprimand from his father, but is amazed to find himself suddenly turned out of his home to shift for himself.

Boltwood hires a small lodging in Harlem, and seeks some occupation for the summer months, but finds unexpected difficulties constantly arising to balk him. He has kept his motor cycle, and he starts out early one morning to ride to Bayside, Long Island, to seek the advice of an old friend. On a lonely country road he comes suddenly upon a stalled automobile. An elderly man, sitting in the car, stops him and asks him to help him start the car. Boltwood recognizes the man as Cyrus Keating, the manufacturer of the "Keating Kar," his father's bitter business rival, and the father of Tom Keating, a Yale man whose enmity Boltwood incurred in a quarrel over a card game.

Boltwood shows his knowledge of motor cars in the manner in which he repairs Keating's car, and the elderly man tells him that if he will drive the car to Dempford for him, he may give him a job as a chauffeur.

On the way to Dempford, Boltwood beats a Ranco racing car in an impromptu road race, and wins the admiration of Cyrus Keating. Keating tells him of his fears that there is a conspiracy to make the Keating racer lose the race for the Traymore Cup,

and Boltwood proposes that he employ him as driver in the race. He confesses that he is the son of Keating's business rival, Henry Boltwood, and Keating declares that he would not dare employ him, despite the fact that Boltwood's father has disowned him.

On arriving at the Keating garage at Dempford, near the race course, they find things in suspicious condition, and Keating discharges his driver and the entire staff of assistants. The disgruntled employees attack Keating, but Boltwood routs them and wins the manufacturer's gratitude and friendship. Despite the angry protests of his son Tom, Keating offers Boltwood the position of driver in the race, and six hundred dollars if he wins.

Matt Shea, a mechanic, is assigned to accompany Boltwood in the race, and all preparations are made, when Henry Boltwood arrives at the Keating garage and forbids his son to drive for Keating. Keating angrily accuses the elder Boltwood of foul play in trying to "fix" the race, and Roger Boltwood announces that he has that day become of age, and that he will drive the Keating car in spite of any protests.

CHAPTER XVI.

TRAGEDY'S DARK WING.

THE hour had come. The minute had arrived. The big Keating racer had been trundled out into the open, and a man stood ready at the starting crank. Roger Boltwood, in leather garments, helmet, and goggles, was pulling on his gloves preparatory to taking

his position at the wheel. The main stand at the starting and finishing line was loaded to its utmost capacity with excited human beings, who now seemed hushed for the moment with a sort of breathless tenseness.

Cyrus Keating, standing near Roger, pulled out his split-second watch and looked at it. "The Ranco has first position," he said. "They'll send her off in half a minute."

The firing of a manifold-denuded motor came to their ears.

Powers gripped Roger's elbow, and slapped him on the back. "Remember what I've told you, old chap," he said. "You won't have to worry about any cars except the Comet and the Ranco. Don't let any one crowd you on the Bayville double curve, and watch your skidding on the turn beyond Chesterbrook Bridge. Something will happen there to the first careless driver who takes the turn at high speed. Now, go out there and eat 'em up."

The report of a pistol came from the starting point, and instantly the roar of the Ranco's cylinders burst upon the ear like the firing of a machine gun. It was answered by a tremendous roar of human voices sufficient to thrill a mummy. That roar ran away into the distance as the Ranco shot down the long, straight stretch from the starting line.

"Five minutes yet," said Cyrus Keating, "then your turn comes, son."

Roger was as cool as an early April morning. Not by a single tremor, action, or word did he betray any strain upon his nerves. Listening, he heard the second pistol shot, which sent the Silent Hood barking away on the trail of the Ranco.

"The Comet goes next," he said. "She's running out now. Myers will be the man to beat in this race, as far as drivers are concerned. He doesn't know what fear means."

The Comet was off on the moment; then followed the Morgan and the Prince. While the crowd thundered its encouragement to the driver of the fifth car, the Keating started forth to take its position. Never in all his remembrance

had Roger Boltwood felt more elated, more filled to the brim with the joy of life, yet his apparent calmness amazed even the mechanic at his side.

The hoarsely shouting spectators grew silent as they surveyed the youthful driver of the car that had rolled into position for the start. From out of that silence came from somewhere a voice Roger could not mistake:

"You're der candy kid, Bolt! Go after dat bunch of lemons, and put 'em to der mat!"

"Suggs!" thought Roger, ready to let in his clutch, ready to punch open the accelerator. "Suggs, the pug—a real man!"

The starter's hand went up, the sun glittering on the pistol. Roger meshed his gears, and was ready for instant action. The pistol spoke, and the grip of the clutch, let in instantly, caused the Keating to jump forward, its cylinders spitting fire with a sudden tremendous roar. With a double movement Roger went through the gears into direct drive, and reached racing speed thirty seconds after leaving the line. Such a leap into action was, of course, a tremendous strain on the car, but the Keating had been built for just such treatment, and nothing gave way. It was afterward remarked by many spectators who watched Boltwood's "get off" that no racing driver with years of experience had ever done the trick with more unflinching certainty or in handsomer style. Down the long, straight road, shining black with oil, the roaring, throbbing racer went tearing in pursuit of its valiant rivals.

Trees, fences, houses, and lines of shouting people seemed rushing backward on either hand. There was some vibration to tell that the blazing engine was doing its work with a full, high flood of life, but the sensation quickly became that of skimming along above the road and barely touching it now and then. A tremendous wind rose, and beat into the faces of Boltwood and Shea. The miles were put behind them at the speed of the fastest express train.

First came the Chesterbrook Bridge, with the dangerous curve beyond it, and

Shea, preparing to throw his body far out as a balance weight, wondered if they would take that curve or go tearing through the fence on the outer side to climb the bank beyond.

The bridge gave back a "roop" as they shot over it. They were on the curve, and the mechanic, holding fast, and thrusting himself far toward the inner side of the road, realized that they skidded.

How to skid at great speed without a spill or a smash is an art which every racing driver must acquire. He must be prepared to do the right thing when he skids at unexpected times, and he must look forward to almost certain skids at known places on the ordinary course. Roger had expected to skid on that turn, and therefore he was fully prepared when the thing happened. A driver of less skill, hitting the spot at a speed not exceeding fifty miles an hour, would doubtless have whirled completely round, and found himself heading the other way; or, if less lucky, would have side-swiped the fence and turned turtle. When neither of these things happened, Shea, swinging back to his seat, felt his confidence in Boltwood rise one hundred per cent.

"Good work there!" thought Shea exultantly. "The old man said he could drive. I'm beginning to believe it. If he makes the Bayville double without accident this time, I'll be ready to ride with him through anything."

Almost before they realized it, they were ripping through the roped-off and guarded main street of a little town, upon which, during the time of the race, no vehicle of any sort save the racing cars would be permitted. The open windows of the houses were choked with human beings hanging out and shrieking at them. Other human beings had found places of vantage on roofs and in trees. Telephone poles bore people clinging like leeches to the iron climbing spikes.

In a twinkling they were again in the open country. Then came the Bayville double curve, where Shea threw the weight of his body first to one side, then to the other, as far as he could with-

out interfering with the driver. To the mechanic's astonishment and admiration, they scarcely seemed to skid at all as they made that S-like twist.

"You're the goods, old man!" shouted Shea, his voice unheard by Roger above the roaring of the motor and the shriek of the air. "Let her go!" And Shea was regarded by those who knew him well as a cold-blooded, unemotional Irishman, something of a human paradox.

Forty miles they covered, and came tearing like a tornado over the starting line for the second round of the course without even glimpsing any other car. Behind them two more racers had started, but Roger did not fear that either the Echo or the Calvin would overtake him. The Prince was ahead, having got off only one minute in advance of the Keating, and in that forty miles the latter had not overtaken No. 5.

On the second lap Boltwood went out with the intention of setting the Prince back a notch before he came round again. Suddenly, as they swooped through a small grove, and almost bounded over a tiny hill, Roger saw the car he was after. It seemed, almost, that the Keating saw the other racer, for it spurted as a mettlesome horse spurts upon a track. In short order Boltwood could taste the light dust picked up by the whirling wheels of the Prince. Into it he forged, and alongside. Just before Chesterbrook Bridge was reached the Prince dropped behind.

"One of 'em!" counted Shea. "Four more to get. We'll get 'em."

They took the curve beyond the bridge even better than they had on the first lap, and Roger went out in search of No. 4, the Morgan. Just before entering the little village they roared past the Morgan, held up by tire trouble.

"Now it's the Comet!" yelled Shea, the words torn from his lips by what seemed to be a raging wind.

The Comet! Roger knew the Comet had got away in third position, and he felt a deep thrill of joy as he yearned for the struggle that should decide whether the Comet or the Keating had

the most speed. At every opportunity, when he dared lift his eyes on a straight stretch, he looked for the Comet, but not until they had entered the last ten miles of the second lap was he rewarded by perceiving a little swirl of dust and the rear end of a flying car.

Shea worked the oil pump. "Get her!" he shrieked, all his reputed stolidness swept away by the blood-firing thrill of it.

It was fairly in front of the packed main stands that Roger fought it out with the other car. At the starting line they were practically side by side, and the shrieking, goggle-eyed multitude of human beings went crazy with enthusiasm.

"Got you!" was Roger's muffled cry, as he perceived that the Keating was creeping into the lead despite every effort of its rival. "This settles the question as far as you're concerned, barring accidents."

But when he had forged past, Shea leaned close, and yelled into his ear:

"The Hood—the Silent Hood!"

It was not the Comet, after all. In that eighty miles the Comet had passed car No. 2, the Silent Hood, and was now in second position, unless it had passed the Ranco also.

Before they again arrived at Chesterbrook Bridge they came crawling up on three other cars, which were bunched in a remarkable manner—crawling up at a speed of more than seventy miles an hour! Two of the cars were fighting it out like demons, while the third hung on close behind. That third Roger perceived was the Calvin, which, starting as No. 8, had therefore fallen back in the race. Just now, however, the Calvin was sticking to the two leaders in a way that proved her to possess speed, if nothing else.

Over the bridge they leaped, and the Keating engaged the Calvin on one of the most dangerous places of the course, the slippery curve.

The Calvin had the inside, and Roger attempted to shoot past. They struck the curve, and in a twinkling the Calvin was forcing the Keating up against the outside fence.

Catastrophe rose and grinned. Disaster reached out its deadly hand for Boltwood and Shea.

Roger was forced to shut off all power, for he dared not apply the brakes. The Calvin skidded across with her rear wheels missing the front wheels of the Keating by barely a foot.

Shea swore roundly. Not a sound came from Boltwood's lips, but his jaws were set, with the muscles standing out taut and hard upon them.

Having foiled the Keating's attempt to pass at that curve, the Calvin shot ahead, and opened up the distance between them. Roger took after it, and did his best to get by before the Bayville double curve was reached. He gained a little steadily, but far too slowly to accomplish his purpose; and almost together, after swooping through Mapleton, they entered the double curve.

Here again tragedy hovered and threatened. Here again the Calvin—without skidding this time—forced Boltwood to relax a little or be smashed. Even while his mind and his hands were occupied in handling the powerful racer, Boltwood thought of something that added to the boiling heat of his blood.

Inadvertently, a week or two before leaving home, he had become aware of a fact carefully hidden from the general public. He had learned that negotiations were being made quietly for a consolidation of the Comet and the Calvin concerns. The Comet had a car of both stamina and speed; the Calvin had speed, but had never stood up under abuse. Roger had wondered why his father cared to make such a consolidation, but now, recalling the statement of Cyrus Keating that the Comet Motor Car Company needed more capital, a sudden light dawned upon him. The people behind the Calvin concern were powerful in the financial world, and a consolidation with them would bring to Henry Boltwood and his associates all the ready money they could possibly require.

"Still," thought Roger, "I don't want to believe that my father would be con-

cerned in any arrangement by which the Calvin would foul the Keating to give the Comet a better chance to win this race. He wouldn't do it. But Christy—Christy might!"

Like a bulldog he had hung close to the Calvin through the double curve. Beyond it he saw his opportunity. The troublesome car, seeking to bother him, had forged to the outside of the course. The inside was opened wide, and into the gap Roger drove the Keating, forcing her to the last notch. Before the Calvin driver was aware of it, the Keating was alongside.

That settled it. The Calvin held on for a few minutes, but found it impossible to keep up the pace. Slowly she dropped behind.

The Ranco and the Comet were still fighting it out only a short distance ahead. Suddenly the Ranco wobbled, and its pace slackened. A tire had blown out, and as the Ranco stopped for repairs the Comet went flying into the lead.

"You'll be eating my dust inside of twenty miles, at most," decided Roger.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE AWFUL HAZARD.

THE speed-mad thousands were howling like lunatics as the two mighty racing cars fought it out past the main stands, and went thundering into the long, straight stretch beyond. Whatever could be said of Myers, who drove the Comet, he was at least an honest racer, with no desire to win at the cost of a rival's life. He had a slight advantage, but he gave the Keating every chance upon that stretch.

For a time it did not seem that Roger could pass, but he knew he must pass before the Chesterbrook curve was reached or drop behind. Delicately, and with the highest and rarest sort of judgment, he manipulated spark and throttle. A hair, only a hair of change, then he saw that he was gaining. Myers tried for more speed and failed. When Shea attempted to shout for joy, the cry was driven back into his throat by

the rushing wind. Little by little the Keating crept past. A foot, a yard, two yards she forged into the lead. When Chesterbrook Bridge was reached she had two good car lengths.

They struck the curve too hard, but Boltwood's steady nerves and wonderful judgment saved them, and they left it behind still on their wheels, with everything working perfectly. Roger knew he had first position; the task was now to hold it.

On the second sweep of the Bayville double curve he caught a glimpse of the first tragedy of the day. The Echo was piled up at the roadside, having left the course, cut down a tree, and wrapped itself in shattered fragments around another. A crowd had gathered around it, and some foolish ones were on the road, but Roger got past without hitting any one.

Not until the race was over did he learn that the Echo's driver had been instantly killed, while the mechanic had marvelously escaped with only a few scratches.

Like a man of iron Boltwood drove, wondering if anything would happen to the Keating, and beginning to believe that nothing would. He lost all track of the laps, and not until he again came upon the Calvin was he bothered.

This time the driver of the Calvin proved his foulness, as well as his folly, by crowding Boltwood on an open stretch. The thing was done wretchedly, and Roger was forced in a moment to the very border of the road, with his opponent still pushing him over.

There was an opening between some trees, and, as his only chance, Boltwood left the course and shot into it. For a few seconds he was on grass ground, but behind him something had happened; and, twisting, he wheeled sharply to the left, flashed back across the narrow ditch, and regained the roadway.

Yes, something had happened behind him. The treacherous driver of the Calvin had misjudged the course in his mad effort to put the Keating out of the running. Roger had saved himself, but the Calvin, deflected, perhaps, by some

trivial thing, found no clear road when it shot off the course. A tree trunk tore away one of the wheels, and the car went bottom up.

There is a saying that Satan protects his own. In this case the Calvin driver was thrown clear of the wreckage, and simply stunned. The mechanic, partly caught beneath the overturned racer, sustained a broken leg.

To Boltwood many hours seemed to pass, and still he roared on round and round that forty-mile course. He was covered with dirt and grime, until his most intimate acquaintances could not have recognized him. Nevertheless, not for a fleeting breath did his nerve falter, his eye fail, or his steady hands relax.

But he was not to get through without misfortune of any sort. Suddenly he realized that the car was misfiring in one cylinder, at least. It was necessary to do something, and he threw the clutch and crowded on the brakes.

"Plug!" screamed Shea. "Plug trouble, I'll guarantee."

They leaped out. The troublesome cylinder was located in a twinkling, and in another twinkling Shea was twisting out the plug to replace it with a duplicate.

In that brief time Roger took a quick look at the tires. "Good Lord!" he groaned. "The rear left-hand shoe is half flat. It's going down. We've got a puncture, Shea!"

They had ripped the shoe off, found the cause of lost inflation, and were putting on another tire when the Comet thundered past them, and went blazing triumphantly into the distance. Neither spoke. The shoe was made ready, and they leaped back into their positions. The engine fired perfectly when started, showing that Shea had properly diagnosed the trouble.

"Now!" yelled the Irishman, as he worked the oil pump. "Get after the Comet again! We've got to trim her."

"We will!" said Roger.

The Ranco came threatening up behind them before they could get under the highest headway, but, while giving the challenger every fair chance, Roger simply declined to let it go by. They

swooped past other cars limping and helplessly beaten. The race for first position, as the wise ones had predicted, was now wholly between the Ranco, the Keating, and the Comet.

True, the Comet was again leading, but it had started three minutes ahead of the Keating, and Roger felt confident, if no further accident happened to his car, that the machine of the Boltwood Company could not come anywhere near finishing sufficiently far in advance to take first place. The Ranco, with six minutes to make up, seemed to be relegated to third position.

But Roger had no intention, if he could prevent it, of allowing the Comet to finish first, even though it should fail to do so by the necessary lead of three minutes' time. He was driving like a fiend as they raged past the main stand, and there Shea, catching the signal, managed to make him understand that they had entered the last lap of the race.

There were forty miles in which to overtake and pass the Comet.

In the straight stretches Roger pushed the Keating to its last hair notch, and on the curves he let up just barely enough to take them without smashing. Yet his judgment and skill were such that by an eyelash flicker he held to the margin of safety.

Shea swayed his body outward as a balance weight, and pumped oil by turns. Not even when they came bellying out of the Bayville double and caught the Comet's dust did the Irishman betray excitement. It seemed that he had worked off his emotions in the earlier stages of the great struggle, and now he, like Boltwood, seemed a mere mechanical part of the throbbing racer.

Less than nineteen miles lay before them and the finishing line, and the Keating, handled magnificently, was doing its utmost. For a time there was nothing to indicate that they were gaining, but in the last five-mile stretch they began to see through the dust the rear of the Comet. Nearer and still nearer they forged, but still it appeared that the Comet, though beaten for the cup, would finish ahead of them.

Neither Boltwood nor Shea knew

anything of the mad excitement of the spectators who watched them swoop past like a tornado in the effort to cut the Comet down. They were watching the gas tank of the rival car, and seeing it slowly—oh, so slowly!—become plainer and more distinct through the veil of dust.

Less than a quarter of a mile from the finishing point the Comet threw a forward shoe. It wobbled, writhed, bucked, went over!

All the guards at that point of the course were insufficient to restrain some of the madly excited spectators, who immediately leaped out upon the track with the Keating thundering down upon them. Roger saw the movement, and refused to throttle down, hoping to get past before any human being could put himself in peril of being dashed into eternity.

Then suddenly he saw a man rush toward one of the two unfortunate human beings who had been thrown sprawling to the roadway by the overturned Comet. It was his father—his own father—in the path of death!

There was a sharp, instantaneous movement of Roger's steady hands upon the wheel, a perilous swerve of the racer, another swerve that brought it back to the course—and on it went.

"Thank God!" breathed Roger huskily, his face ghastly pale beneath its caking coat of oil and grime.

Over the line he shot, deaf to the mighty plaudits of the leaping multitude hailing him as conqueror from the stands.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GOAL IN SIGHT.

WHEN Roger brought the panting racer to a stop Shea remained calm, and almost without a symptom of emotion he said:

"Pretty good driving, Boltwood."

Looking back, and seeing no other car in sight, Roger turned as quickly as possible on the track, taking the outer left-hand side, and driving toward the stands. His one thought at that mo-

ment was of his father, and now he could feel the nerves quivering in every part of his body.

One of the two limping racers they had passed came hobbling over the finishing line unnoticed and unapplauded. Then the voice of the announcer was heard proclaiming through a huge megaphone:

"The Keating Kar, Boltwood driver, wins first position and the cup."

Once more the great throngs of people sent up a mighty shout. Those in the stands beheld Roger approaching, and, leaning toward him with outstretched arms and flushed faces, they gave him the ovation of a conquering gladiator. He did not seem either to see or hear them. He was thinking of what had happened to the Comet, and how, by an almost infinitesimal margin, he had avoided killing his own father.

All along the front of the stands, as he rode close to give a clear road for any other racing cars that might come up, the crowd bellowed and surged and shouted when he passed. About him, torn from the throbbing bosoms of hundreds of ladies, falling upon his dust-covered shoulders in a perfect storm, rained bouquets of flowers. He had passed the stands when, from out of the subsiding tumult, the voice of the announcer again reached his ears: "Neither the driver nor the mechanic of the Comet is seriously hurt."

From somewhere Powers, his face glowing, bobbed up, and leaped upon the Keating, seizing Roger and giving him a tremendous hug.

"Finest race ever driven!" he cried. "You've won the cup, old fellow—you've won the cup!"

"Have you seen anything of my father?" asked Roger. "Do you know if he is all right? He must have been crazy to rush out onto the track when Myers had that spill. I nearly killed him."

"Nobody was hurt," assured Powers. "Why, Myers wasn't even stunned. His mechanic is cut up some, but he was on his feet, and able to stand in no time at all. Myer's heart is broken. He

was crying like a baby when they carried him off."

"He drove a fair and honest race, which is more than I can say for one other driver at least," said Boltwood.

The guards had surrounded the car to keep the crowd from pulling Roger out of it in their hero-worshiping madness, and, thus protected, he turned from the course and drove slowly to the garage.

Cyrus Keating was waiting there, panting a little from his haste to reach it ahead of Roger. He grasped Boltwood's hand as the young man stepped out of the conquering machine.

"Boy," he said, "you're one of the finest drivers in the world. Nobody who saw you drive to-day will dispute it."

"Thank you, Mr. Keating," said Roger, almost listlessly. "I tried to do my best, and that was all I could do."

"You're tired. You're pale. You're done up. I don't wonder. You must rest at once."

"I don't need rest," said Roger. "I need just a little time to recover from what happened after the Comet turned over."

"You had the Comet beaten, anyhow. When you passed for the last lap I knew you'd win if no accident happened to you."

"We were fortunate," said Roger, "to have so little trouble. We changed only one tire in the race, and a bad plug held us up but a few minutes."

"You had the car that was built to win, and, with you driving, it won in spite of all the crooked schemes to beat it."

Roger had cast aside his gloves, helmet, and goggles. He felt stifled, and he walked out of the garage to get air. Two rods away he saw his father passing toward the Comet garage, accompanied by several other men. Instantly Roger bounded forward.

"Father!" he cried. "Father, I'm so glad——"

The words died on his lips, and his outstretched hands sank slowly, for Henry Boltwood had turned upon him a face so distorted by disappointment

and anger, so repellent and accusing, that Roger was stricken dumb. For twenty seconds, perhaps, the elder man gazed with cold, hard eyes straight at his son; then, without a word, he walked on with his associates.

Roger's splendid shoulders drooped. "He shouldn't feel that way toward me," he muttered huskily. "It isn't right."

He was standing thus when a beautiful girl who had witnessed the rebuff, her face flushed, her eyes full of mingled sympathy and admiration, came up quickly, and placed her gloved hand on his arm.

"You drove a splendid race, Mr. Boltwood," she said, her voice thrilling him when even the plaudits of the multitude had failed. "But I feared you'd be killed, and I prayed—I prayed that you might not."

The color came back into his own face, showing through the mottled splotches of grime and dirt. There was a slight tremor in his voice as he brushed back a lock of hair from his broad forehead, and answered her laughingly:

"It was very good of you to be so interested in my performance, Miss Keating, and the knowledge of it gives me more pleasure than the winning of the cup."

Charlie Randall was escorting her, and even he came up and shook Roger's hand. "It was some race, old sport," he declared. "If I've ever said you couldn't drive—in proper condition to do so—I'll eat my words."

There was, perhaps, the slightest touch of malice and envy in this, but Roger chose to ignore it, and he thanked Randall quietly.

Cyrus Keating, bubbling with satisfaction and enthusiasm like a man thirty years younger, came from the garage, spoke to his daughter, and slapped a hand on Roger's back.

"The cup presentation will be made at once in front of the main stand," he said. "The Calvin, the Echo, and the Comet all failed to finish, and the Prince was disqualified. The Ranco, the Morgan, and the Silent Hood are

reported as following you in the order named. Shea's ready. Get into the car and go out there to receive the cup."

"It will be all over then, I hope," said Roger. "This will be the hardest part of the whole business."

All along the line people hailed him as he drove out to take his position in front of the main-stand box occupied by the chief officers of the racing board. In a sort of trance he bowed his thanks to the renewed thunders of applause which greeted him.

Next he realized that, standing in the front of the box, almost within arm's reach of him, Maxwell Traymore was making the presentation speech. The cheering had ceased, and gaping thousands were straining their ears to hear and their eyes to see. A huge floral piece, fashioned to spell the words "Cup Winner," inside a massive horseshoe, was passed out and received, Shea taking charge of it. Then, after a few more words, came the cup, the sight of which set the people cheering again as it was passed down.

The sound of their voices died away, and Roger, knowing what he must do, rose and replied with a few clear, distinct, modest words. Afterward to save him, he could not have repeated even the gist of what he said. But always he would vividly remember how the scene around him seemed to fade and melt and change, until in that supreme moment of his triumph he appeared to be looking upon an elm-shaded campus surrounded by dormitories with which he was familiar; a campus thronged with happy, purposeful students, himself one of them, back again—back at Yale!

CHAPTER XIX.

MARTIN PHILBIN.

ROGER BOLTWOOD had hoped to reënter New Haven without encountering any of his former associates. He was beginning to congratulate himself on his luck in dodging the small mob at the railway station, waiting to greet returning chums, when he nearly ran down little Larry O'Leary.

"Careful, careful!" expostulated the beaming little Irishman, grabbing him with both hands. "You're not driving an automobile now, and you've got to have some consideration for pedestrians when you're afoot. Say, old man, I'm mighty glad to see you. Storrow, Conklin, and Bernfield are here already. You know somebody said something about your not coming back. I didn't believe it. I told them you'd be here with bells on."

"I'm here," smiled Roger, "but I've cut out the bells. No big noise for me."

"S'matter, pop? I've lately heard rumors and hints at rumors, but in these degenerate modern days one can hear anything except the silvery voice of truth. You know truth is said to lie in the bottom of a deep well. Huh! it's my opinion she was drowned long ago. It can't be that you're——"

"It can be," interrupted Roger promptly. "It is. I am. Never mind the harrowing details. Pardon me if I shrink at displaying the hideous family skeleton. Suffice it that I'm back here, sails close-hauled to the wind, and evidently a long-time passenger on the good ship Economy. Got to cut out former giddy pleasures, come to earth, and compass my course along the lowlands."

"You're joking, Rog. Some duck said you'd actually had to get out and work. Said you'd been forced to drive a racing automobile for money. I withered the foolish mutt with my scorn."

"Next time you'd better save your scorn for legitimate use, Larry. I'm back here by the skin of my teeth, and, to stay, I've got to live as cheaply and carefully as possible. Already I've sent notice that I couldn't take the rooms they were holding for me in Vanderbilt. A modest dormitory for mine, and rooms shared with some economical chap. I don't suppose you know the man I'm looking for?"

Larry giggled, as if regarding the whole thing as a joke. "Lemme consider," he said, touching his temple with the tip of his index finger. "Now, there's Philbin, who used to sling hash

last year in a night restaurant. Philbin has handed me many a juicy hot dog. Philbin is poor, worthy, persevering, and ambitious. I believe he's come up a trifle in the world this year. Dame Rumor hath whispered in my ear that Philbin has actually taken a couple of rooms in Lawrence. Doubtless he'd be willing to share those rooms and the expenses with one Roger Boltwood, late high roller and general good fellow, forced to retrench and travel at a slower pace because of heavy financial reverses. Oh, say, you and Mart Philbin would make a hot team—you sure would!" O'Leary finished by choking with laughter over the mental picture of Roger Boltwood and Martin Philbin as roommates.

"Thank you, Larry," said Roger quietly. "Perhaps I'll look this man Philbin up. So long! See you later."

As Boltwood swung off up the street, carrying his grip, Larry stared after him, scratching his head in a puzzled way. "He didn't take a cab. That's odd. He didn't even take a street car. That's odder. Never knew him to walk to save cab fare, and as for doing it to retain a miserable nickel in his jeans — Oh, blazes, never! He must be needing exercise. Still, Boltwood walking—for exercise 'Tis passing strange."

O'Leary would have been flabbergasted had he followed Roger, seen him leave the hand bag with a friendly cigar-counter clerk near the college buildings, and proceed from the cigar store direct to Lawrence, where he made inquiries for Martin Philbin. Crossing the campus with a firm stride, Roger cast just one sidelong glance toward beautiful Vanderbilt.

"Farewell!" he muttered, with a grim smile. "Farewell to you and to all the joyous follies that came into my life with you."

A few of the early arrivals had gathered in a little knot near the fence, where they were exchanging greetings and gossip. Roger was aware that one of the group called the attention of the others to him, and that nearly all of them looked in his direction; but by no

outward symptom did he betray this knowledge.

At Lawrence, Josh, a colored man, told him where to find Martin Philbin. Following directions, he knocked at a door that was standing slightly ajar, thus permitting his ears distinctly to hear the softly whistled strains of "Annie Laurie" coming from the lips of some unseen person in the room.

The whistling stopped instantly. "Come in!" called a voice.

Roger pushed the door open, and stood on the threshold facing a tall, well-built, somewhat spare young man, who greeted him with a quizzical smile and an odd lifting of one eyebrow. In a twinkling Boltwood decided that he rather liked the chap.

"Are you Martin Philbin?" he asked.

"Sure as death and taxes," was the genial answer, made in a pleasant, musical tone of voice. "I'm Martin Philbin, but what the dickens Roger Boltwood wants of me I can't guess."

"You know me, then?" said Roger, stepping inside and surveying the rather poor study, as well as glimpsing the uncurtained alcove bedroom.

Philbin laughed, showing his splendid teeth. "I reckon 'most everybody knows you around here. Couldn't very well help it, you know, for you were always getting into the limelight. 'There he goes. Yes, that's him. Rog Boltwood, old Hen Boltwood's son. Father reeks with money. Oh, he's some spender, believe me! And when he cuts loose—say, give him a clear track! That's the way they talked, so how was a man to help knowing you by sight, Boltwood?"

Roger's face burned. "Thank you for the frank manner in which you have permitted me to see the light in which I was regarded, Philbin. Doubtless there was reason. It's a good thing for somebody to hold the mirror up to a chap now and then. You've taken these rooms, have you?"

"Yes," answered Philbin proudly. "I managed to sleep and exist, when I had to, in a basement hole last year, but no more of that for me. I've had a little streak of luck, and now I'm going to try

to live like a gentleman and a student, even if my suite isn't located in Vanderbilt or some other swell dormitory."

"These rooms could be made fairly comfortable," said Roger. "They're not so bad, and you get a bit of sun in the morning. That's fine."

"Oh, I'll pick up some more things now and then as I can afford it," said Philbin. "I know I need rugs and chairs and portières and pictures, and some lace curtains at the windows wouldn't be bad, either. But I'm no millionaire's son, like you, Boltwood, and so I can't afford to do everything at once."

"I've got a load of stuff in storage that wouldn't go badly in these rooms," said Roger. "I've got the curtains, the rugs, the chairs, and a corking good study table, not to mention pictures and knickknacks. What do you say if I move in such truck of mine as will go well here, Philbin?"

Again the young man lifted one eyebrow in that odd manner, at the same time pursing his lips like one about to whistle, but remaining silent as he surveyed the visitor with puzzled, questioning eyes.

"I couldn't begin to get all my truck in here," said Roger, "and we wouldn't need it, either. What we didn't need I could sell, perhaps, to fellows who might want it."

"We?" breathed Philbin. "What *we* don't need? Did I get you right, Boltwood? If I did, what's the play, if you don't mind putting me wise?"

"I thought," said Roger simply, "you might like to have some one share these rooms and the expenses with you, that's all."

Three times Philbin tried to speak, and he ended by dropping on a chair and bursting into a shout of incredulous, almost derisive, laughter.

"Go away, Boltwood!" he managed to say at length, limply waving Roger off. "You can't put anything like that over on me. You looking for a chance to room with some poor slob in Lawrence! You, the prince of high rollers, with a suite in Vanderbilt!" Then of a sudden it seemed that he viewed the

matter in quite a different light, which promptly banished the mirth from his face and voice. Rising, he faced Roger, throwing back his shoulders and motioning toward the door. "It's a pretty poor joke, Boltwood," he said cuttingly, "when a man of your caliber has to seek his victim here. You don't show any indication that you've been drinking, but——"

"Wait a minute," interrupted Roger quickly. "You quite misapprehend, Philbin. There's no joke about it; I'm in dead, serious earnest. No need to give you particulars now; I'll do that at some better time; but I've found it necessary within the last two months to get out and hustle for myself. That means that I've not received a dollar or an atom of assistance from my father, and I'm not looking for anything of the sort. It means that I've got to live economically in order to get through college, and, hearing of you by chance, I've come here to propose that we enter into partnership. It's a sincere, honest offer. What do you say?"

Philbin stepped forward promptly, his slender, shapely hand extended for Roger to grasp.

"I say hooray!" he answered. "It hits me as some fine proposition. Move your belongings in as soon as you please."

CHAPTER XX.

OLD FRIENDS.

IT was not possible to use even a fourth of Boltwood's furniture and knickknacks in those two rooms at Lawrence. A splendid Turkish rug practically hid the flooring, and with fine, solid-looking easy-chairs and Roger's study table, the aspect of the place was soon changed. Then came bookcases filled with books, and pictures and banners to adorn the walls. Some beautiful portières, toning with the Turkish floor rug, were hung to cut off more than a glimpse of the bedroom, in which Roger had two single beds set up, with the finest of hair mattresses and everything to correspond.

With coat and collar peeled off, his

shirt sleeves rolled up, Roger genuinely enjoyed the work of putting the rooms in order. His enjoyment was deepened by the enthusiasm and delight of Philbin, who seemed literally transported by his good fortune in acquiring such a roommate.

"Say," he exclaimed, as he stood in the middle of the study, and gazed around, "if the spirit of my dear old aunt could take a peep in here now she'd be horrified by the belief that I had begun to spend the little pot of money she left me in riotous and reckless extravagance. Why, I don't suppose Aunt Henrietta ever saw a real Turkish rug in all her life. But she was some aunt, Boltwood, believe me. She saved the pennies, and the pennies grew into dollars. I was her favorite nephew, and just when things looked blackest for me Aunt Henrietta up and died, and left me all she had."

Roger, willing to pause for a moment, came and flung a leg over a corner of the study table.

"So it was luck that brought you back to Yale, Phil. Well, I had some luck myself, else I'd not be here."

"Yes, it was luck," said Philbin, a shadow settling on his fine face. "I tell you, Boltwood, old man, I don't believe I could have stood another year of what I had to go through as a freshman. It wasn't the work. I don't mind work. It wasn't tending the furnaces in winter. But you'll never know what I had to stand for as waiter in that night lunchroom."

"I suppose some of the customers were thoughtlessly insolent," said Roger. "Of course, I know the kind of chaps who roll into a place like that after midnight. Lots of them have their skins full, and they don't know what they are saying."

"It wasn't that so much, though of course it got under my hide some. But, Boltwood, the man who runs that restaurant is simply a beast. And I had to work for him or get out of college. It was the last and only thing I could find to do to keep myself from starving."

"Hard lines, sure," said Roger sympathetically. "I've never been up

against anything like that, Phil, old man. I don't think I could quite stand for it."

"My people came from the South," murmured Philbin, with a short laugh. "I was raised in Ohio, but my mother was born in Georgia. She's an invalid, poor mother. She's paralyzed, and can't even feed herself. But her mind is as active as ever, and if she had ever known what I was going through that year in order to get an education it would have driven her plumb crazy. I didn't even let my father suspect anything like the real truth, Boltwood. He's a minister."

"Oh, then you're a minister's son?"

"I am, but I fear I don't live up to the tradition. I've never touched any of the high places, for I haven't had the chance; and now I'm positive I wouldn't have the inclination. Do you know, I've always had to be so confounded careful of the pennies that I fear it has got into my blood. Even if I should inherit a fortune to-day I don't believe I could enjoy it as a man should. It would hurt me to spend money, and a man who can't enjoy spending has no business to have more than he absolutely needs for necessary expenses. If I seem to be penurious or mean sometimes, Bolt, just make allowances for me—will you, old man?"

"You bet I will!" said Roger earnestly, as he stepped forward and placed a hand on his roommate's shoulder. "You know one of the hardest things in the world for me is to hold onto money. I've always had all I could spend for anything I wanted, and, now that conditions have changed, as long as I find a dollar down in my pocket I have to fight not to blow it for the first thing that strikes my fancy. It's really a fight, Phil. It's got on my nerves a bit, too; for sometimes I resent it because I can't buy anything I happen to see and want. Your training, old chap, has gone to one extreme, and mine to the other. Both of us should realize that there is a happy medium, and we must try to find it."

As far as possible during the time following his return to New Haven and

the opening of the college term, Roger avoided public places where he would be likely to encounter any of his old associates. With Philbin he ate at Commons, knowing that there was little chance that his professed friends of last year would meet him there. It was impossible, however, to continue to avoid them indefinitely, and presently he ran squarely into Walter Storrow and Irving Conklin.

"There's Bolt—there he is now," said Storrow, in his solemn fashion. "O'Leary was right; he's here."

His face wreathed in smiles, Conklin dashed forward and seized Roger's hand. "Where the devil have you been keeping yourself, Boltwood?" he spluttered. "You're not in Vanderbilt. O'Leary said you came two days ago, but I thought he was lying. Fitzgerald said you weren't here—didn't believe you'd come at all."

"What does Fitzgerald know about my plans?" asked Roger. "Probably he got his pointers from Tom Keating, and I haven't been letting Keating into my private business."

"But where are you stopping? Where are you going to room?" questioned Storrow.

"I'm rooming in Lawrence."

Conklin staggered and made a clutch at the empty air, while Storrow seemed a graven image of disbelief.

"Lawrence!" spluttered Conklin. "You rooming in Lawrence! Tell it to Josephine!"

"There's no law to compel you to believe it," said Roger; "but if you want to find me any time you'll have to hunt me up there. I'm rooming with a man named Philbin."

"In Lawrence!" groaned Storrow. "Oh, how have the mighty fallen!"

"Come on," urged Conklin. "Come for a ball with us. I need a bracer after this. Where will we go?"

"You'll have to excuse me, boys," said Roger. "The same thing that brought me up to Lawrence has caused me to cut out the joy juice. No more of that for me."

"Oh, come, come!" scoffed Conklin.

"What are you trying to put across, Rog? It won't go with this bunch."

"Here come Bernfield and Kilmer," said Storrow. "They've got their blinkers on us."

The two approaching students came up rapidly, the blue eyes of the taller man, a curly-haired blond, lighting with an expression of pleasure at sight of Roger.

"Why, how are you, Boltwood, old fel?" he exclaimed, grasping Roger's hand. "Queer, but I was speaking of you to Kilmer just as we spied you chinning with Storrow and Conklin. What's this guff O'Leary was telling me about your taking rooms in Lawrence?"

"No guff about it, Bernfield," replied Roger, unabashed, while he shook hands with Price Kilmer, the other man—short, stout, red-faced, and inclined to puff short-windedly. "Having found it absolutely necessary to change my mode of living on account of cramped finances, I gave up my rooms in Vanderbilt, and am living somewhat more modestly in a thoroughly respectable if not thoroughly swell dormitory."

"Why, old man," said Bernfield promptly, "if you are a bit hard up for any reason, there are plenty of fellows who would loan you all you need. You should know you could come to me any time. I believe I've found it necessary to give you the touch once or twice."

"I'm afraid you don't understand the circumstances, Bern. I appreciate what you have just said, but I wasn't in a position to go on living here as I had lived, and I couldn't borrow money of anybody without knowing how I was to pay it."

"Is it possible," said Kilmer, in a throaty voice, "that there's some truth in the rumor I heard about you, Boltwood? Did your dad fall out with you?"

"No," smiled Roger; "I was the one who fell out, and I struck bottom hard."

"Look here," said Kilmer; "it ain't true, is it, that you're the R. Boltwood who drove the winning Keating Kar in the Traymore Cup Race? Somebody said so, but I didn't believe it."

"I'm the same R. Boltwood," admitted Roger.

"Well, by Jove! by Jove!" gurgled the stout chap. "Wouldn't believe it. Said I knew better. Why, you won the cup! Driving a Keating, too! How'd it happen you didn't drive a Comet?"

"It's a long, sad story," laughed Roger, with pretended lightness. "I will not weary you with the tale. I will say, however, that by driving a Keating and defeating the Comet I apparently drove the final and clinching nail in the coffin containing my hope of reconciliation with one Henry Boltwood. Now I beg you spare my feelings."

"Oh, it's all a joke—I know it is," declared Conklin. "These fathers get grouchy sometimes, but they have to come round in the end. Come on, everybody, let's saunter over to Heub's and have a ball. If Boltwood chooses to play the part of a martyr until his old man relents, he's the only one that will have to suffer. Mighty clever idea, Bolt—really it is. The old boy will get worried about you, and come nosing around to find you living frugally like a poverty-stricken dub, and he'll be smitten by remorse because of his cold and cruel brutality, and he'll fold you to his penitent bosom, and——"

"You've never met my father, Conk," interrupted Roger. "If he should chance to find me living on husks in a hovel there would be no slaughter of the fatted calf. I can't seem to convince you that I've cut out the frisky thirst quencher, but again I declare it as a positive fact. I have—— What's the matter, Storrow?"

Martin Storrow was surveying with an expression of intense dislike a quartet of young men who were sauntering past.

"Oh, nothing; only there's Pony Dill," growled Storrow. "He thinks he's the real thing since he got in with Keating's crowd. The lispng little jackass! He attempted to throw the hooks into me once, and I'm waiting for a chance to get back at him."

Tom Keating himself was one of the four swagger-looking youths who were

chatting and laughing as they sauntered by Roger and his companions. Nodding in a friendly yet reserved manner, Keating spoke to each of the fellows save Roger, calling them by name. His omission of Boltwood was so obvious that, as a specimen of bad manners, it reached the limit.

"The infernal cad!" murmured Norry Bernfield. "Evidently he still remembers the time you made him look like a cheap shine with the eight-ounce gloves, Bolt. I never did have much use for that bounder."

"But Rog drove the Keating Kar in the cup race," gurgled Kilmer.

"And was paid for it," put in Roger.

Back from the students who had passed drifted the voice of Tom Keating: "Oh, they'll drop him when they find out he hasn't the coin to keep up the pace they——" His words became indistinguishable. Conklin, Bernfield, Kilmer, and Storrow looked at one another and then at Roger. They knew he had heard the words intended for his ears, but, instead of seeming at all disturbed, he smiled.

"The dirty cad!" exploded Conklin. "We'll show him! Come on, Rog, you can't refuse now."

He passed his arm through Boltwood's, nodding to Kilmer, who promptly took the other arm, and in this manner they bore Roger away to Heublein's.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TOAST.

ROGER insisted on taking sarsaparilla. Not even the remonstrances of Kilmer or the joshing of Conklin influenced him to change his mind. When Bernfield produced his monogrammed case and passed it, Boltwood declined to take a cigarette.

"I've cut out smoking, too," he stated gravely. "You know an automobile racing driver needs his nerve, and cigarettes aren't the best thing in the world for a man's nerves."

"Do you mean to say you've gone into the racing game as a business?" asked Kilmer dubiously, bowing to some

students passing their table. "It's dangerous, old man. You must have seen proof of that in that cup race. If you're really looking to be killed, however, you might take up flying. That's got the other thing beaten when it comes to the number of subjects it furnishes for the undertaker."

"If it hadn't been for the racing game I wouldn't be here now," said Roger quietly, "and I've made a sort of agreement with Cyrus Keating. If I drive in another race it will be at the wheel of a Keating Kar."

Storrow shook his head. His habitual solemn manner had led his friends to give him the nickname of "Gloom."

"Couldn't hire me to drive in one of those races," he asserted, "for fifty thousand dollars."

"Still," said Roger, "you'll sit in the tonneau of a high-powered car with a lot of drinks under your belt, and nobody can drive fast enough to keep you from growling about the way he's crawling along."

"That's different."

"Yes, it's different, and the difference lies in the fact that in a professional race the driver probably is absolutely sober, while in a joy ride nine times out of ten he isn't. I've been doing some thinking in the last ten minutes, fellows. I appreciate the manner in which you brought me here, and your evident purpose to demonstrate that altered circumstances on my part have not changed your regard for me. In spite of all that, the situation is decidedly altered. Last year I was in a position to accept hospitality and favors from any man, for I could return everything with interest. To-day it's different."

"Oh, come——" Bernfield attempted to break in.

"Wait, Bern," persisted Roger. "Let me say what I started to say. You ought to know, fellows, that I'm not the kind of a chap to travel with any set of fellows unless able to keep up my end. I'm no sponge or hanger-on."

"I'd punch the man who hinted such a thing!" exclaimed Bernfield.

"Thanks! You're a gentleman, Bern. Now you can all see the position in

which you would place me if I tried to keep in with you. I couldn't do my share of the buying, for I haven't got the needful. What little money I've got I must take care of if I'm going to get through the present college year. You've offered to loan me money, but I hope I can get through Yale without being compelled to borrow a dollar from any man."

"Noble ambition!" muttered Kilmer, with a slight touch of sarcasm, it seemed.

"There may be nothing noble about it, but I've just decided on that one thing, and I'm going to ask you fellows to help me stick to it. Your friendship I shall always appreciate, be sure of that, no matter if I can't be one of you. And you can see that that is out of the question. I've got to follow the only course open to me that will allow me to maintain my self-respect. Last year I was known as a high roller, but there's no more high rolling for me—no more gay parties, midnight suppers, joy rides, and all that. The day my father and I dissolved I came down to earth with a thump that jarred me and opened my eyes to just what I was up against."

"But we can't let you quit our little circle of good fellows, Rog," protested Conklin. "We won't listen to it."

Norry Bernfield sipped his high ball and put down the glass meditatively. Suddenly he said: "Boltwood is right, fellows. I've been trying to put myself in his place, and I think I can see this thing from his viewpoint. In his position I'd feel just as he does, although I might not be as cheerful. It takes a lot of sand for a man to be cheerful when hard luck has handed him a solar-plexus wallop of this sort. Bolt, I want you to remember that I'm your friend under any and all circumstances. I hope you won't forget it."

"I won't, Bern, bet your life! I'm glad you appreciate my position. I'm glad you back me up. As a special favor, I want to ask you fellows to do something for me. Whenever you feel like inviting me to join you, as you have to-day, I wish you wouldn't. You'll simply make it necessary for me to re-

fuse, and you can imagine that refusing wouldn't be the easiest thing in the world."

"Are you going to cut everything out?" asked Storrow. "Are you going to keep away from your club, even? You haven't shown your nose there since coming back."

"Because I knew I'd run into friends who would extend invitations to conviviality, and I was ducking such things. When all my friends come to know just how the matter stands, you'll see me around the club sometimes." He turned the lapel of his coat, and displayed his fraternity pin.

"Everybody figured," said Kilmer, "that you were one man of the bunch who stood the best chance of making Bones."

"Bones!" exclaimed Roger, modulating his voice involuntarily, although there seemed to be no listeners to fear outside their little group. "I, one of the fifteen favored by the gods! Quit your kidding, Gloomy."

"Still," murmured Bernfield, moving his glass round and round on a little wet spot, "still, it wouldn't surprise me. You may stand a better chance than you would if things hadn't happened this way."

Roger lifted his glass of sarsaparilla. "Drink to my good luck!" he begged. "There's really worse luck than for a spendthrift son to be kicked outdoors by a rich dad. A year ago I wouldn't have thought so. I've changed my mind about many things in the last few weeks. Drink, boys; it may be the last time you'll have a chance to do so with Roger Boltwood—unless you drink at a soda fountain."

Norry Bernfield rose to his feet, lifting his glass. "I'm going to drink it standing, then," he said, as the others imitated his example. "Here's to Roger Boltwood, good fellow, loyal friend, man to his marrow. May he get a strangle hold on hard luck, and put it to the mat. I believe he will. And if anybody wants to gamble on it, I'll back Bolt to the extent of every dollar I can raise."

"Thank you, Bernfield," said Roger

quietly, suppressing a sudden throb of feeling. "You've given me a good big boost on the way."

"Drink it down, drink it down," cried the others. "Here's to Boltwood!"

They clinked their glasses and drank.

"Now, fellows," said Roger, "I hope you'll excuse me, for I've got to get back to my rooms and do some grinding. Yes, I'm actually studying, and if I fail to pass a second time it won't be my fault."

They shook hands with him, and watched him leave, Bernfield's eyes taking the measure of his fine figure as he passed out of the room and the door closed behind him. For some minutes the four men sat silently around the table.

"Jove!" came presently from Kilmer's lips. "Hard luck for Boltwood, eh?"

"Hard luck?" said Bernfield instantly. "Nothing of the sort! It might have seemed like hard luck for a weaker fellow; for him it was the best that could have happened. I didn't dream he had the stuff in him, but he's showing that it's there, all right, and he'll come out on top. If this hadn't happened to him he might have developed into a useless spender, instead of a real man."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE UNMASKING.

ROGER BOLTWOOD had disappeared from his former haunts at New Haven, and he was seen no more with the swift set in which he had once scintillated as a star of the first magnitude. Therefore it was no more than natural that many of those who thought of him at all, recalling the fact that he had been dropped a year, reached the conclusion that he had not returned to Yale. Some of these told themselves that it was no particular loss to the college.

Of course, Tom Keating chuckled with malicious satisfaction, and called the attention of his friends to the fact that he had been quite right in prophesying Boltwood's prompt throw-down

by former chums when they should learn of his altered circumstances.

Roger had spoken the truth when he declared that he was studying hard. He was doing so for the first time in his life. Always, until the occasion of the humiliating failure which had set him back a year in college, he had in some way succeeded in "getting by." One reason for such good luck was that he had an elastic mind which permitted itself to be crammed and jammed to the limit at the very last moment, retaining this condition of falsely acquired information and knowledge just long enough to make temporary use of it—then seeming to forget it all completely.

That the modest student who roomed in Lawrence appeared regularly in class, chapel, and lecture hall, and spent hours studying like any ordinary grind, was the former high-flying Roger Boltwood seemed incredible—even to Roger himself.

Again and again he found himself lagging a little, and yearning to falter. Even in his rooms during those hours he had resolved to spend in honest study he often awoke to realize that he was loafing and dreaming like any other lazy, irresponsible chap.

Not that he had foolishly made up his mind never to rest, never to relax; he had sense enough to know that rest and relaxation are absolutely essential to the man who would rise to his highest efficiency and make the most of himself. Not, however, until he had satisfied himself with each day's required task would he sit back and take things easy.

It was in one of these breathing spells, not long after the college term got fairly into smooth-running order, that Philbin made a suggestion. Roger was walking restlessly up and down the cramped room, with Martin's eyes following him, when the latter suddenly said:

"Why don't you go out for the eleven, Bolt? If I had your build and spring-steel make-up I would. You're like a caged beast sometimes, prancing back and forth here to work off some of your surplus energy."

Roger stopped short, and stared at his

roommate. "The eleven, Phil? I don't remember receiving a letter of invitation to come out."

"You don't have to have one. You know a general notice was posted in the gym. Why should you receive a special invitation, anyhow?"

"Don't know of any particular reason," admitted Roger; "only it's customary to send out such special requests to especially promising subjects."

"Do you consider," queried Philbin, "that you've been an especially promising subject?"

"Hardly. Don't know why I should go in for football. If it were baseball I might feel differently about it. I do get cramped and nervous sitting here plugging, and I suppose I ought to take up something. Reckon the best thing would be a general line of work in the gym."

"And where would that get you to, old man? It might put those good muscles and sinews of yours in a little better condition, but you'd be the only man to benefit by it."

"Well, I'm the only man I've got to look out for at present, am I not?"

"You are—not! Simply because you've been selfish and egotistical—never thought of any one except Roger Boltwood—now, don't hand me that sort of a glare; you've said it yourself—simply because you've been that way all your life, up to date, doesn't make it right for you to continue that way. You've turned over a new leaf. It's time now that you dug yourself well out of the old ruts."

"Well, say, Philbin, you're certainly handing me a warm line of conversation. Egotism! Selfishness! Will you please demonstrate where my egotism stands out so prominently? Will you explain what you mean by calling me selfish?"

"I'll do my best," said Philbin cheerfully. "I'm not denying that your course since being cast forth upon the world by your father has been rather commendable—as far as it goes. Before that you were selfish without any particular effort on your part. Since

then you've been compelled to make efforts, but you've made them for yourself alone, with absolutely no thought for any one else."

"Huh!" grunted Roger, frowning. "Go on; go on!"

"And you're egotistical. You're proud of the fact that you didn't become a bum and gutter vag after your father threw you out."

"Proud of it! Why shouldn't I be?"

Philbin smiled that charming, friendly smile which displayed his fine teeth. "Did avoiding that prove to be such a terribly difficult thing?" he asked. "Do you think you deserve any tremendous amount of credit for your success thus far? Were you compelled to work like a dog and suffer every sort of privation in order to get back here to college? Isn't it a fact that you tumbled into a streak of luck, and won your way back at a single stroke, by doing something you were especially qualified to do by nature and some degree of experience; by performing a piece of work that required only hours instead of days and months and years—a piece of work, at that, which gave you keen delight instead of acute suffering?"

Boltwood raised a hand in smiling protest.

"Wait just a moment; I haven't finished," said Philbin. "Isn't it a fact that, having made a tremendous stride toward the goal in that easy manner, you are still finding a sort of chesty pride in giving up your former luxurious, easy mode of living, cutting yourself off from old friends, and demonstrating that you've got a lot of bulldog determination in you that makes you just as good as the next fellow—and a little better than the most of them? Don't you, every time you think of the old enjoyable fleshpots, pat yourself metaphorically on the back and whisper compliments for your own ears?"

Gradually Boltwood's face had taken on a deeper flush, and now it was burning scarlet. He had seemed indignant at the outset, but now he appeared to be considering the plain words of his roommate, not one of which had wholly

missed the target. Philbin gave him time.

Suddenly Roger looked up, laughing in a half-shamed manner. "By Jove, Philbin," he said, "you've certainly got it all figured out to a T. I never thought of it that way before, but you're right. You're dead right." He sank down on a chair, elbows on his knees, his chin propped on his cupped hands.

"I thought you'd see it," said Philbin, his manner wholly devoid of the offensive. "You know the old saying: 'A knock is a boost,' and I mean it that way in this case. If I hadn't felt absolutely positive that you had the right stuff in you, Boltwood, I'd never have said the things I have."

"Thanks!" said Roger slowly. "I didn't realize that I was wearing a mask till you stripped it off, Phil; now I'm just beginning to get a look at my real self. Say, what have I done to feel chesty about? What am I doing now that's not, as you put it, solely for my own selfish ends? I thought I had proved myself some real big gun, but I see that as yet I've proved nothing at all. It was luck that boosted me, from the time I found Cyrus Keating stalled on Long Island until I won the Traymore Cup. And a man who has been raised by mere luck, and goes round hugging the idea that he's the greatest thing that ever happened is simply an egotistical, foolish dub. I've collapsed like a pricked bladder, Phil. You've taken the wind out of my sails completely."

"I don't want to do that; I want to put more wind into them. I want you to stand by the helm and steer a straight course for the right port. Say, I'm getting nautical, and I never saw the ocean in my life until I came to college!"

His pleasant laugh brought a smile creeping back to Boltwood's face, but Roger immediately grew grave again. A frown crept into his brow, and the muscles of his jaw tensed perceptibly.

"In this matter of selfishness," he said presently, "I don't see just what I'm going to do. We're all selfish, every

one of us. We're working for ourselves. We plug to get an education, in order that we may be fitted to go into the world and buck up against things and win—for our own good. You're doing that very thing. I realize that it has cost you a blamed sight more than it has me, but——"

"That's generous, at least, Bolt. Do you know what I'd do if I could? Do you know what's caused me no small amount of regret because of my inability to get at it? I'll tell you. If I had any small qualifications which would enable me to go in for football, baseball, rowing, or the track team, you'd see me spending all the time needed to develop those qualifications. I'd do it not simply for myself, but for my college. I think I've felt a bit of the true Yale spirit already, although, like most fellows in my position, I've had little chance to get saturated with it. It's a great thing, Boltwood—the Yale spirit. Do you know what it is?"

"Why, really, old man, I'm not sure. I thought I did. I thought it meant loyalty to Old Eli. I thought it meant belief in Yale, its traditions, its glories, its magnificent accomplishments. I thought it meant a feeling of fellowship toward every worthy, loyal Yale man."

"And you might add that you thought it meant following up the track events, and cheering for the Yale men who participated. You thought it meant sitting on the bleachers at a football or baseball game, and singing and cheering with the rest of your class. You thought it meant going down to New London and yelling yourself hoarse for the crew. It means more than all that. It means action. It means hard work, long and persistent work, and sharp, strenuous endeavor to maintain the standard of the college in some way or other. When a man isn't fitted to do this on the athletic field or in the boat, he has to look around for other methods. Certainly, he's far less fortunate than the fellow who can train for and take part in athletics. You're a natural athlete, Boltwood. If you hadn't been, your manner of living would have put you to the bad long ago. No matter what form of

athletics you take up, you should go in for something or other without faltering or delay. It's a duty you owe your college. I suggested football because it seemed to me that you were built for it, and I know the team is going to need every good man it can develop this year."

Boltwood again resumed his walk up and down the length of the Turkish rug. For a minute or two Philbin watched him quizzically, one eyebrow elevated in that odd manner of his, but he did not venture to say anything further. Presently Roger paused, and turned toward his companion.

"I'm going to think this thing over, Phil," he announced decisively. "I'm much obliged for your suggestion. Perhaps I'll make a try."

CHAPTER XXIII.

OUT FOR THE ELEVEN.

THE following day Roger Boltwood appeared before Captain Brinkley E Brooks on the football field, and announced himself as a candidate for the team. Although knowing Boltwood by reputation, Brooks did not recognize him, and he surveyed the applicant with a critical eye.

"You've got the build," he said. "Ever play?"

"At Andover one year."

"Only one?"

"That's all."

"What was the matter? Why didn't you play longer? Was it your last year?"

"My second," answered Roger, realizing that he was beginning to turn red. "I sort of—fell out of it—after that."

"Hum!" grunted Brooks. "What's your name?"

"Boltwood."

"Eh? Boltwood? Not Roger Boltwood? Why, hang it, yes you are! I remember some one pointing you out to me once, Boltwood."

Roger wondered under what circumstances this had happened, and, thinking of the escapades by which he had won the title of "high roller," the crimson deepened in his face.

Brooks was looking him over once more. Out on the field a great swarm of men were working under the directions of "Red" Harney, the head coach, and several assistants. Roger pretended to be interested in their maneuvers while Brooks took his physical measure for the second time.

"I presume you're serious about this, Boltwood?" said the captain. "Of course, you know what it means. You know you'll have to cut out the fancy stuff, come down to plain living, steady training, and rigorous, hard work. Unless you mean to——"

"If I hadn't meant to comply with every requirement I wouldn't be here, Captain Brooks," interrupted Roger, a bit warmly.

"Hi, Addison!" hailed Brooks. "Come here, please."

At the call a young man in soiled football togs turned and jogged up.

"Addison, this is Roger Boltwood, a new candidate. Take him over to the locker building, and find him some sort of a suit, will you?"

"Sure," responded Addison, with a ghost of a grin, as he looked Roger over. "Ain't much stuff left, but I reckon I can fit him out somehow. Come on, Boltwood."

In the locker building Addison finally dug out an old jersey, some pants, a pair of heelless, toeless stockings, and some disreputable cleated shoes.

"This stuff has been through the wash, Boltwood," he said, "but I don't know as you'll care to put it on. Perhaps you'll feel more like furnishing your own togs."

"On the contrary," answered Roger, as he began to peel down, "I don't feel that way at all. Football clothes cost money."

"I guess you can afford 'em if you want to. If a fellow in your place hasn't confidence enough in himself to spend that much, I'm doubtful of his chance to last very long."

Roger did not see fit to enlighten Addison concerning the conditions which evidently made him appear in the man's eyes like a miser. Boltwood was tired

of such explaining, and in time Addison would find out for himself.

Left alone, Roger made haste to get into the worn garments, and returned with as little delay as possible to the field, where, perceiving Brooks hard at work with a bunch of greenhorns, he reported to Red Harney.

"All right!" snapped Harney, without even looking at him. "Go out there and chase punts with those fellows."

Although the rules were greatly changed since the year when he had played half-heartedly at Andover, Roger knew how to chase punts and fall on the ball scientifically, even if he was somewhat out of practice. Nevertheless, a period of slamming himself onto the pigskin seemed to attract the attention of no one save Andy Dowling, a man with whom he collided in a mix-up of two erratically bounding balls.

Now it chanced that, once on a time, Boltwood had unintentionally, though perhaps not without some blame, incurred the displeasure of Dowling, who had fancied that Roger maliciously singled him out for ridicule by imitating his misfortune as a stutterer, which was rather pronounced in times of excitement. Not having a forgiving disposition, or being of a forgetful turn, Dowling had maintained a pronounced dislike for Roger from that day.

And now, by accident, they came together with a crash as they flung themselves bodily at one of the two bounding footballs. The shock made both of them see stars for a moment, and their attitudes of half-stunned astonishment as they lifted themselves from the ground would have caused laughter, had not every one around them been too busy with his own affairs to give them attention.

"Um-mum!" groaned Roger, rubbing his head and blinking at Dowling. "I beg your pardon."

"Huh!" rasped Dowling, glaring back. "Why didn't you fall on your own bub-ball? What are you dud-doing here, anyhow?"

"I'm trying to do the same thing you

are, I reckon," returned Roger cheerfully, choosing to ignore the wrathful, sneering manner of the other man. "I'm tearing up the earth in a mad endeavor to prove that I've special qualifications to become Yale's football star of the present season."

"You!" muttered Dowling, as if he could not believe it possible. "Why, you——"

"Yes, that's quite true," admitted Roger, rising quickly and offering the other man a helping hand. "But you're thinking about last year. It's different now."

Ignoring the proffered assistance, Dowling scrambled up.

"Fuf-fuf-fine football pup-player——" he began.

But Roger cut him short in the midst of his stammered sarcasm. "Thanks for the compliment, Dowling. There's a coach snarling his head off at us. We'd better cut out the sociable chat just now."

He caught up one of the footballs, gave it a deft turn between his two palms, dropped it, and punted it easily and gracefully straight into the hands of the fuming coach. The latter gave Roger a single sharp look, as if meaning to recognize him again, and the practice went on. Next time Roger saw Andy Dowling, the man, with some other candidates chosen from the green squad, was waiting his turn to tackle the dummy. Boltwood wondered how it happened that he was not given a chance at the canvas man, but decided that it was because he had appeared late on the field as a candidate, Dowling having had the advantage of more than a week of practice.

There was a short game between the scrub and the regulars, watched with deep interest and anxiety by the big group of new men who were ambitious to become players. A few of these were called into action at intervals by the coach, who plainly had special ones in his mind that he wished to give work of this sort. Feeling a throb of satisfaction because Dowling was not among the ones thus favored, Roger was genuinely ashamed when he real-

ized that such jealous emotion was evidence of the selfishness with which he had been charged by Philbin.

Thus early, a considerable list of hopeless would-be's had been dropped, and to-day still more of the aspiring but never-could-qualify candidates were given notice that they must shelve their hopes of football glory. Everything in the form of deadwood was being trimmed away as fast as possible, to give the coaches a chance to concentrate their work upon a smaller number who seemed really worthy of attention. Henceforth, as the reduced ranks of the volunteers were tested more and more minutely, men would continue to be dropped in gradually decreasing numbers until, the season advancing, a regular squad of possible players would remain to be drilled, pounded, hammered, and tried in every conceivable way by which the right men might be culled from it for the last great game of the year.

"Perhaps it's a good thing I didn't come out earlier," thought Boltwood. "Maybe I'd have found myself dropped already, without having a fair chance."

Arriving at his rooms after the usual short run, shower, and rubdown which followed practice, Roger told Philbin what he had done, and was congratulated.

"Oh, but you'll get there, you'll make the team," predicted Philbin confidently. "If you don't make it this year, there's another year coming, you know."

"I've thought of that, but, being of an impetuous and impatient nature, I've decided to make it this year. It's become something of a necessity after your talk of yesterday, in which you brutally opened my eyes to the fact that thus far I've really done nothing at all worthy of feeling cocky over. In order to win back a certain necessary amount of self-respect, I've got to do something worth while. You gave me a tip, and I'm following it. Watch my smoke."

But if Roger really entertained a belief that his rapid progress would heat the air to the smoking point, he was doomed to disappointment. Coming

out for the second and third days, he found himself still one of the unrecognized mass of greenhorns who were allowed to pound themselves stiff and sore chasing the ball and falling on it; but, for some unknown reason, he was not called on to try the dummy or to take part in a real scrimmage.

What made it all the more annoying was the fact that Dowling had apparently attracted Red Harney's attention, and was given an opportunity to work with the scrub in a practice game, during which, although he did nothing specially remarkable, he had a position in the line—and filled it!

The opening game with Wesleyan was at hand. More men were dropped, but still, though seemingly ignored, Boltwood did not receive notice that his services were no longer required at the field. Within him, however, there sprouted and grew a sense of being baffled, of increasing annoyance, which threatened to develop into resentment.

"There's something back of this," he decided, just as thousands of men before him had arrived at the conviction that partiality was keeping them from advancement toward a definite goal. "I

don't know what it is, but I'm sure something is preventing me from getting a chance to show. They've got to give me a chance. If they don't, somebody is going to hear a loud, unpleasant noise, at least."

When he told his roommate, Philbin betrayed apprehension. "But you're not going to quit?" he cried.

Roger snorted. "Quit? Say, Phil, what do you take me for? I've just begun. They can't throw me down without giving me some sort of a try-out, and if I get as much as half a show I'm going to make some of those other men go like blazes to hold their jobs."

"You will," said Philbin, his eyes on Roger's lower jaw. "If you get half a show you'll play against Harvard this year. If I ever gambled—which I do not—I'd bet on it."

TO BE CONTINUED.

The next section of this serial will appear in the March mid-month TOP-NOTCH, out February 15th. Remember that this magazine is issued every two weeks, and you do not have to wait a month for the next installment. Back numbers may be obtained of news dealers or the publishers.

The Cardiff Giant

ONE of the most famous hoaxes ever perpetrated in this country was undoubtedly the so-called "Cardiff Giant."

On October 16, 1869, tremendous excitement was caused by a report that the petrified body of a prehistoric giant had been discovered at Cardiff, New York, by some men who were digging a well.

Crowds flocked to see the wonder. Newell, the finder, made seven thousand dollars in a week. Barnum offered sixty thousand dollars down for it, but his offer was rejected.

The finder took the "giant" from town to town. In one day four thousand people paid fifty cents apiece to see it.

Eventually it was discovered that the amazing prehistoric relic had been carved at Boone, in Iowa, by an Italian stone cutter, and that from this town it had been secretly sent to Newell's farm and buried at dead of night. As the huge stone image weighed almost three thousand pounds, the cleverness of the perpetrators of the fake was really extraordinary.

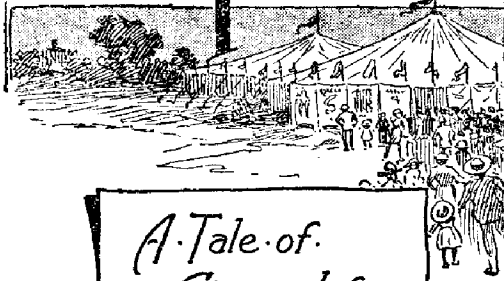
Good Material

A PARTY of ladies, on it being reported that a certain Captain Silk had arrived in town, exclaimed, with one exception: "What a name for a soldier!"

"The fittest name in the world," rejoined a witty female; "for silk can never be worsted!"

The Yellow

Dread



A Tale of
Circus Life.

John Miller Gregory



JIMMY HARDY was frightened. Twice since the circus season opened he had fallen from his trapeze, and circus tradition has it that the third fall means death or serious injury. He was superstitious, as every circus performer is, and the fact that he realized that he was afraid made his apprehension more poignant. Each time he had fallen he had worn a suit of yellow tights.

Jimmy was regarded as one of the best trapeze performers in the country. He was a feature with the MacMahon Shows, a ten-car aggregation which played the Eastern coast, from Bangor to Jacksonville. As he was an "all-around" performer, he was called upon for the free act outside the "Kid," or side show, before the opening of the main tent—a wire act, a single-trapeze act, and a double-trapeze act with a performer named Salee—and he helped in the big flying act which closed the show.

Each year Jimmy declared that the MacMahon Shows were becoming too much of a workshop for him, and that he would quit at the end of the season, but whenever he heard that "Florida" Kelly had signed for another year, he

hurriedly sent for a contract, and annexed his name to the line at the bottom of it. Forty dollars a week was a good salary, he thought, if Florida, "Queen of the Air," was with the show. If she had not been, a hundred dollars a week would not have looked especially good to him.

Miss Kelly was not remarkably pretty; she was just an ordinary, matter-of-fact, sensible little circus woman, who had been in the business since early childhood, and liked it. Her mother was still a "flyer" in the big act, and Florida did wire, flying-ring, and trapeze acts that were very clever.

She had been on the show with Jimmy so long that she regarded him as her especial charge, and bossed him accordingly, much to Jimmy's delight.

The show had been out five weeks when, one day, Jimmy came, for the second time, from his berth in the sleeper, where he had been confined by his injuries. During the seven long days, when he had stared for hours at the dreary scenery along the route, or strained his ears for the sound of the band from the circus lot, he had registered a solemn vow never again to wear a suit of yellow tights.

He told this to Florida, as he came

upon her where she was washing her tights in a tub of soapy water behind the cook house. She listened, as she always did to Jimmy, the while busily scrubbing, wringing, and hanging the various garments on a guy line to dry.

"If you feel that way about yellow," she said, when he finished, "you'd be foolish to wear it. You'd fall sure."

"I've got three yellow pairs in my trunk," Jimmy went on, "besides six other pairs. Anybody who wants the yellow ones can have them."

Florida wrung out her last garment, and hung it on the line. "Run in and get your soiled tights," she offered, "and I'll wash them out for you."

Jimmy ducked under the side wall of the dressing tent, as she changed the water in her tub. He returned in a few minutes, with an odd look in his face. Over his arm he carried three pairs of tights—blue, red, and pink.

"Here's a funny thing," he said, puzzled. "I had a pair of lavender tights, and they've disappeared. In their place I found a pair of yellow ones. Now I've got four pairs of yellow ones."

Florida looked up at him suddenly, with concern in her face. "Jimmy, you're getting nervous. You'd better take things easy for a day or so. You ain't well yet."

"Oh, I'm all right, unless I'm going color blind."

She took the tights from his hand, and plunged them into the warm water, as Jimmy seated himself on a blue property box, and began to roll a cigarette from the "makings."

"Maybe somebody's putting a jinx on me," he said, after he had smoked a while in silence.

Florida let it go at that.

Jimmy was proud of his "wardrobe," as circus people call their ring costumes, and usually changed his tights for each of his acts. When he went back to work Florida noticed that he stuck to one color during the entire show. When she saw this she knew that Jimmy was more worried than he cared to admit.

One night after the show, as she entered the "privilege car" with José Salee, Jimmy's partner on the double

"traps," she saw Jimmy seated at a table in a corner, with his back turned to the table at which she and Salee sat down.

José Salee was a black-haired, black-eyed young Costa Rican, who had been in the "States" and the show business since his early boyhood. His forehead was narrow, and his black eyebrows met in the middle and gave him a sinister appearance. Although he and Jimmy worked together, they had never become friends. Salee was too fond of Florida for Jimmy's comfort.

A noisy crowd of performers and ticket sellers came trooping into the privilege car from the lot, and lined up at the bar. The cash register began to ring steadily, and the talk became general and loud.

Salee leaned over the table toward Florida. There was a challenge in the black depths of his eyes. "Jimmy's no man for you," he said. "He's beginning to go back. Two falls in five weeks is bad. The next time he falls he'll be down and out."

"He's cut out the yellow tights for good," she replied. "I ordered six new pairs of different colors for him today."

Salee looked surprised. "Is that so?" he said slowly. "When'll he get them?"

"They ought to be at Belmont, when the show reaches there next week," Florida answered.

Salee was silent. Finally, lowering his voice, he asked: "Are you and Jimmy going to get married?"

Florida's face flushed. Jimmy hadn't asked that question himself, but she saw no reason for letting Salee know that. Instead, her head flew back, and she answered quickly:

"That's our business."

"Listen, Flo," said Salee eagerly. "I love you. Will you marry me?"

She turned her head slightly, and saw that Jimmy's back was still toward them. "No," she replied; "I don't love you."

His face grew red with anger. His voice was filled with passion. "I'll make you love me!" he cried. "If it wasn't

for Jimmy, I believe you would love me now."

His voice had risen, and several people at near-by tables turned toward them. Florida's blue eyes flashed.

"You've no right to talk like that," she said. "I've given you no cause to. I don't love you, and you'll please leave my private affairs alone. If you're going to sit here, you must talk lower. Do you think I want these women gabbing about me?"

Salee pushed back the little bench he was sitting on and rose. "I'll make you love me yet," he whispered passionately, then turned on his heel and walked out of the car.

Florida started to call Jimmy, but resisted the inclination. As she rose to go back to the sleeper, a big, blond woman, who did a "strong" act in the side show, called her.

"You want to watch out for that black-haired fellow," she said warningly. "I heard what he said. Those greasers can't be trusted. I had one of them for a husband once. If you need any help, let me know."

"Thanks," said Florida, reddening, "but I guess I can handle him without any outside help. Thanks, just the same."

She went back to her berth, where she laid awake half the night, planning to help Jimmy in his fight against the "jinx," and wondering just how much Salee had to do with it.

II.

THE next day, as soon as the show got back to the lot, after the parade, Jimmy sought Florida. There was a worried frown between his eyes, and his face was paler than usual.

"How many pairs of tights did you wash for me the other day?" he asked.

"Three," answered Florida; "one blue, one red, and one pink. You said you left two white pairs and four yellow pairs in your trunk."

"Well, the red pair is missing," said Jimmy, "and I found five yellow ones in my trunk."

"Jimmy," said Florida, with finality, "you are going color blind."

For answer Jimmy went to the dressing tent, and returned a few minutes later with five pairs of yellow tights on his arm. In astonishment, Florida sat down on a stake puller, and whistled long and dolefully.

During the performance that afternoon, she watched Jimmy carefully. She could see that the mysterious disappearance of his tights, and the equally mysterious appearance of the yellow ones in their place, were affecting his work. At supper, when they sat side by side at the long table, she suggested that she dye his yellow tights. He would have enough then, she told him, to last until his new ones arrived.

"What's the difference," he demurred. "They'd still be yellow underneath, wouldn't they? When I got on the traps, I'd think about the yellow tights I had on. Last night, when I was doing that head balance, I caught sight of the yellow tights Madge was wearing, and I came near tumbling off the bar. There's nothing to it, Flo, that yellow color's got my goat."

Two days later Jimmy came to Florida with downright terror written in his face.

"There's only one pair left," he said, holding out the blue tights for her to see. "Every pair has been changed for yellow ones but this. I keep my trunk locked. I don't see how it's being done, or who's doing it, or why they're doing it. I can't understand it."

"It'll be two more days before we get to Belmont," Florida replied. "Can't you borrow a pair?"

"No chance," said Jimmy, "even if I'd wear another man's tights. But I draw the line there; it's bad luck. I'd rather drop out of the show."

When the night show was ready to open, Jimmy, coming across the lot from the train, met José Salee standing in the dark near the entrance to the dressing tent.

"Have you seen Flo?" Salee asked. "She's looking for you."

Jimmy glanced at his watch. It lacked

but a few minutes of the time for the opening pageant, but he took the risk.

"Where is she?"

"Down that way," Salee answered, pointing toward the cook tent.

Jimmy dashed away, and Salee turned and disappeared into the dressing tent.

Ten minutes later, Florida, dressed for the pageant, saw him talking to a negro ringman in the entryway. Salee was too excited to notice her as she came up, and, without trying, she could overhear all that he said to the negro. He seemed to be arguing.

"You'll be safe enough," Salee was saying, "and it'll mean twenty-five bucks to you."

"Twenty-five bones is a heap ob money, but dey's a heap ob risk, too," said the timorous ringman.

"There ain't any risk!" Salee declared flatly. "He'll be so excited he won't notice anything, and when I give you the sign all you will have to do is to step over to the rope and do it. Then, in the excitement, you can slip away."

"Gimme the twenty-five," said the ringman, after a moment's hesitation.

"It'll be waiting for you after the show is over," said Salee. "Is it a go?"

"Well, I don' like it much, but I reckon hit's a go, all right. I sho' needs dat twenty-five."

The whistle blew for the leaps, after the pageant, and the performers trooped into the hippodrome track. Simultaneously there came excited words from the men's dressing tent, and Jimmy appeared at the door, wrapped in a bath robe, his bare feet thrust into a pair of wooden ring sandals. His hair was disheveled, and his face white from mingled anger and fright. MacMahon rushed up to him, as Florida ran back from the entryway to see what was the matter.

"What do you mean by not going in the leaps?" MacMahon demanded, as he grasped Jimmy by the shoulder, and spun him around. MacMahon was a big man, and usually had his way unquestioned, but this time Jimmy faced him squarely.

"My last pair of tights is gone. I

found these in their place. Nine pairs of yellow tights." He thrust the armful toward the manager, who let them fall unnoticed to the ground.

"What do I care about their color?" he roared. "Put 'em on, and be quick about it."

"I've fallen twice in yellow tights," said Jimmy. "I won't wear them again."

"You'll wear 'em to-night, or you'll stay in this town," the manager shouted.

"They're a hoodoo," Jimmy pleaded. "If I wear 'em again I'll fall, and that'll be the end of me."

The manager was red with anger. He strode forward, his fist upraised. "You'll do as I say on this show!" he roared. "Who's paying your salary?"

Florida's lithe figure, in a red kimono, was between them in a flash. She turned to Jimmy with a look of appeal in her eyes.

"Go on, Jimmy, and wear them to-night," she begged. "To-morrow I'll see that you get some other kind."

Jimmy was deathly pale. He turned a scornful, accusing face upon her. "So that's what you sent Salee to tell me you wanted to see me for, is it?"

She looked up in astonishment, and her face flushed at the note in his voice. "I didn't send Salee to you. What do you mean?"

But Jimmy had gone to the dressing tent. He appeared a few minutes later, clad in yellow tights, and passed Florida without speaking to her. The girl watched him, puzzled, trying to think what he could have meant.

III.

FLORIDA'S eyes hardly left Jimmy for a second that night as he went through his various acts. She was fearful lest he might make a misstep on his wire, or that he would become frightened while poised high in the air on his trapeze.

But Jimmy was recklessness itself. Something seemed to be urging him to feats of daring which he never attempted unless he felt thoroughly fit. Florida felt her heart contract as she watched him.

She was worried, too, about Salee. She wondered if he had been plotting with the ringman against Jimmy. The Costa Rican had treated her strangely since their talk in the privilege car, and she felt instinctively that he was awaiting an opportunity to revenge himself upon Jimmy.

The show progressed smoothly until the final act. Florida, in her brilliant red tights, poised like a butterfly on her flying trapeze, stopped between each of her tricks to look down upon Jimmy, as he stood under her, waiting for the signal to mount to the take-off on the flying-act rigging.

The ringmen were spreading the huge net and guying it at the ends. She could see Jimmy's scornful look, as he walked from line to line, testing them.

Then something seemed to force her glance upon Salee. He had just stepped down from his wire, and was saying something to the negro. She thought she saw something bright in the ringman's hand.

Her act was about over. For the finish she had a long rope, twisted so that when she flung herself from her trapeze bar, it unwound and flung her far over the audience. It was a showy trick, and a dangerous one. Fastened only by one foot, if the rope should break, or the loop become untied, she would be hurled against a quarter pole, or into the seats, perhaps to her death.

But she was not thinking of herself. Her attention was riveted upon the men beneath her. Mechanically she fastened the loop about her foot, as, hand over hand, Jimmy began to climb to the "cradle" in the rigging. In a moment he stood upright upon it, waiting for his partners to climb to the other side.

She looked down again. The negro was moving rapidly to the thick rope which supported the cradle on which Jimmy was standing. A knife in his hand for an instant caught the light. She knew now what he intended to do.

Salee was standing directly under the cradle, waiting to give the man the signal to cut the line. One slash, and the heavy rigging would give way, and Jimmy, outside the big safety net,

would go hurtling to the ground. No other performers were near the big rope, and the negro doubtless felt safe from observation.

Florida hung by her knees, and began to swing her trapeze furiously, far into the air. Every breath was a prayer that she might be in time.

She reached the limit of her swing, and turned loose, directly toward Jimmy.

Like a red meteor she flew out in the air, the rope paying itself out behind her.

She passed the cradle like a flash of red light.

"Jump!" she shouted, in a voice filled with agony. "Jump!"

Her upturned gaze caught a momentary flash of a yellow figure, rolled like a ball, as it bounded up from the net, then she was caught by the rope and jerked back. The heavy flying rigging came rushing down, missing her head by an inch. She heard it as it fell swishing by her; then, as she swung back, she saw the heavy iron bar catch José Salee on the head, and he went down in a crumpled heap.

IV.

WHILE the ringmaster was quieting the audience, several performers lifted Salee from the ground and took him into the pad room, where they laid him tenderly on a canvas couch. A hushed and awed group stood by, waiting for the doctor's verdict.

The Costa Rican tried to raise himself. He whispered something to the physician, who turned and nodded to Florida and Jimmy, making way for them to draw close to the injured man.

"Be quick," he said; "he won't last long."

Jimmy bent over the couch.

"I guess I'm done for," said Salee, in a sibilant whisper. "I want to tell you before I go—look in my trunk."

Jimmy ran into the dressing tent, and returned a minute later with a bundle of tights of different colors. He laid them on the ground beside Salee's couch.

"If that's what's bothering you, old man," he whispered gently, "forget it."

"No, I'd rather tell you, Jimmy," said the dying man. "I've been taking your tights, and giving you yellow ones. I knew it would get your goat after a while, and I wanted you to tumble. I wanted you to go down and out, because I wanted Flo."

He raised himself on his elbow, and his voice grew weaker. "Well, it's all over now, I guess, but the concert. I'll feel better if you say you forgive me."

"It's all right," mumbled Jimmy. He felt Florida's slender hand slip into his, and he pressed it. She knew then that all was well between them—Jimmy understood.

Salee looked at her, while his eyes slowly glazed, and he fell back on the couch. The physician stepped forward, and motioned back those who stood too close. After a while he turned and shook his head.

"It's all over," he said.

One or two of the women sobbed convulsively. Florida Kelly turned to Jimmy, and buried her tear-wet face on his shoulder. In the silence she could hear the voice of the big blonde who did a strong act in the side show.

"José was a good kid, all right," she was saying, as she passed from one performer to another. "I'll head a subscription to send his body home to Newark. Do you want to come in?"

Parlor Mountaineers

A PARTY of twenty-seven intrepid mountain climbers whose paths had crossed on the Alps, met again in New York recently and renewed memories of Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn by making an ascent of the service stairs of a popular hotel from the first to the eighth floor. They were the guests of Countess Natalie Kilfus, whose home is on the Riviera, a short distance from Monte Carlo. Their exploit marked the anniversary of a narrow escape of Countess Kilfus, who lost her footing and nearly went to her death with several of her party on an Alpine climbing trip. Several of her guests were members of that party.

The climbers gathered on the first floor of the hotel, where they were roped together in a chain for mutual support, and each provided with an alpenstock and the proper Alpine headgear. Led by a guide in full mountain-climbing dress, they plodded upward flight by flight till they had gained the thin air of the eighth floor in safety.

On this floor the art room was decorated with firs, pines, and Alpine scenery. A sugar cake in the image of Mont Blanc was the centerpiece of the table. Tyrolese singers yodeled from a Swiss hut in one corner of the room.

Prejudice on the Bench

IT was a case in an Irish court, and the prisoner seeming hard to satisfy, juryman after juryman was asked to leave the box. However, all things come to an end, even in Ireland, and at last the swearing of the jury was completed. And then the prisoner leaned over the dock and sought the ear of his counsel.

"The jury's all right now, I think," he whispered; "but ye must challenge the judge. I've been convicted under him sivilal times already, and maybe he's beginnin' to have a prejudice."

Frivolous Extravagance

HE made his wife keep a cash account. Every week he would go over it, growling and grumbling, like this:

"Look here, Hannah; mustard plasters, a shilling; three teeth extracted, ten shillings. There's eleven shillings in one week spent for your private pleasure. Do you think I'm made of money?"

On the Rocks of Success



By
Howard
Dwight
Smiley

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

NO FATTED CALF.

THIRTY-FIVE thousand dollars was a lot of money to fall into all at once. When Hugh Cranson received Lawyer Patterson's letter apprising him of his good fortune he experienced much the same sensation of surprise as would one diving into a warm lake in August and striking cold spring water, except that the shock was decidedly pleasant.

Hugh drummed thoughtfully on the car window with his fingers. Perhaps it would have been just as well if he had remained in the old town, after all. He had in reality taken up the same job in the city that he had left in his uncle's store—grocery clerk in one of the big department stores.

Still, he never could have endured that old, dark store, the stuffy, old-fashioned counters, piled half to the ceiling with dusty goods; the space between the counters set with ungainly benches that nearly filled it and made it impossible for two people to pass in the aisle without turning sideways; the dingy kerosene lamps that served dimly to illuminate the place in the evening, and the general haphazard, jumbled-up arrangement of everything.

But he was going to change all that

now. He would throw out those dusty old counters that had done service for nearly half a century, and replace them with double-deck plate-glass show cases. He would install electric lights, and give the whole interior a vigorous redecorating that would brighten it up.

Of course, Mr. Potts would object to all this; that was to be expected. But Hugh now owned a half interest in that store, and if he was to take an active part in the management there were certainly going to be some improvements made.

The train stopped at Brookton, and Hugh stepped off. Old Jim Carpenter, who had driven the hotel bus for twenty years, greeted him cordially, and invited him to ride on the driver's seat as far as the hotel.

He left his bag at the hotel and walked directly to the store. He told himself as he entered that it was like reviewing an old picture. Even a dead fly that hung dejectedly to the wire that was suspended from the ceiling and supported a smoky old kerosene lamp looked strangely familiar. Hugh assured himself that it was the same one that had hung there when he left the town, five years before.

The store was free from customers, and he found Mr. Potts going over the contents of a large cash register. The young man gasped at the sight of this

fixture. Well, well! They had actually acquired a cash register! He could hardly believe it.

He advanced on Mr. Potts with a friendly smile and outstretched hand. The old man glanced up from his money counting, bestowed on Hugh a grim, perfunctory nod, then jerked his head toward the rear of the store.

"Busy," he grunted shortly. "Be back there in a minute."

Hugh was taken aback by the curt-ness of the other's greeting, but walked, wondering, to the rear of the store, where the old high desk, the ponderous, antiquated safe, and a few rickety chairs gave it the semblance of an office.

He was still wondering at the other's coolness when the old man sauntered back and inspected Hugh from head to foot for a minute before speaking.

"Regular dude, ain't you?" he observed, in a tone that startled the young man into surprised resentment.

"Mr. Potts——" he began.

"I been expecting you any minute," the storekeeper interrupted laconically. "Knew you wouldn't lose no time getting here to spend your poor dead uncle's money, even if the town wasn't good enough for you during his lifetime."

"Why, Mr. Potts!" cried Hugh, in a hurt tone. "What do you mean?"

"Be them all the clothes you've got here?" questioned the storekeeper, ignoring Hugh's question.

"Yes. I——"

"Well, you'd better go down to Dobbins' and get something that's fit to wear. I don't want no dudes hangin' 'round this store."

"These clothes are as good as yours!" retorted Hugh, angered at last by the other's manner.

"There now, don't go gettin' sassy 'round here," admonished Mr. Potts sternly. "You go get some clothes, like I told you, and then get back here and get to work. You've got to earn your way if you hang 'round here."

"Earn my way?" gasped the astonished Hugh.

"You bet you! If you show you're

worth it, I am goin' to pay you five dollars a week; otherwise you don't get nothin'."

"I wish you would tell me what you are talking about!" exclaimed Hugh, by now thoroughly exasperated by the other's attitude. "I own half this store!"

"Mebbe you don't," retorted Mr. Potts mysteriously. "Read the will yet?"

"Certainly not! I've been in town only about half an hour!"

"Well, you'd better go up and see Lawyer Patterson, then; he's executor," dryly suggested Mr. Potts. "You won't be so sassy when you see how things are fixed."

"I gather from that, that there is a string attached to this property," said Hugh.

"Gather anything you like," grunted Mr. Potts. "One thing you may as well understand first as last is, that I'm boss of this store, and you're under my orders. You can obey 'em, or get out and stay out, just as you like!"

"I am entirely at loss to understand you!" returned Hugh. "One thing is certain, however, and that is, if I have anything to say about the management of this store—and I see no reason why I haven't—I am going to make you dance for the manner in which you have treated me! It is entirely uncalled for, and I assure you I won't overlook it!"

"You're welcome to all the dancing you get out of me," growled the storekeeper, as Hugh stalked indignantly out.

Lawyer Patterson greeted his visitor heartily, and invited him to a seat.

Hugh then related to the lawyer the conversation that had taken place between himself and Mr. Potts.

"Well, well, so that is the attitude he is taking, eh?" said Mr. Patterson, when he had concluded. "I was expecting something of the sort, but I hardly thought he would begin so soon."

"I wish you would tell me what it is all about," said Hugh.

"My friend," said the old lawyer

kindly, "I am afraid you are up a stump. Your Uncle Andrew's will gives Potts absolute control of the store. He holds your share in trust, to be turned over to you when, in his estimation, you are capable of taking charge of it. In the meantime you are to work under his orders at whatever wages he considers you are worth, for a term of at least five years, after which, if you have not fulfilled the requirements of the will, your interest reverts to him."

"What did Uncle Andrew do that for?" exclaimed Hugh, in surprise.

"I might have told you this in my letter," said the lawyer, "but I thought it better to wait until I saw you. Now I am going to talk frankly with you, and what I say must be kept in confidence.

"In the first place," he continued, "you incurred your uncle's displeasure when you left the store for the city several years ago. He had hoped that you would grow into his place, but I am in a position to know that he was more hurt than angered; yet his old-fashioned ideas of dignity were such that he would not show that side of his feelings to you. Now, between you and me, Potts had known for some time that Mr. Collins intended willing you a half interest in the store. Potts wanted it himself, and tried to induce your uncle to turn it over to him, on the plea that they had built up the business, and had been associated for nearly half a century, and it was no more than fair that the survivor should own the store. He argued that you deserved nothing after the way you had deserted them. Your uncle was firm on that point, however, and when Potts found he could not influence him in that way, he resorted to other methods that were more successful."

"For instance?" asked Hugh interestedly.

"Well, the report reached your uncle that you were leading a dissolute, riotous life in the city—drinking, and gambling, and having a gay time generally."

"Why, there isn't a word of truth in that!" cried Hugh indignantly.

"Of course there isn't!" replied the

lawyer. "I know you too well for that. This information was given your uncle to induce him to leave your interest in the store so that Potts would have absolute control. Of course, you understand that Potts is under bonds to the probate judge to keep your share, valued at twenty thousand dollars, intact until the expiration of the five years, when it reverts to him if you have not lived up to the requirements."

"And what he intends to do is to make it so uncomfortable for me that I will throw up my hands before the expiration of that time!" exclaimed Hugh, beginning to see the light.

"Exactly," answered the lawyer. "I realized what was coming at the time your uncle made his will, and had he sought my counsel I would have done what I could to avert this most deplorable state of affairs. As it was, Mr. Potts was present when the will was made, and I could say nothing."

"I'll make him dance for this or know the reason why!" exclaimed Hugh.

"What are you going to do?" asked the lawyer curiously.

"Can't you take this matter up with the judge of probate? He ought to be able to straighten it out when he finds how matters stand."

"I could try," answered Mr. Patterson doubtfully.

"All right; you do it! In the meantime, I'll go back to my job in the city. That is still open for me. Has Potts got a string on the rest of Uncle Andrew's bequest?"

"No," answered the lawyer; "I have the deed to your uncle's old home, which is valued at five thousand dollars, also the ten thousand dollars life insurance. You can have these any time."

"I'll take them now," answered Hugh promptly.

CHAPTER II.

TOO MUCH.

A MONTH after Hugh's return to the city, Billy Donaldson, the grocery drummer, dropped into the old store. Mr. Potts greeted him with surprise. "Thought you'd quit the Rockford Grocery Company," he said.

"I have," answered Billy. "Haven't been with them for three months. I am now representing the Quality Products Company, of Chicago, and I dropped in to see about your handling our goods in your town."

"I dunno," said Mr. Potts, with sudden coolness; "I ain't taking on any new brands. They're too hard to sell."

"Ours won't be," Billy assured him. "We've got a very alluring proposition to make. You see, this is a brand-new company, and our goods are all new and practically unknown to the public, but we have a system of introducing the goods that will no doubt be a winner."

"What is your system?" inquired Mr. Potts curiously.

"Well, we propose to give one of the stores here the exclusive agency for all our goods, and then sample the town and county with full-size packages of every article we carry. We will sample one article at a time, by mailing the customer a neat little letter, inclosing a coupon which will entitle him to a full-size package of one of our commodities, when presented at the store. One advantage of this is that it will bring to your store many people who would not come here ordinarily. Bring them not once, but many times, which may result in their becoming permanent patrons. We furnish the samples to you absolutely free, the only expense to you being the cost of cartage from the depot, and the time consumed in passing out the samples. You are not required to lay in a stock of our goods until the sampling is over, and you are satisfied as to the popularity of the Quality Products."

"That sounds pretty good," said Mr. Potts reflectively. "You say you would give me the exclusive agency if I took it up?"

"Yes, sir. We will go under ten-thousand-dollar bonds to fulfill our part of the agreement, and we expect you to do the same."

"Me go under bonds! What for?"

"Merely to guarantee that you will handle our goods conscientiously, and carry them for a period of at least two years; it being understood that this does

not interfere with your carrying any other brands that you care to, and that we furnish you with our goods only after we have created a demand for them, and then only in such quantities as you may require. The company further agrees to take back all unsold goods and refund the money, if you are dissatisfied at the expiration of the contract."

"Say, I'll take up that proposition!" exclaimed Mr. Potts. "It's the best I ever had put up to me!"

"I knew you'd do it when you saw what we had to offer," said Billy. "We'll go right out and have a lawyer draw up the contract. I have some blanks with me."

Ten days later a consignment of coffee arrived for Mr. Potts. It was put up in one-pound tin cans, with attractive red labels, and made a handsome addition to the store shelves.

The next morning Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Addison, and Mrs. Shippy entered the store simultaneously. Mrs. Shippy had been a regular customer for thirty years. The other two women traded at Cromin's, on the corner.

Mr. Potts, who was presiding behind the grocery counter, noted this with gratification. Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Addison fluttered up and presented yellow slips of paper, and after Mr. Potts had adjusted his spectacles, he found these to be coupons issued by the Quality Products Company, and that each entitled the bearer to one full-size can of Quality Coffee, absolutely free of charge.

Mr. Potts wrapped up the coffee, and watched the ladies depart, with a broad smile. This trick was going to bring him a lot of new customers, he was sure. Then he reached for Mrs. Shippy's coupon.

Mrs. Shippy had none. She had heard that a great many others received letters through the post office the night before, containing coupons, but none had come for her.

"Now, that's strange!" exclaimed Mr. Potts, in a distressed tone. "I'm sure I sent your address in! Oh, it will surely be along to-day or to-morrow,

Mrs. Shippy. Is there anything else I can help you to?"

"I came in for a pound of coffee," answered Mrs. Shippy, a bit coldly.

"Well, now, that's too bad!" said the storekeeper. "I'd give you a sample if I could, but I'm under contract not to give out any without the coupon."

"Then I guess I'll wait until mine comes," decided Mrs. Shippy. "But," she added, with a suggestion of sarcasm in her tone, "it seems to me you'd see to it that your own customers get theirs first, instead of folks who never trade here."

Mr. Potts watched her leave the store with an expression of dismay. He had probably offended her. Well, it was the fault of the Quality Company; he must write them at once, and tell them to be more careful. He had sent in the addresses in two separate lists, just as Billy Donaldson instructed him to do; one of his own customers, and one of the outsiders. There was no excuse for such a blunder.

Mr. Potts did not write, however—he telegraphed. Following the exit of Mrs. Shippy the women began to flow in, and before noon he had exchanged three hundred and ten cans of coffee for coupons, and in every instance, as he noted with growing alarm, to outsiders. Not one of his own customers received a sample, for the simple reason that they had no coupons.

At noon he rushed to the telegraph office and wired the company again.

Two hours later he received this laconic and brief reply, sent collect:

Nothing in the contract binds us to send coupons to any one except those we choose.

The boy who delivered the message also brought notice that a shipment of baking powder had just arrived by freight for Mr. Potts.

CHAPTER III.

UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER.

BY noon next day Mr. Potts had distributed all of the coffee, and as no more coupons were presented, it became apparent to him that the company had sent him exactly the number of cans re-

quired by the issue of coupons. Not one of his regular customs had received a coupon.

Furthermore, he was now passing out pound cans of Quality Baking Powder to presenters of coupons, and while several hundred people had been in and carried away their cans, not one among them was a customer of the store. His own customers came in, it is true, but it was to inquire indignantly why they were excluded from this remarkable free sampling.

Mr. Potts tried to explain, but seemed to be unable to make any one understand. One or two left the store satisfied with his assurance that they would surely receive their coupons later, but the majority departed indignant, with the conviction that they were being flimflammed by the store which they had stood by for years.

A remarkable change took place. The town turned over, as it were. For years the firm of Collins & Potts had carried fifty per cent of the trade of the community. The rest was divided between three smaller stores in the town.

A highly indignant fifty per cent suddenly ceased trading at Collins & Potts, and invaded the three smaller stores, almost swamping them. The other fifty per cent breezed cheerfully into the old store, received free samples of coffee and baking powder, and breezed out again—and purchased the balance of their necessities at their usual trading places.

The day following the arrival of the baking powder, a consignment of soap was received. This was distributed, six cakes for each coupon. The next day brought yeast cakes, and the next tea, and so on.

Mr. Potts was frantic. He wired the company repeatedly, and wrote them long letters at night, telling them his woes, and in every instance he received curt and brief replies to the effect that the company was living up to its part of the contract, and that Mr. Potts was expected to do the same. Not once did they offer any explanation for their extraordinary conduct.

Mr. Potts had a stormy interview

with Lawyer Patterson in the latter's office. The contract was carefully gone over, and the lawyer assured the frantic storekeeper that he was nailed up tighter than a sheep's hide to the side of a barn. There was nothing that withheld the company from sampling the public with their products. There was no clause that compelled them to send coupons to any except those they chose. They could continue distributing samples for two years if they cared to, and Mr. Potts was bound to deliver the samples or forfeit his contract and the ten-thousand-dollar bond.

Mr. Potts returned to the store a saddened man. He locked his doors, and went home and sent for a doctor. Then the rumor started that the storekeeper was in bed and on the verge of a nervous breakdown. It became evident that the ordeal had become too much for him.

Two days later he received a letter from the Quality Products Company calling his attention to the fact that he was not living up to his part of the contract. Two consignments of goods, one of Quality Oatmeal, the other of Quality Pancake Flour, were waiting on the siding for distribution. Unless he attended to these at once, the company would consider the contract broken, and would take immediate measures to collect the ten thousand dollars.

Tearing his hair in despair, Mr. Potts dragged himself from his house to the store, and reopened it. He had to admit, even to himself, that the company had him "nailed to the barn." Why they were doing it he couldn't imagine.

In the meantime Lawyer Patterson had been viewing the proceedings with an apprehensive eye. In his estimation everything had gone to smash, and the trade at the store was irretrievably ruined. He felt that it was his duty to apprise Hugh Cranson of the situation.

Two days later Hugh arrived in town in high dudgeon.

"What right have you got to sign such a contract without my sanction?" he indignantly demanded of Mr. Potts.

"Ain't it been pointed out to you that I'm boss of this store?" retorted Potts.

"It ain't none of your business what I do!"

"Is that so?" returned Hugh, with considerable heat. "You evidently overlook the fact that you are under forty-thousand-dollar bonds to the judge of probate to see that my interest in this establishment is kept intact until it is either turned over to me or forfeited! I think it is decidedly my business, when I come back here and find the store gone to smash, and the trade cleaned out! My interest is—or rather was—worth twenty thousand dollars, and it is up to you to make good!"

This phase of the situation hadn't occurred to Mr. Potts. He was liable for Hugh's interest, and would have to make it good out of his own pocket in case the business failed. The trade was indeed ruined; not a customer remained, and as each of them held a personal grudge against him, he doubted if he would ever be able to get them back. The stock wouldn't bring forty cents on the dollar at a forced sale, and, even if it did, there would not be enough to pay Hugh his share. Mr. Potts was indeed in desperate straits; he thought deeply for a minute, then turned to the young man.

"I reckon I'm licked so far as the store is concerned," he said. "I can never get back the trade I've lost, and there is no use trying. You're a bright young man, and mebbe you could do something, so if you'll agree to it, I'll turn the whole shootin' match over to you and get out."

"Do I understand by that that if I release you from all liabilities so far as my interest in the store is concerned, that you will turn it over to me absolutely, and step down and out?"

"I do," averred Mr. Potts, glad to get out of the muddle on any terms.

"Come along up to Lawyer Patterson's office," said Hugh promptly

CHAPTER IV. SQUARING UP.

MR. POTTS heaved a sigh of relief when the papers were at last signed that released him from all re-

sponsibilities, so far as the store was concerned. It was true that he had lost his business, and that he didn't have much money left, but if he had had to make that twenty thousand dollars good out of his own pocket it would have ruined him absolutely. As the matter stood, he felt that he had got out extremely easy, for he was convinced that the store was now not worth a dollar, so far as trade was concerned. He felt that he had got the best of Hugh, after all.

His troubles were not over by any means, however. Three days later a young man dropped off the train from Chicago, and hunted him up.

"I am an attorney representing the Quality Products Company," he informed Mr. Potts. "I am here in the matter of that contract."

"I ain't got nothin' to do with it," averred Mr. Potts. "I've turned over my store and all my interests in it to Hugh Cranson. You'll have to see him."

"You gave your personal bond in that contract," answered the lawyer coldly. "Mr. Cranson is not in any way responsible for it. You'll have to make good."

After they had threshed this out at great length, and with much heat, in Mr. Patterson's office, Mr. Potts began to see where the lawyers were right. He was still nailed to the barn.

"I ain't got ten thousand dollars," groaned the old man brokenly. "I'm cleaned out. Why can't you fellers let me alone?"

"We can't afford to lose the cost of the free sampling we have done," the lawyer informed him. "But we don't want to be too hard on you, Mr. Potts, and if you will make good the amount the company has expended, together with my fee, I think they will let the matter drop."

"How much will that be?" asked Mr. Potts.

"About thirty-three hundred dollars."

"I reckon I'll have to pay it," said the old man resignedly. "I'll have the money ready for you at three o'clock."

He went to the bank and put a mort-

gage on his home, and paid the company's claim. It cleaned him out, but he was glad to get away with even a mortgaged roof to sleep under. Truly the Fates had been extremely hard on the parsimonious old man.

One day, two months after these events, Mr. Potts timidly entered his old store. A wonderful change had taken place. The old counters and benches had vanished, and in their place were double-decked plate-glass show cases. Electric lights had replaced the old, smoky lamps, and the whole interior had been redecorated until Mr. Potts hardly recognized the place.

The store was well filled with customers, and the clerks were busy. Mr. Potts made his way to the rear, where he found Hugh seated at a roll-top desk, writing a letter.

"Good morning, Hugh," began the old man hesitatingly.

The new proprietor glanced up with a show of irritation. "Busy!" he said shortly. "Sit down! I'll be through in a minute."

Mr. Potts winced, but seated himself in one of the new oak office chairs, and waited until Hugh had finished writing his letter.

"Well?" said the young man suddenly, spinning around in his swivel chair.

"I—I was thinkin' that mebber you needed another clerk," faltered Mr. Potts. "If you do, I'd be mighty glad to get the job."

"Are those all the clothes you have?" questioned Hugh coldly.

"Why—er—yes. What's the matter with 'em?" answered Mr. Potts, looking down at his shabby garments.

"They're old and baggy and slovenly. Go down to Dobbins' and get yourself a decent suit, then come back here and hang up your coat and get to work. Tell Dobbins that I'll stand for the suit, in case he won't trust you."

"Then you'll give me a job?" cried Mr. Potts eagerly.

Hugh contemplated the old man silently for a minute, then his manner changed.

"Yes, Mr. Potts, I am going to give

you a job, and I am going to do better than that," he answered kindly. "I think you have been punished enough, and I have not forgotten the fact that you are my uncle's old partner, and that you and he were associated in this business for over forty years, even if you tried to fleece me out of my share of this store by despicable methods. I matched my wits against yours, Mr. Potts, and I won. I am the Quality Products Company. I bought those goods from the wholesale houses, and had them packed and labeled for me, and it was I who sent Billy Donaldson down here to get that contract from you. I knew you would fall for it. I have beaten you and made you pay all the expenses of the beating in the bargain.

"Now," he went on, "I am not going

to nag you any further, but we are going to forget everything. You can take a position in the store and show *me!*" Hugh put a strong emphasis on the "me." "And at the end of one year, if you show yourself to be square and fair with me, I am going to give you back your half interest in this store. The trade is building up again very nicely since the change of management."

Mr. Potts could hardly believe his ears.

"Goin' to give me back my store?" he murmured ecstatically. "Goin' to give me back my store! You don't mean it, Hugh!"

"Yes, I do; every word of it," the young merchant assured him. "And now," he said, with a wave of his hand, "you go along and get that new suit, and get into the harness again."

Training of Seals

ACCORDING to an old trainer, it is a very simple thing to teach seals the tricks they do in the ring.

"The cardinal principle in training animals," said he, "is not to attempt to make an animal do anything contrary to the nature of its particular species. To be successful, a trainer must know enough about the habits of the animals he has under training to fit the tricks he would teach them to their natural bent.

"The seal is very easily taught. You begin with one seal, some small pieces of fish, and a string. You let the seal sit on his pedestal, something he likes to do by nature; then you throw him one of the pieces of fish, and he naturally and easily catches it. Next you tie a piece of fish on the end of your string and swing it toward the seal; he catches this, too, and you keep moving away from him and swinging the fish to him from an increasing distance. Now you are ready to begin with the hat or cornucopia. You put a piece of fish in the bottom of it and toss it to the seal. The seal is dexterous by nature, and his nose, quickly detecting the fish in the tip of the cone, seeks it out. The cone catches on his snout and he bites out the fish and tosses the cone aside. Before long he comes to associate the cone with fish, and he will catch any number of similar ones and toss them aside when he fails to find what he wants.

"Balancing the big rubber ball is based on the same principle. The ball is soaked in fishy brine and thrown to the seal. He gets the odor and tries his best to get into the ball and find what he is after. This results in his balancing the ball on his nose, a feat to which his supple neck and his natural feeding habits are all adapted, and then he gets his piece of fish as a prize."

The Girl on the Wire

THE young man had talked for ten or fifteen minutes without a break, when the girl at the other end of the wire interrupted.

"Just a moment, Guy," she said.

"What is it, Fleda?"

"I want to change the receiver to the other ear. This one's tired."

Making an Induction Coil

The laboratory of the experimenter with electricity is incomplete without an induction coil, while in commercial work this device probably serves more purposes than any other piece of electrical apparatus. The coil described herein is large enough for a small wireless station; it will give a spark "fat" enough to ignite gunpowder even at a considerable distance from the switch.

To make this device, secure a cardboard tube of 1 inch inside diameter, and 1 foot long. From 1-inch pine cut two blocks, each 6 inches square, and bore a 1-inch hole in the center of each; slip the ends of the tube into these holes, and tack it to the wood from the inside. Coat both tube and blocks with shellac, applying several coats, allow-

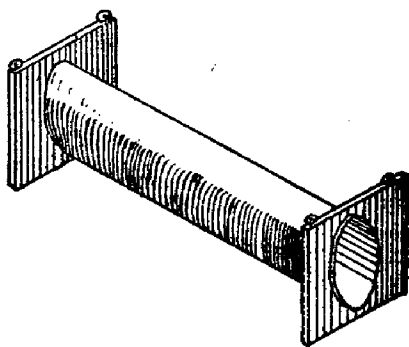


Fig. 1.

ing each coat to dry; put binding posts, or common wood screws, into the blocks as shown, and the affair will look something like Fig. 1.

The first, or primary, coil may now be wound. If you have a lathe, fasten the tube and blocks between centers, and winding will be an easy matter; if not, winding by hand is not hard, although a bit slow. Fasten one end of the wire, which should be No. 20, insulated, to a binding post on one block, and wind a layer evenly on the tube; coat with shellac, put on a layer of thin paper, and shellac that; then wind another layer, and repeat the coats of paper and shellac. Four layers in all should comprise the primary coil, and the loose end should be fastened under the other binding post of the same block

with which you started. Several layers of paper should now be wound on and liberally coated with shellac, the use of which throughout is to keep out moisture, which would be fatal to the proper working of the coil.

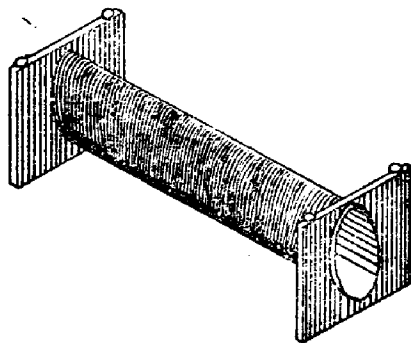


Fig. 2.

The secondary coil, which will require about two pounds of No. 36 copper wire, insulated, may now be wound. Proceed exactly as for the primary coil, except that the start and finish are made from the block at the opposite end of the tube. Shellac and paper are applied as before, and when the last layer is in place, an extra heavy coating of each should be used. Fig. 2 shows the coil wound, but without the finishing coat of paper.

For the base upon which the coil is mounted, secure a piece of wood 14

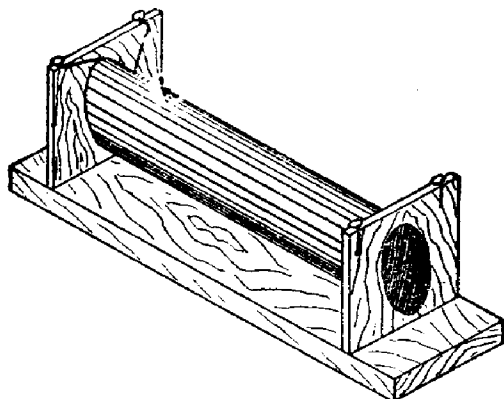


Fig. 3.

inches long, 6 inches wide, and 1 inch thick; give it several coats of shellac to keep out dampness. If kiln-dried wood is used for the mountings throughout, so much the better.

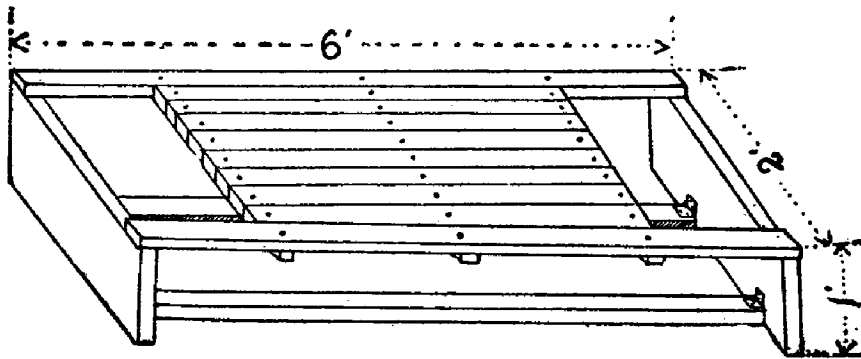
For the core, a solid piece of soft iron, 12 inches long and 1 inch in diameter, may be secured; but it is easier and perhaps even better to use No. 16 or No. 18 soft-iron wire. This should be cut into pieces 12 inches long, and packed into the center of the tube until the latter is filled. The coil is now completed by gumming paper or cloth over the tube ends and coating with shellac, as usual.

If carefully made, this coil will prove as efficient as any which might be purchased, and is, of course, very much cheaper.



Spring Platform for Exercise

This is a handy thing for either indoor or outdoor athletics, as it is practical and portable. The following lumber is required for it:



Two oak boards $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick, 1 foot wide, and 2 feet long; two oak stringers 1 inch thick, 4 inches wide, and 5 feet 9 inches long; two selected white hickory strips 1 inch thick, 6 inches wide, and 6 feet long; four white hickory strips $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick, 3 inches wide, and 4 feet long; three cleats of oak or hickory 1 inch thick, 3 inches wide, and 2 feet long.

The two oak stringers are attached to the bottom of the oak end boards with heavy hinges, and it is safer to rivet them on than it is to use screws. On top of the end boards the springboard proper is secured.

The springboard is built up by placing the short hickory strips side by side,

with the long hickory strips outside, as shown in the illustration, and holding them there by means of cleats. These cleats may be put on with small bolts, the tops of the bolts being countersunk so that the bolt heads will not project above the surface.

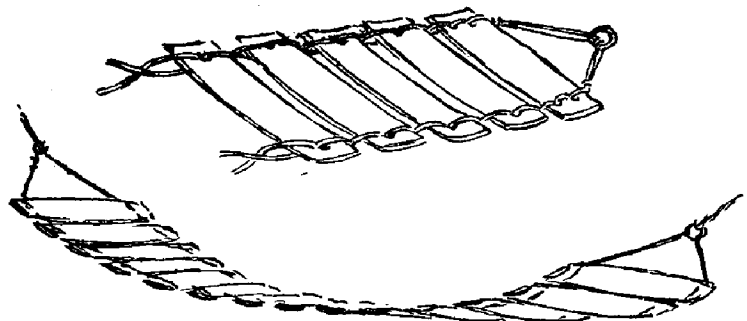
Now comes the question of securing the sustaining hickory strips to the oak end pieces. This may best be done by screwing down the ends and boring a $9/32$ -inch hole through each of the ends of the strips and the end boards at an angle, and putting in bolts.



A Barrel-stave Hammock

The barrel staves which constitute almost the only material required for this odd hammock have a 1-inch hole bored 2 inches from each end. The end staves have two at each end, so that they will lie flat when the rope is put in. The ropes are laced up through one hole, down through the next, then up through the next, and so on down each side, where they are run through the ring and again laced through the same holes in the opposite way. The loose ends are then put through a ring, and tied.

The rings should be about 2 feet from

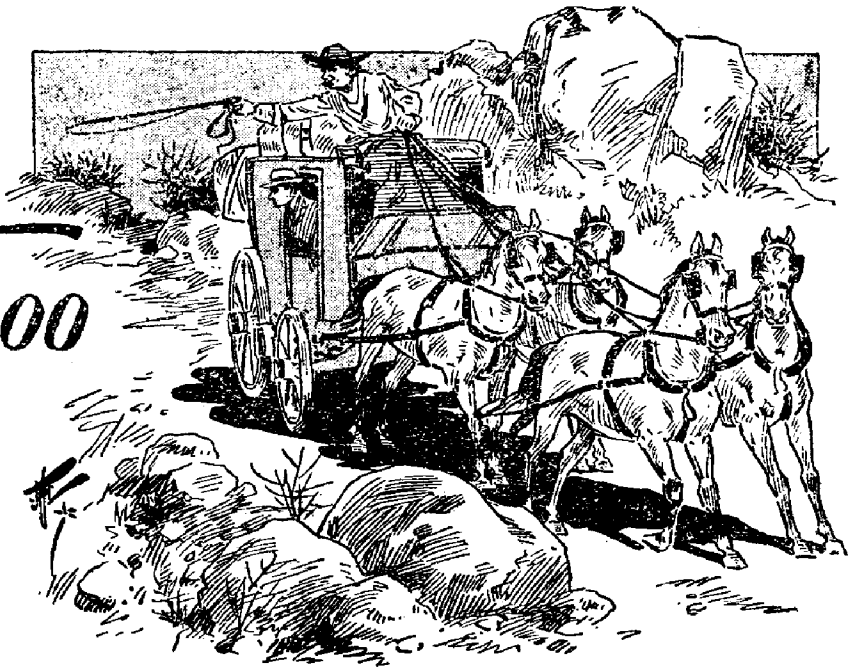


the staves at the ends. There should be twenty-five 3-inch staves, or eighteen 4-inch staves. Clothesline rope will answer, but the end ropes should be somewhat heavier.

Under the Taboo

By
Dennis F. Stovall

Story of a
Western Mine.



(A COMPLETE NOVELETTE)

CHAPTER I.

THE LADY OF THE MINE.

MARTIN DOUGLAS had just seen the last of his luggage placed safely aboard the Sumpter-Taber gold-mine stage, and was on the point of climbing into the coach himself, when a boy rode up on a wheel, looked at him a moment as if to make sure that he was the man sought, and handed over a little yellow envelope with the question: "Ain't your name Douglas?"

"It sure is," the engineer replied, as he signed for the telegram, and hastily opened it. He read it hurriedly at first, expecting it to be nothing more than additional instructions regarding the work that was ahead of him. He was surprised to find it of an entirely different nature. His face clouded, and his mouth was tightly drawn. Finally he noted that the boy stood by, waiting for a reply.

"There will be no answer," Douglas told him, tossing down a coin. Left to himself, he read the telegram through again. There was not much to it, but the contents perplexed him not a little. The wording was as follows:

Martin Douglas, Granite, Ore., or Taber Mine.

Take my serious advice and throw up that Taber job. It's a bad proposition. You may not get out alive. Just talked with miner from there. The mine is tabooed. Can't give details; but don't go in. Drop it before it's too late.

HARRY FIELDS.

"I'm sorry, Harry, old friend," the engineer remarked to the yellow sheet of paper; "you mean all right, but I can't take your advice. I'm no quitter. I'm not going to give it up—not at this stage of the game."

His brows were drawn closely together, and something like a frown overspread his clean-shaven face. This was the second time he had been advised to keep away from the Taber, the first warning having come not more than an hour before, and from a man who claimed to know all about the mine. But the advice of this man, like that of Harry Fields, lacked details. And Martin Douglas was too practical, too determined, to give serious attention to fables.

Within a few minutes the driver had climbed to his seat of importance, received the whip and the lines, and, after pulling the slouched hat to just the proper angle over his left eye, spoke a

word of command to the four horses and the coach rolled out of town. Yet a little while, and they had struck the mountains, not pausing till the summit of the divide was reached. Here the driver brought the outfit to an abrupt halt and called below:

"There it is, friend—that's the Taber Mine. Take a squint at it."

The engineer looked out and noted that the driver's whip pointed downward toward a jumbled litter of tents, cabins, and buildings at the base of the fir-clad mountain. One structure, much larger than the brood by which it was surrounded, leaned its generous, red roof against the hillside as if afraid of falling into the vale below. This was the stamp mill, its two tall stacks being plumed with lazy clouds of smoke and steam. The thunder of its battery could be plainly heard.

Within a few minutes the driver repeated. "A thousand bucks a month wouldn't induce your Uncle Riley to enter that mine, an' I'm an orphan, with nobody to mourn my demise." He shook his head dubiously, and cracked the long whip over the leaders. The coach reeled forward, and whirled at breakneck speed down the corkscrew road.

"Number three!" Douglas muttered, "and I pass again; wonder who will be next?" He smiled grimly as he thought of the dark suggestions of mystery, the meaning of which he could not guess. Nor was he inclined to try. With the solution of riddles Martin Douglas was not at present concerned. The main thing with him was that he would soon be chief of the Taber Mine—that he was to make practical use of the education lately acquired. His one aim and purpose was to make good as a mining engineer.

Soon the rocking Concord drew up before the camp store and post office. While the driver tossed down the mail bags, Douglas, who happened to be the only passenger, climbed out and stretched his cramped limbs. A dozen or more flannel-shirted men lounged idly on boxes and benches in front of the store, most of them casting curious

glances in the direction of the new arrival.

Just across the tailings-piled road, and almost opposite the store, rose a big wooden building which Douglas guessed was the boarding house; and it was toward this that he wended his way, carrying a part of his luggage and instructing the driver to bring over the remainder. Before he had reached the porch, a young fellow, whom the engineer took to be the camp roustabout, intercepted him and asked if his name was Douglas.

"That's the main part of it," the engineer replied.

"You're the new supe, ain't you?" the young fellow inquired.

"I hope to be," Douglas said.

"The lady has a special cabin, with an office, fixed up for you," the roustabout told him. "Let me have some of your stuff, an' I'll tell Pete to bring over your trunk."

The engineer was relieved of a part of his load, and followed up the road toward the mill, finally halting before a long, low cabin that nestled under a laurel. Near by was another cabin, which he took to be the office of the bookkeeper, and just beyond it still another one, whose rear end backed up against the mill wall, and which, from the array of bottles, beakers, and retorting flasks that the engineer glimpsed through the window, he guessed to be the laboratory of the mine's assayer.

The roustabout unlocked the door and gave Douglas the key. "Here's where you'll live and do your heavy work," he remarked; then added mysteriously: "Unless the Taber gets you some time when you're not lookin'."

The engineer paid but little attention to the roustabout's concluding statement. Frequent repetition had made the thing grow tiresome; moreover, he was immediately interested in his quarters. He found himself in a well-appointed office, the front room of the cabin being fitted with a massive desk, a draft board, stool, swivel chair, and cabinets with plenty of cubby-holes and files. The floor was rough, but carpeted with the skins of

bear, lynx, and cougar. From the low, heavy-beamed ceiling hung two incandescent lamps, which he guessed were supplied with electric energy by the mine's own plant. As it was growing dark, he turned one of them on.

Many things were revealed that he did not see before, which indicated the pains that had been taken for his reception. The cobblestone fireplace was piled with wood and kindling, ready for a match; and on the mantel was a humidor filled to the brim with smoking tobacco. The engineer took his beloved pipe from its case and, laying it down beside the bowl of fine cut, smiled happily; for now the combination was complete.

Through an open door he saw the rear room of the cabin, and a bed whose deep, thick mattress was comfortably piled with warm blankets. Into this room he took his luggage, and a few minutes later his trunk was unloaded on the porch. He found the roustabout waiting to assist in conveying it to its destined place in the sleeping apartment. When this task was done, the roustabout informed him that "the lady" wished to see him when he had eaten supper. "That's her cabin just across the way," he added, with a jerk of his thumb.

The big brass gong at the boarding house clanged the first call to supper. Looking out, the engineer saw the miners filing across the road from the bunk house—the night-shift men going to mess. The camp was ablaze now with the glare of arc lamps, and the windows of the many cabins and buildings gleamed with light. Close by, the stamp battery pounded, like a thousand restless hoofs on a stable floor. Douglas washed the dirt of travel from his face and hands, and joined the line of hungry men.

"It's the new supe," he heard one man remark in low tones to an inquiring neighbor, as they were seated at the board. "His sojourn here will be about as long as the dance of a grasshopper on a hot stove."

There was some laughter as the result of this, and other remarks were

made, of a similar kind, to all of which the young engineer paid no heed. He enjoyed his beef, beans, and stewed prunes with the heartiest of them, and proved to a goodly number that he was not the "stuck-up" sort that they had at first believed.

A half hour after supper, when he had made sure that his personal appearance was good enough to warrant an audience with the lady owner and manager of the mine, he found himself tapping on the door of the little cabin that stood just across the road from his own. He knew the lady of the Taber by correspondence only, but had pictured her in his mind as a woman of middle age; a typical woman of the West, whose hair would be tinged with gray, and whose face would show the lines of responsibility, worry, and care. She had signed her name as plain Winnie Mason, and she was, no doubt, the widow of a man who had at one time owned the mine.

The door opened at once, and a girl of about twenty, bright-eyed and smiling, greeted him. Her mass of copper-brown hair scintillated in the lights behind her. She was attired in a house gown as charming and modish as any Douglas had seen in the East.

The engineer was taken completely by surprise. He had not expected to meet such a fascinating creature. He told himself at once that he had never seen a prettier girl. She must be—he hoped she would prove to be—the daughter of "the lady."

"I beg your pardon," he said, bowing politely, "the owner of the mine wishes to see me. I am Martin Douglas, and I was directed to this cabin."

The young woman laughed merrily and extended her hand. "I am the owner of the Taber," she told him. "My name is Winnie Mason. Come in."

CHAPTER II.

THE TABER MYSTERY.

DOUGLAS' second surprise was a greater—and a happier one—than the first, yet it was hard for the engineer to believe that this young woman

—this rose-pink slip of a girl—could be the owner and manager of the Taber Mine.

The cabin was arranged, in the matter of its rooms, similarly to his own; but its furnishings were entirely different. It was much like stepping into the bright, cheerful study of a college girl. There was a soft velvet rug on the floor, the walls were daintily tinted and gayly covered with pictures, posters, and pennants. There were big, lazy chairs waiting temptingly before a cozy fireplace, in which a cheerful fire blazed, and a mammoth leather couch in one corner piled with pillows and cushions. The little desk that stood against the wall, heaped with a litter of papers, letters, and documents, was the only feature of the room that indicated the position of the occupant. Even this might have been the working desk of a student.

"I'm glad you could accept the position," the girl told him, as he seated himself in one of the big chairs before the fire. "I have been in need of a superintendent for some time. My foreman, Oliver Judd, though a competent miner, and a good manager of men, is not a practical mining engineer."

"I hope that I will be able to give you the assistance you need," Douglas replied. "I haven't the experience of older men, but I believe I can solve all the problems that the Taber will present."

"That's the kind of talk that pleases me," she said happily. "And let me tell you, right at the beginning, that the Taber will have a few riddles for you of a peculiar nature. It was this fact that made it difficult for me to find a man who would accept the position. You were the third to whom this place was tendered. The first man got no closer to the camp than Sumpter; the second came to the mine, remained overnight, and took the early-morning stage. I do not know whether the same influences were exerted to turn you or not; if they were——"

"I was advised to keep away," he told her simply, "but it was advice that I could not heed."

The young woman gazed at him a moment in silence, her eyes beaming. "And why couldn't you heed it?" she asked.

"Because I am determined to investigate and learn for myself. If it is a problem in mining engineering, it will be to my advantage to solve it, no matter how dangerous or difficult." Martin Douglas spoke lowly, but his words were filled with determination and purpose.

Again the young woman beamed upon him. And, after a pause, she continued, as if to put him thoroughly to the test: "The thing that made the mining engineers ahead of you turn back is more than a problem—it is a mystery."

If she had hoped to move Martin Douglas to the slightest change of color in his cheek, or to word or gesture, she met disappointment. He received her statement with calm indifference, and finally asked:

"Three others were good enough to offer a hint of this mystery, but none gave details. Perhaps you might be good enough to tell me something of its nature."

"Willingly," she answered. "You may not know that this mine was left to me by my father, who was accidentally killed on the property some two years ago. Oliver Judd was foreman of the Taber at the time my father met his death, and has been in charge of it ever since as general foreman and boss of the crew. There are very few men in the crew now who were here two years ago, for mining men, as a class, are a restless lot. I mention this that you may get an idea of the peculiar nature of this so-called mystery of the Taber Fraction."

"The Taber Fraction?" Douglas broke in, his eyes kindling with interest.

"Yes, the Taber Fraction," she answered. "This property consists of one full claim and a fraction. The Fraction adjoins the Taber proper on the north, and it was over there that the original strike occurred. This first strike was very rich, and considerable underground work was done—a shaft

sunk, and drifts run on two or three levels. My father had a partner in those days, but the partner died, and the old workings were subsequently covered over and hidden, but not till they had completely filled with water."

The girl paused a moment as if to see what effect this would have upon the engineer. "I understand," he told her finally, and then she continued:

"The main shaft of the Taber is now down eight hundred feet, and there are almost two miles of underground workings. To follow the ore body, it has been necessary to extend the drifts well over the line into the Taber Fraction. Every day our main workings are getting closer and closer to the old workings; each time a drill is moved forward, or a blast set, there is danger of that subterranean lake breaking through and flooding the mine, drowning the men and putting an end to the work."

For a moment the happy spirit left the girl. Her voice was filled with apprehension and fear, and something came into her eyes that betrayed the weight of her responsibility. In spite of herself, the terror of this thing which had made brave men turn their backs upon the camp, bore heavily upon her.

Martin Douglas was struck at once with an earnest desire to help her—to shoulder the load that was bearing her down. "It seems to me that this should not prove a very difficult thing," he said encouragingly. "Your father must have left a working chart of the old mine, showing the location of the shaft, its depth, the length of drifts, and——"

"That's just the difficulty," she hastened to inform him. "If he ever had any such chart, it has been lost or destroyed, for it cannot be found. Neither can any man be located who worked with father on the Taber Fraction."

"This man, Oliver Judd, your foreman," Douglas started to ask, "did he——"

"He was not with my father when the Fraction was worked. He knows of it only by what was told him," the girl said.

"Who told him about the old workings?"

"My father. Judd says that the matter was mentioned a number of times, and that father feared the flooded shaft and drifts might cause trouble. I knew nothing of it till about a year ago. Judd had kept it quiet, and the men worked in the mine oblivious to the hidden danger. Then he said something about it, and from that time we have had great difficulty in maintaining a crew. Whenever a water vein is struck, the miners rush out in terror, nor can they be induced to return. Mysterious, underground noises are sometimes heard, which are believed to be the sound of gushing water, and this causes a panic. The strikes, lay-offs, threats, and other disturbances have about put me on the verge of desperation. I do not know what to do. Were it something tangible, something that I could see, I would not mind it for a moment. But it is the mystery of the thing that places it beyond my comprehension."

Again her face clouded, the sparkle left her eyes, and an expression of hopelessness and despair was printed on her face. And again the sympathy of Martin Douglas was touched. He became more determined to prove himself master of the situation.

"By locating the old shaft," he said, speaking as if there could be little difficulty about it, "it would require but a few days to place a headframe and double skip. A big gasoline engine could supply the power, and by operating the two skips night and day, the old workings could be unwatered in six weeks. A surface pump would then serve to keep them clear."

"I wish it could be done," she said, in the same tone of hopelessness.

"It can be done," he assured her; "it must be done. Why did you send for me? Didn't you think that I might help you?"

"Yes, I did," she told him, suddenly revived by his enthusiasm.

"Then leave the thing to me, and don't you worry any more about it." He rose as if to go. He was, in truth, anxious to begin. "When could I see and have a talk with the foreman?"

"Not till morning," she returned.

"He is on duty during the day shift, and the mine is in charge of the level boss during the night. You had better go to your cabin, have a good sleep, and take up the task with a fresh mind in the morning."

"Very well," he agreed, "that suits me."

She leaped up buoyantly, and became once more the happy, and, apparently, carefree girl who had met him at the door. "I feel better," she told him; "I feel certain that I have found the man who can solve this problem. You do not realize what a burden has been lifted from me."

"And I am happy in the confidence you show," the engineer returned. "I shall strive to prove myself equal to the trust." Douglas would have told her more, had the courage been given him. Looking down into her smiling face, and with the glow of her brown eyes thrilling him, he would gladly have said that this task, dark and dangerous though it appeared to be, was a pleasure. What did he care for the mystery? If there were a dozen mysteries, black and sinister, hovering over the Taber, he would joyfully throw himself into them all.

She walked with him to the door, and before bidding him good night, once again drew from him the promise that he would go to his cabin and get a good night's rest. He turned away with a vision of a young woman clad in a dainty, rose-pink gown, her face radiant, and her wealth of copper-brown hair scintillating in the soft glow of the lighted room.

It was yet early evening, and the camp was wide awake. Brightly illuminated as a city street, the roadways and the cross-trails swarmed with men. The night shift was just going on, and the day men were filing from the mess house, well fed and boisterous. Lights blinked from the cabin windows, and the Miner's Rest, a big frame building near the store, equipped with pool and billiard tables, card games, and other amusements for the crew, buzzed like a beehive.

Douglas sauntered down to the door

and noted that the place was filled with men, and densely fogged with tobacco smoke. In the more quiet and secluded corners of the big room, a few miners were reading books, magazines, and papers, or trying to write letters to "the folks back home."

Douglas strode in and mingled for a time with the crowd. He was keenly aware of the curious glances thrown his way, and overheard several remarks of which he was the subject. Though he felt the dignity and importance of his position, as chief of the Taber, he desired to win the good will of the men. They stood aloof, however, and seemed averse to becoming acquainted. This was not at all in keeping with the free-hearted spirit of the mines, and the engineer was at a loss to account for it.

After a time he left the place, and walked farther out toward the border of the camp. Out there, near the point where the stage road entered, darkness prevailed. The engineer felt in his coat for his pipe, and remembered that he had laid it on the mantel of his cabin beside the humidior of fine cut.

Obliged to go without the desired smoke, he proceeded a short distance farther, and was brought to keen attention by the sound of voices down the trail. At first he believed the voices were of men approaching, and he paused to let them pass. But they got no closer apparently, and when he had stood a moment, he discovered that two men were standing in the black shadow of an overhanging bluff, almost directly below him.

He would have paid no attention to their talk, but for the fact that he seemed to be the subject of the conversation. This matter of being the topic for all the gossip of the camp was getting on his nerves, and making him ill at ease. His had always been the plan of speaking out, of keeping everything aboveboard. A desire to learn, if possible, the reason for his being kept in distrust by the miners held him in silence.

"Yes, he just got here to-night," said one, in a deep bass voice.

"Aren't you afraid he will get onto

the scheme and put the lady wise?" the other asked in a tone of alarm.

"Not a bit of it," the first one replied. "He's young and inexperienced, an' he won't last long. One good scare on the lower level will fix him good and plenty."

"I hope you can throw the scare into him pretty soon, for I've got my people all primed for the deal, and the sooner we can close it up, the quicker can we make our clean-up."

"Leave that to me," the bass voice said. "I'll have scare number one happen to-night. It's quite likely that he will load his trunk on the stage, and strike the road for Sumpter to-morrow."

CHAPTER III.

A MIDNIGHT CALL.

MMARTIN DOUGLAS would hear no more. Struck with sudden anger, he was seized with the impulse to approach the two men and make his identity known. He would have it out with them, and in the open, as was his way. On second thought he concluded that this might not be prudent or wise. He did not know who they were—did not know for sure that they belonged to the camp. It was too dark for him to distinguish them, and their voices were strange.

Of one thing he was certain: they were talking about him, and about the Taber. Two words had floated up to him that caused suspicion; these were "scheme" and "deal." Whoever they were, these men were mixed up in a plot that concerned himself and the Taber. Plans had been made, no doubt, to take advantage of the young woman who owned the mine, and he stood in the way.

The engineer ground his teeth and clenched his fists. "Brutes!" he muttered under his breath, "to take advantage of a girl! I hope I am in the way. As for throwing a scare into me—well, turn loose; I'm ready!"

He turned back on the trail as quietly as he had come, leaving the two men talking under the bluff. He was convinced now that all this behind-the-palm

talk meant something more than the danger of a flooded mine. It was something more evil, more mysterious, than a mere problem in mining engineering.

No wonder Winnie Mason was worrying her heart out. It was a load far too heavy for her to bear. "Leave it to me," he said half aloud. "I'm itching for a fight, and this thing suits me!"

He passed up the winding path to the camp, going by the Miner's Rest, which still thronged with men. From the mess house came the clatter of dishes, a violin and a mouth organ whined and wailed a mournful tune from a near-by cabin, the hoist engines sputtered and coughed as they jerked the loaded cages up the shaft, and above all thundered the mill.

Douglas entered his cabin and turned on the light. It was yet an hour before bedtime, so he touched a match to the kindled pile of fuel in the fireplace, filled his pipe from the fresh bowl, and sat down before the cheerful blaze for a peaceful smoke. He threw off the black depression that had assailed him, forgot the troubles promised for the future, and enjoyed to the full a happy, fascinating picture that had but recently come to his mind.

The engineer had trained himself never to let an unsolved problem keep him awake. When he went to his bed it was for no other purpose than to sleep. So to-night, when he stretched himself at comfortable ease between the thick blankets, his head had no sooner touched the pillow than slumber came to him.

Late in the night he awoke. Some one was loudly pounding on his door. He leaped out, jumped into a few of his clothes, and called: "Who is it? What's wanted?"

"I'm Harter," a voice replied, "the night-shift boss. You're wanted up at the mine."

"All right. I'll be ready in a jiffy," the engineer told him. Whereupon he got into his khaki clothes, flannel shirt, and miner's boots. A moment later he was at the door, finding a short, heavy-set man standing on the porch.

"I hate to call you out at this time of night," the shift boss said, "but the devil is loose on the lower level. All the men are out, and I can't get them to go down. Judd gave me strict orders not to wake him till morning. He was in the mine about nine last evening, and told some of the men that there might be trouble."

"What's wrong?" Douglas asked, as he started from the cabin and followed Harter up the winding trail toward the shaft house. The lights were all out in the buildings and cabins, and the camp was in darkness, save for the sputtering glare of a single arc lamp near the mill.

"It's a break at the end of the lower drift—over against the Fraction," the shift boss explained.

"Is the water coming in?"

"Spurting like a bulkhead," Harter returned in a tone of alarm. "The rock is slipping, too. We're on soft ground over there."

Reaching the shaft house, they found all of the night crew, except those who had been placed on the upper levels, standing idly round the headframe. Many of them still wore their rubber coats and held to their candlesticks, though a number had gone to the "change room" and made ready to quit the mine for the night. All glanced up with surprise when the young engineer came among them. As Douglas had never been down in the Taber, he knew nothing whatever of the mine, and could only judge of the condition below by the expression of terror on the faces of the men.

The crowd gave way and he advanced directly to the cage. "I want two men," he announced, turning about and looking steadily into the eyes of those around him.

"What for?" one man wanted to know.

"To prop up the drift," the engineer replied. "I think there must be a break in the rock."

"You bet there's a break in the rock," the same voice answered. "and a hundred men couldn't prop it up."

"It must be propped up," Douglas

said sternly, his black eyes flashing. "Come, quick, two of you!"

The little shift boss came over and entered the cage. "One more man," called the new superintendent.

But the men held back. "It's no use," said one. "She's comin' down fast. The water's pourin' in like a flood through a flume."

The stubbornness of the crew drove the engineer to anger. Had he been longer among them he would have given expression to his feelings, but prudence demanded extreme caution at this time, and by an effort he controlled himself.

"Very well," he told them, "Harter and I will go down alone. All of the night men will remain here till we return. If the lower level is safe, you will go on duty again and finish the shift."

There was a ring of authority, of leadership and undaunted courage in the young superintendent's words. This was recognized instantly. The crew changed at once from their state of obstinacy. If they could not obey, they would at least await a further order; moreover, they wanted to test the mettle of the young fellow who had attempted to command.

Douglas pulled the bell wire and gave the signal to "Down—eight!"

The cage dropped instantly. The station levels flitted by, all of them electric-lighted, deserted and silent save the fifth, from which came the distant clatter of an air drill.

"Part of the night crew are on this level," the shift boss remarked. "They feel safe."

On the eighth level they suddenly stopped with a jerk. It was dark down there, and hot, for the rocky passages were filled with steam, fogging the incandescent lamps and making it difficult to breathe. Water was dripping everywhere, and running in streams along the tunnel floor. Off in the distance it could be heard to splash and gurgle as if an underworld cataract were tearing through the mine.

Harter had pulled two candlesticks from a station post, stuck in fresh candles, and lighted them. He passed one

to the superintendent. In the yellow glow of the little flame, the face of the shift boss shone ghastly pale. His hand trembled nervously when he gave Douglas the candle.

"Follow me," he directed, "the break is at the end of this drift."

CHAPTER IV.

THE BREAK.

DOUGLAS and Harter followed the car track, passing under the ore chutes that dropped down from the stopes. Up in these the men had been at work. All of the stopes appeared to have been deserted in wild panic. Candles, half spent, sputtered from sticks whose beaks clung to the jagged quartz. Drills, picks, and shovels were scattered in confusion. Two ore cars, partly filled, remained under a spout.

Halfway down the drift they came to the pump station. Underneath this was the sump, a huge, underground reservoir, into which all of the water of the mine was drained. The big pump, unmanned, kept up its rhythmic beat. The heat was intense here, for the escaping steam came from the station, being first delivered to the lower level through an asbestos-incased pipe from the power house on the surface.

"How is the sump?" Douglas asked, when the two entered the station.

Harter crossed the room, held his candle up near a big-figured gauge, and replied: "She's within three feet of the top; that's more than ten above low water."

"Is the pump holding it down?"

"No, she ain't; and that's the devil of it. The water has gained three feet since the beginnin' of the shift. At this rate the whole lower level will be flooded within twelve hours." The expression of terror on Harter's face became intensified. His words were filled with an overwhelming fear. He turned to the young engineer and exclaimed: "Do you know, young fellow, what we're up against?"

"I know that we've got a wet mine to keep drained," Douglas replied calmly.

"It's worse than that," Harter returned hoarsely. "We're borin' into a hole of water big enough to fill the Taber to the rim! I think this drift is within a yard of it right now."

"Oh, come, brace up!" Douglas said encouragingly, for he noted that the shift boss was on the verge of despair. "Let's take a look at the drift."

Without waiting for Harter to show the way, the engineer left the station and continued his walk along the track. Six hundred feet from the level station he reached the face of the drift. The splash of water and the groan of slipping rock and earth, though sounds that would have attracted but little attention on the surface, when confined to the narrow, rock-bound chamber, seemed almost deafening.

A long slit was exposed across the face of the drift, and from this the water gushed as if through a leak in a gigantic reservoir. Douglas ran up under the slipping maw and jabbed his candlestick into the rock. Then he examined it hurriedly, but with a careful eye. He wanted to know if that stream gushed merely from a vein that would soon spend itself, or came from a hidden sump.

The shift boss tremblingly approached, and stood by in silence. He saw the engineer thrust exploring hands into the break; saw him pull slabs of quartz from the vein and hold them up near the light. He wondered at this, but wondered most of all when the young superintendent put his mouth to the gushing fountain and tasted of the water.

Douglas whirled about instantly, full of life and action. He had reached a decision, and a course of procedure was full upon his mind.

"That water is pure!" he shouted. "It's just an underground vein, but we must prop up this drift. It's coming down. Run back to the cage and ring for timbers."

The shift boss turned and ran down the drift, leaving the superintendent pulling at the quartz with bare hands. Yet a little while and a load of stulls came down the shaft; moreover, a

crowd of men came also, and swarmed along the drift, bearing the timbers on their shoulders. They had recovered from the first shock of their fright, and their courage had been renewed by the cool behavior and lack of fear of the superintendent.

"That's the stuff, men!" Douglas cried cheerfully, as he saw them coming, and stood by to let them pass.

Jacks were brought with the timbers, and, seizing one of these, the engineer helped drive the stulls home as they were passed up from behind. The men worked like Trojans, all of them, in the oppressive atmosphere of the tunnel. Within an hour the creaking and grinding ceased. The slip settled firm on its new foundation. The engineer was the last to leave the drift, and, as he turned away he noted with extreme satisfaction that the water no longer gushed from the vein. It merely dribbled down the face. Half exhausted, he tottered back along the drift, pausing at the pump station for a glance at the gauge. The sump was being lowered. The report of this, coupled with the engineer's assurance that the mine was safe, drove all remaining fear from the night crew. Loaded with men, the cage brought all of those who had remained on the surface, and all went to their places in the stopes to complete the shift.

Now that he was down in the mine, the superintendent finished the night in an examination of all the lower workings, going from level to level. When he emerged from the shaft, day was breaking, the mill whistle shrieked the change of shift, and the brass gong clanged the first call to morning mess. He went to his cabin, changed his clothes, and filed down with the men to the boarding house.

He was shown to a special table that was set apart from those around which gathered the crew. This little table differed from the others not only in size, but in the cleanliness of its linen and the polish of its silver-plated knives, forks, and spoons. Douglas pleasantly declined the favor, and seated himself with the crew. He had noted that the little table was spread

for two, and was curious to know who would be the other man. He kept his eye on the corner, and saw a dapper, flaxen-haired young fellow, who wore eyeglasses, a high collar, and a general air of importance, strut in and take one of the reserved seats.

Shortly after breakfast he saw this young fellow rap at the door of Miss Mason's cabin. The girl appeared and handed out a bundle of letters, which the flaxen-haired man took at once in the direction of the post office. Douglas concluded that he must be the mine's bookkeeper.

The engineer had given the roustabout orders to find Oliver Judd, the foreman, and inform him that the superintendent desired a meeting as early as possible that morning in the latter's cabin. Within an hour, and while Douglas was getting his books, papers, and surveying instruments in order, there came a heavy footfall on the porch, followed by an equally heavy rap on the door. When the engineer opened it, he found before him a man who corresponded in every way to the tread and the rap. He was big, tall, and powerful, with unusually long arms and heavy hands. He wore miner's boots and a corduroy suit. Underneath the low-drawn sloucher hat glittered a pair of black eyes, small and close set. His face was covered with a dark, bushy beard.

"I'm Judd, the foreman," he announced. "You wanted to see me?"

The engineer gave a slight start, for the voice was the deep bass he had heard while standing on the trail at the border of the camp the evening before—the voice of the one who had said that "one good scare on the lower level would fix the kid good and plenty."

A host of thoughts ran riot through his brain. He was seized on the instant with the belief that the foreman was connected, in some way, with the mystery of the Taber Fraction. He was, at least, an active party in a plot that vitally concerned the mine.

"Yes, I want to see you," Douglas hastened to tell him. "Come in a while and we'll talk things over."

The big fellow strode in, but seemed ill at ease on the rug-covered floor. He went over and leaned against the mantel, waiting for the engineer to state the business of the meeting.

"In the first place, I want to ask that you bring me the surveyors' charts and working diagrams of the Taber," Douglas requested. "I suppose you have a number of them, showing the location of levels, drifts, and all underground workings?"

"Yes, I have," the foreman answered.

"I must have them in order to get a line on the work that has been done, and to proceed intelligently with the development. I would like also to ask if you have, or know anything about, an old working chart of the Taber Fraction?"

Oliver Judd did not at once answer. He shifted his weight uneasily from one foot to the other, then gazed at Douglas as if the question were not fully understood. "The Taber Fraction?" he asked. "What do you mean by that?"

"I mean the portion of the Taber on which Mason made the original strike. I understand that you know something of it."

"I don't know anything about a working chart," the foreman replied.

"Do you know anything about the old workings?"

"Very little," Oliver Judd said, speaking as if he were making a confession. It was plainly evident that he resented these pointed questions of the new superintendent, and was keenly averse to answering them.

"But you do know that the lower north drift is getting under the Taber Fraction, that the old workings are filled with water, and that the Taber itself is in great danger of being flooded?"

"I think there is some danger, yes," the foreman said.

"The men of the crew, who got their belief in the existence of the old water-filled workings from you, must think there is a lot of danger; anyway, the entire lower-level crew fled from the mine last night, and I couldn't get them to go down till the shift boss and I had made an investigation."

"What did I have to do with that?" the foreman demanded, with sudden anger. He took a step from the fireplace, and glowered upon the engineer. The later remained in his seat, perfectly calm and unperturbed.

"You passed the word around, when in the mine about nine o'clock, that there might be trouble before morning."

The foreman's black eyes were gleaming wickedly, but Douglas looked into them unflinchingly when he told him this.

"What if I did? Didn't I have a right to tell 'em that, if I thought it was so?" the foreman demanded, his wrath increasing.

"Now, see here, Judd," the superintendent cut in, sitting up in his chair and looking the big fellow in the face. "It's a foolish waste of time for us to quarrel, or go on in this rambling way. What I wish to learn is the amount of definite information you have regarding the old Taber Fraction workings."

"What good would it do you?" Oliver Judd asked, his anger still uncooled.

"As superintendent of the mine it might possibly be quite helpful to me," Douglas assured him. "You have been foreman a number of years, and certainly ought to know the property thoroughly. As I have been given the position of superintendent, it will be to our advantage to work in harmony. Neither should keep from the other anything that relates to the operation of the Taber."

"I'm not keepin' back anything," Judd repeated, with dogged persistence.

"I sincerely hope you are not," the superintendent returned. "So I will think that you had nothing to do with the scare given the crew last night. I made a careful examination of the break, and am satisfied that the water came only from a vein."

"How can you tell the difference between vein water and that from hidden workin's?" the foreman wanted to know.

"Very easily," Douglas answered. "In the first place, there is the nature of the break itself. This one was a

long, narrow slit, proving it to be an opening or fissure that served as a natural underground watercourse. But the simplest test of all is to taste the water. That from an old mine would be stagnant. This was pure and sweet."

"And so you believe that the mine is safe?" Judd asked.

"Yes, I believe it is safe. I have gone over it thoroughly," Douglas answered. "And the crew shall be advised of my belief. As superintendent I must demand that you keep silent regarding the matter. There has been too much said about it already." The superintendent was on his feet now, and speaking in the calm but forceful tone of a leader.

"How about the old workin's? Don't you think——"

"I think they do not exist," Douglas told him frankly. He turned to his desk, as if the matter had been definitely settled.

Oliver Judd shambled to the door, hesitating a moment with his hand on the knob. He looked toward the superintendent with an expression on his grizzled face that indicated a further question on his mind which he lacked the courage to speak. Douglas bent over the desk and became busily engaged with the papers before him. So the foreman went out, slamming the door.

CHAPTER V.

THE BOOKKEEPER'S DISCOVERY.

SHORTLY after Judd left, Douglas rose and began pacing back and forth across the cabin. Though he had presented a bold front to the foreman, the engineer was deeply troubled. He had spoken the truth when he said that he believed the mine was safe for the present; but as for the future, that was a different matter.

It is an old, old adage among miners that "no man can guess beyond the point of the pick." and this applies as truly to the possible striking of water, as to the uncovering of treasure. So the superintendent had no means of knowing what lay ten feet or a yard

beyond the face of the lower north drift. He had told Oliver Judd that he believed the much-talked-of old workings did not exist. And, so far as his observations in the mine could prove, this statement was true. He knew absolutely that the water pouring into the lower level sump, though great in volume, came from no other source than that of fissures and rock veins. In the parlance of the West, the Taber was a "wet mine."

This very fact, however, increased the danger, for if the old Taber Fraction workings did exist, they must certainly be filled with water. With no charts, no diagrams, no engineer's maps or drawings of any sort, not even a single scrap of definite information concerning the fabled claim, how was he to locate it, or prevent the lower drifts from breaking through? Strangely enough, all the "pay chutes" of the ore body extended over into the Taber Fraction, and all subsequent work must be done in that direction. There was nothing to be done but go on blindly, trusting to luck and taking a miners' chance.

It was during his troubled state of mind that he heard the pounding of hoofs on the road, and, looking out, saw a man and a woman, riding mountain ponies, gallop through the camp and approach the cabin. At first he took them to be strangers, but when they came closer, he saw that the woman was the young lady of the mine, and her escort the dapper, flaxen-haired fellow who sat at a special table for mess. For some reason, Douglas had taken a dislike to the fellow, mainly because of his pompous air. This dislike now became intensified.

He was in the act of lighting his pipe when he heard one of the horses come to a halt before his cabin, and a young woman's voice called: "Hello, Mr. Douglas!"

He replaced the pipe on the mantel and went to the door. Miss Mason, mounted on her pony, greeted him cheerfully.

"How are you this morning?" she asked, and before he could make reply,

went on cheerily: "I heard about the difficulty you had last night, and of your getting the crew to go down after the break. That was good work."

Her words were free from flattery, but the ring of sincerity in her tone drove the depression from the engineer's mind. Her smile made him forget his troubles on the instant. He would gladly have faced danger, and suffered the hardships of the night just to hear her tell him this—that he had done "good work."

"I learned something this morning that makes me happy," she continued, "and which you will, no doubt, be glad to hear: Jason, the bookkeeper, with whom I have been out riding, told me that he had found an old working chart of the Taber Fraction. He uncovered it among a lot of rubbish in his office."

"I am glad to hear it," Douglas returned enthusiastically. It certainly looked as if this would be a good day for him. With such a chart in his possession, he could soon locate the exact position of the old workings, if they really existed.

"I told him to have it ready for you this morning," Miss Mason said, "so you can see it at any time."

"I will go over at once, and take the necessary data from the chart; then I'll make a survey this afternoon," he returned. "I will possibly be able to report to you this evening on the position of the Fraction shaft and drifts, and whether our lower level is in danger."

"That will be fine!" she declared, her face lighting. "I shall expect to see you after supper."

"You may depend upon me," he assured her.

She reined her horse back into the road, and the engineer went at once to the bookkeeper's office. He opened the door and entered a room heated to suffocation, for the cabin was tightly closed and a hot fire roared in the stove. Jason was seated on a high stool before a desk, and barely took the trouble to turn his head when Douglas came in.

"Miss Mason says that you have found an old working chart of the Taber Fraction," the superintendent be-

gan, without introduction. "I would like to see it."

The bookkeeper took ample time to finish adding a column of figures, then gave Douglas a long, squinting stare, as if to make sure he was not being imposed upon; and, without a word, he slid off the stool and opened the safe. From this he drew a roll of soiled paper, spreading it on the desk for the engineer to examine. "That's it," he said.

"First, let me make a motion for more air," Douglas remarked, as he turned and opened the door. "This office is worse than the lower-level pump station."

He came back and made a close examination of the ancient chart. It proved to be an old survey, or map, bearing a date in the lower right-hand corner more than twelve years old. It not only indicated the original lines of the Taber Fraction, but of the Taber claim as well; also, it showed the location of the old shaft, and of the three drifts that appeared to have been run. With notebook and pencil the superintendent took down the more important data—enough to give him a working basis for a survey—then rolled up the chart and placed it in Jason's hand.

"I have no safe in my cabin," Douglas told him, "and for the present, at least, this must be kept secure. I will probably want to see it again late this afternoon."

The engineer left hurriedly, forgetting to close the door, putting the dapper Jason to the trouble of shutting it himself. Douglas was highly elated, for he had found on the old chart the information of which he stood in urgent need. According to the old survey, the lines of which had been indicated and drawn in ink, there were a thousand feet of underground workings in the Taber Fraction. Most of this was represented by the shaft itself, from which a short drift was run. And this old shaft, whose collar had been purposely covered over and hidden, stood but a short distance from the main Taber line.

Calling two helpers from the crew, Douglas took his surveying instruments

and began running his lines. His object was, first, to make a hurried survey, then check it up by a more careful one on the morrow. He found the claim stakes, and the Fraction claim stakes as indicated, and by early afternoon had made a complete survey of the property.

With the data thus secured, he took the working charts of the Taber which Oliver Judd had brought over, and calculated the position of the old workings. So keenly interested was he in the problem, and so anxious to have it over, that he did not hear the mess gong's call to dinner. Seated at the draft board, with a green shade pulled low over his eyes, he worked with feverish haste through the afternoon. Madly his pencil flew across the paper, placing a line here, a dot there, and tiny figures everywhere.

As he neared the conclusion, the expression of happiness slowly left his face, to be replaced by one of keen anxiety. It was not working out as he had hoped. His worst fears seemed certain of realization. And finally, when the last figure had been placed, he jerked off the green shade, threw down the pencil, and, with a glare of horror in his tired eyes, exclaimed aloud:

"It's awful! How can I tell her that the lower-level drift is already within three feet of an underground sea?"

CHAPTER VI.

THE AFFAIR IN THE OFFICE.

THERE was a possibility that he was wrong—that his calculations were in error. This possibility was remote, however, for, rapidly as he had worked, Douglas checked up his figures as he went along.

To assure himself that he was right, he took his field book and the newly finished map, picked up his hat, and started for the bookkeeper's cabin. Dusk was falling, and already darkness filled the vale, for it was early winter, and night at this season drops quickly in the mountains. The arc lamps were not yet lighted, but several of the cabin windows were glowing.

The bookkeeper's quarters were but a short distance from his own, and he had proceeded only a little way when he was startled by a sound like that of a heavily falling body. This was followed by the trample of feet, a muffled shout, and a crash of broken glass. The disturbance seemed to come directly from Jason's cabin, the windows of which remained dark. It occurred to the engineer that if the bookkeeper were still at work, a light would be burning over the desk.

He struck forward on a run, dashed across the little porch, and threw open the door. The air of the room was as bad as he had found it that morning. He was struck with the truth of this when he entered. But he found the room dark and quiet; ominously quiet, it seemed to him.

At first he believed that Jason had gone out, and that the noise he had heard had come from some other cabin near by. Yet he had been absolutely certain that it came from the bookkeeper's quarters. Since it was too dark to distinguish any object in the room, the engineer struck a match with which to find the incandescent lamp.

When the little light flared up, it revealed a picture of disorder, chaos, and confusion, which brought a cry of alarm from the engineer. The table had been overturned, the desk upset, and papers, books, and records scattered over the floor. The safe door stood ajar, and it was evident that a struggle had occurred. Just as the match burned out and fell from his fingers, Douglas heard a muffled groan from a corner, and had a glimpse of Jason, bound and gagged, and tightly strapped to the desk stool.

The superintendent found the electric light and turned it on, going at once to the man's assistance. Jason's clothes were half torn from his body, his face was bruised and bleeding.

Douglas removed the gag and the straps, lifting him up. "What's wrong, Jason?" he asked hurriedly. "Tell me, quick!"

"I was attacked"—the bookkeeper manager to say—"from behind.

Knocked down and tied. I tried to fight him off, but he was a big fellow."

"Who was it?" Douglas inquired.

"I couldn't see," said Jason. "It was dark."

"What did he want? And did he get anything—did he rob——"

"He took the chart—the survey of the old workings——"

"The blasted thief!" Douglas shouted, as he let go his hold upon Jason, and ran over to the safe. He opened the door wider, and looked carefully inside. A tray of coin, a roll of bills, several papers, and documents lay undisturbed; but the roll of soiled paper that the bookkeeper had placed there that morning was gone. Somebody had stolen the only absolute record and proof of the Taber Fraction!

Though roughly handled, Jason was not badly hurt, and was soon able to stand on his feet. He presented a sorry appearance, however, and started at once for his sleeping room, behind the office, with the evident intention of changing his clothes.

The engineer followed him in. "Are you sure he took the chart?" he asked.

"Yes, I'm sure of it," the bookkeeper replied.

"And can't you tell me anything about him—didn't you get a chance to see his face?" Douglas was desperately trying to get some sort of clew.

"It was dark," Jason said again. "He was a big fellow."

"And he escaped through this room," the superintendent added, as he examined the broken pane of the rear bedroom window. "I heard the crash of breaking glass only a minute before entering the office."

Douglas attempted to get further information regarding the assailant from Jason, but that badly ruffled young man could tell him nothing more than that "he was a big fellow," and had made the unexpected attack from behind, in the growing darkness of the cabin.

After questioning him closely, Douglas was convinced that Jason knew more than he would reveal. While it had been dark in the office for almost an hour before the robbery, it

was not so dark but that objects were distinguishable anywhere in the room, especially to one inside accustomed to the gloom. It did not seem likely that any one could have entered, tied and gagged the bookkeeper, and stolen the chart without being recognized.

The affair was peculiar, and only added to the confusion that jumbled the engineer's mind. He was satisfied that the old map had been stolen for no other purpose than to obliterate all existing information concerning the mysterious Taber Fraction. The thief was necessarily interested in keeping the location and position of the old workings a mystery. Reasoning on this line, the engineer was not long in forming a conclusion. He believed he could place his hand on the man who had stolen the chart.

Unable to get anything more from the bookkeeper, Douglas went out through the broken window, pausing just outside, and striking a match to make an examination of the ground. Prints of large miner's boots were plainly visible, bearing out Jason's one positive utterance that the thief was "a big fellow." By striking several matches, the superintendent followed the tracks round the cabin to an unused trail, and along the trail to the much-traveled tailings-piled road. Here they were lost.

Night was now fully on, and during the time that Douglas had been in the bookkeeper's cabin, the shift whistle had sounded, the mess gong clanged, and the day men had filed in for supper. The superintendent remembered that he had not eaten dinner, and though the unsolved problem clamored for a solution, he was determined to satisfy his hunger before going another step into the mystery.

Nearly all the seats at the main table were filled when Douglas entered the dining room, but a place was found for him on one of the long benches. Before sitting down, he glanced up and down the rows of men, and was satisfied that the one he sought was not in the mess hall.

Just as he began work on a heaping

plate of beef and beans, the foreman came in. It so happened that there was not a single vacant seat except the one opposite the superintendent, and to this seat Judd was directed by a waiter. He came over at once as if to sit down, but hesitated suddenly and turned as if to leave.

"Come on in! Come on in!" called a grizzled digger good-humoredly. "No use lookin' for a better place; here's where the high bloods always eat."

"Sure thing," another one declared, taking the foreman by the coat tail and pulling him over.

Then Oliver Judd lifted his huge feet over the bench and squeezed in, getting busy immediately with the mining-camp fare. Not once did he raise his eyes, or look across the table, and Douglas, who had been observing him keenly, took note of two long, fresh cuts across the top of the broad right hand.

Judd ate ravenously, and finished his supper with those around him. Douglas did not hurry, and left the dining hall when the night men had all gone out, and the day shift was coming in. A crowd was filling the brightly lighted Miner's Rest, so he sauntered down and entered the place.

Oliver Judd was chalking a billiard cue and getting ready for a game at one of the tables. The superintendent passed on to the rear of the room, and idly toyed with a deck of cards, but kept his eyes all the time on the four billiard players.

He saw the roustabout enter the door and stand for a time just inside, surveying the crowd. The fellow was breathing hard, as if he had been running, and there was an expression of terror on his face. Douglas saw him walk over and touch Judd on the arm, speaking something in his ear. The foreman, with no apparent concern, jerked a thumb in the direction of the card table where Douglas sat.

Then the roustabout came back and, drawing close to the engineer, said hoarsely, his voice filled with fear:

"There's another break at the end of the lower drift! All the men are out,

and not even Harter will go down. Judd told me to see you."

Douglas dropped the cards, shoved back his chair, and rose stiffly to his feet. For a time the big room, with its crowd of flannel-shirted men, the green-covered tables, the reading desks and chairs, floated dizzily before him. Only by a supreme effort could he stand erect.

"Another break on the lower drift!" he muttered. Then his calculations of the day must have been correct! He had hoped to verify his findings, but now it was too late. With only a yard between the face of the drift and that underworld sea, it had required but a little while for the drills to bore through. They had struck the old workings of the Taber Fraction! Certain destruction threatened the mine!

CHAPTER VII.

A TEST OF NERVE.

THE roustabout had spoken in low tones. Only the two men who received the message heard him speak. When Douglas looked across the room he saw Judd pause to chalk the billiard cue again. The foreman's slouched hat was pulled low over his face, but underneath the drooping brim the small black eyes glittered wickedly. The engineer felt the piercing gaze, and knew what it meant.

"He thinks I'm afraid," Douglas said to himself; "he thinks I'm afraid to go down. Well, if this is to be a test of nerve, we'll see who is the better man." Then he turned to the roustabout, who stood near by, and spoke aloud: "I'll go up at once. We must hold the break."

Judd's dark gaze followed him across the room, and the engineer, without a pause, went out into the night. Reaching the trail, he broke into a run, fully realizing that there was no time to lose. Even though the break should prove but another fitful burst of a water vein, unless the slip were propped up the lower level would be choked, and development in that direction blocked for a month.

He found all of the lower-level men

huddled around the shaft; they had been driven from the mine by the sinking wall and the intruding flood; and it was plainly evident that they had no intention of going down again.

As on the night before, several of them remained with candles in their hands, but a greater number had thrown off their ponchos. Douglas walked directly to the cage. The crew gazed at him in wonderment.

"I want a man to go down with me," he called.

There was no response. The men held back. It was too much like courting death.

"What's the use?" one murmured. "An army couldn't catch up with 'er now."

"We must catch up with her!" Douglas shouted. "I want just one man. Come, be quick!"

Not one came forward. "He must take us for fools," one old digger muttered aloud.

"You're worse than that," the superintendent returned hotly. "You're a pack of cowards!" Seized with an uncontrollable rage, he raised a clenched fist and yelled: "I'll go down alone!" He pulled the bell wire and gave the signal for the cage to sink.

At this instant there was a sudden commotion in the crowd; a big man broke through from the rear, and shouted: "Hold a second! I'm no coward! I'll go down!"

Just as the gate was closing a man charged up and leaped on the platform. And as they dropped, Douglas became aware of a tall, powerful fellow standing beside him in the cage. As they flitted past a lighted station, the superintendent looked up into the other man's face. He found himself gazing into the black, piercing eyes of Oliver Judd!

He was too amazed for speech, and the swift, downward journey was completed in silence. On the lower level, the two stepped out, lighted their candles, and struck a fast pace down the drift. Douglas took the lead.

Beyond the pump station thick darkness prevailed. The whole lower level

was shaking as if in the grasp of an earthquake. All around and above, the mountain's heart throbbed and palpitated, loosening the earth and dropping quartz and broken shale to the tunnel floor.

The noise was deafening. Water poured from everywhere—from the drift roof, from fissures in the walls, and even gushed up from below. The two men were drenched with it; they waded in a swift-rushing underworld stream. Grimly, silently, they pushed along the drift, protecting the fluttering candles with their hands.

Above the roar and rush of waters sounded the crack of breaking timbers. Huge stulls creaked and groaned as in the agony of despair under their mighty load of sinking ground. Now and then a smaller prop broke with a snap, and a report like a rifle shot. The great, gaping stope, that opened upward into the bowels of the underworld, spilled quartz from its yawning maw as if impelled by a great, unseen hand.

It was a thing to test the nerve of real men. Once Douglas paused, believing he had been left alone; but on looking back he saw the huge form of the foreman following just behind.

Finding a sheltering rock, the superintendent jabbed in his candlestick, and ran forward to examine the face of the drift. The water gushed through as on the night before. The real danger seemed not so much from the flood, as from the breaking ground.

"We must get more props under her!" he shouted.

"Sure!" the foreman responded. "I'll ring for timbers."

The two of them ran back to the level station, and sent up a hurry call for stulls and jacks. In a little while the cage dropped with a load of braces. But no men came down. Douglas and Judd were left to fight it out alone. Each lifted a brace of stulls and struck up the drift.

Douglas climbed into the snapping maw of the stope—into the very jaws of death.

"Pass up the timbers," he commanded. "I'll drive them home."

While he wedged in the load they had brought, Judd ran back for more. Load after load was handed up and hammered in.

All the while the shrieking, grinding din increased in fury. The mountain kicked and plunged. It was as if demons were holding carnival in the Taber's labyrinths.

With a thousand odds against them, the two men worked on, desperately, determinedly, grimly. It was two men against an avalanche—two men propping up a toppling mountain.

Little by little they gained ground. Slowly the creaking and grinding ceased, and finally the hanging wall became quiet. Heavier timbers were piled at the base. With a final groan the mountain settled firm on its new foundation.

When satisfied that enough had been done to hold the slip, the two men tottered down the stope toward the drift. But at that moment a break occurred near the maw. Judd saw it coming, seized a stull, and quickly drove it under. The slip broke in twain, just as the timber was placed beneath.

Then followed a terrific crash, as if the earth was torn apart. Black darkness filled the stope.

The maw was choked with tons of crumbled shale. Both men were thrown flat upon the quartz-strewn floor. They were cut off from the open tunnel by an impenetrable barrier of rock and granite.

The splash and gurgle of running water, the distant chugging of the pump, the creaking of timbers—all the sounds of the underworld were suddenly shut from them. It was as if they had been thrown into a dungeon and a mammoth door closed upon them.

The stulls they had driven in place held the wall and prevented the choking of the mine; also, they prevented the lives of the two men from being pinched out. The engineer lay a long while, gasping for breath. Then, by a painful effort, he began working himself free of the mass of loose shale that pinned his body to the floor. Bruised, bleeding, his strength nearly gone, he

finally pulled himself out and dropped on top of the pile.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNDER STRESS.

DOUGLAS thrust a fumbling finger into the pocket of his jacket, and found a match. He lighted it and looked around. The match burned only an instant, but in that short time the entire situation was revealed—the stone vault, with its walls of unguessable thickness, and the piles of loose shale. From one of the piles two big boots protruded. At the other side of the pile were the head and arms of Oliver Judd.

The light went out, and Douglas crawled over toward the pile. He clawed with bare hands at the heap of broken rock that pinned the foreman down. Finally he uncovered the big fellow's body.

He put his ear to Judd's heart, and found that he was alive. "Hello!" he called. "Wake up, Judd."

The foreman made no reply. By a great effort the engineer turned him over. He lighted another match and called again. Then the foreman opened his eyes. There was no glitter in his gaze, and when he saw the superintendent bending over him he lifted a hand in protest. "Don't mind me; I'm all right." The deep bass voice trembled huskily.

Judd raised up, uttering a groan, and before the match went out looked around. "I guess we're here for keeps," he mumbled.

"Looks that way," Douglas agreed, dropping the match.

The foreman turned over on his back, taking a more comfortable position. "I feel just like an elephant had sat down on me, good and heavy. Are you hurt?"

"Not much," the engineer answered. "Just weak, that's all."

The silence of a sepulcher filled the vault. It was a long time before either of them spoke. Finally the foreman said: "It may be that we won't get out

of here—that the men can't reach us, even though they get up the courage to try."

"The break is safe enough," the engineer replied, "but there's the water, and I'm afraid the drills broke through and tapped——"

"Don't worry about the water," said the other, in tones far more kind than Douglas had heard him use. "It's my fault—all this scare about the Fraction."

Another silence followed, during which the engineer wondered what Judd could mean. After a time the foreman continued:

"There's something I want to tell you. I guess I'd better say it while the air's good. It's about the old workin's. Do you know that you guessed right the other day? There ain't any such thing—nothin' only one short shaft, an' it's filled with rock and earth."

"But the chart," Douglas broke in; "Jason found a working map of the old claim."

"I know he did—the little shrimp," Judd returned. "But as I'm tellin' you, it showed only the one straight shaft. The bookkeeper faked the rest of it—marked in the drifts and levels—just to fool the lady. Somehow, he thought it would give him a stand-in."

In the wonder of this revelation the engineer forgot the peril, the terror, and fear of the moment. Yet there were other things to be explained, and he waited for Judd to go on.

"I'm tellin' you this," the foreman continued, his voice growing weaker, "because I want to do the square thing by you. Let me tell you that I admire your pluck. You're made of the real stuff—and my scare wouldn't work with you. I knew that as soon as I reached the shaft house and saw that you were goin' to go down alone. It looks like a sure case of passin' over, and I want to make things straight with you."

There was no bitterness, no hate, nothing but plaintive kindness in Oliver Judd's tone. "It was all a put-up job," he confessed. "At any other time or

place I wouldn't be man enough to tell you; but down here, with just the two of us, and a mountain lyin' between us an' daylight, it's altogether different. I got up the scare over a year ago. You see, I'm under obligations to a bunch that is determined to keep me down. This was my only chance to get out with them. They promised that if I'd manage things so as to get the Taber for a song—discourage the girl and make her give it up—they'd call things even, and let me go. Let me say, it hurt me to take an advantage of a girl. She's every ounce a woman, that little girl, and if I ever get out of here I'm goin' to get down on my knees and beg her to forgive me. That's what I will—me, old Oliver Judd, who never begged quarter from any one, man or woman. What's more, I'll take off my hat to the fellow that claims her for his own. He will be a lucky chap, you bet."

Martin Douglas forgot that he had ever harbored ill feeling against the foreman. He reached over and found Judd's big hand. The two gripped long and hard in the black, tense silence of the vault. In that firm handclasp there came between them complete mutual understanding.

"There's just one more thing," the foreman added, "and then my conscience is unburdened. That's about the robbery last night. I took the old map from the bookkeeper, knowing it was bogus, and not wantin' you to make a fool of yourself over it. I had to tie Jason down, the little brat, as he tried to fight. I didn't s'pose it was in 'im."

Silence again filled the vault. After a long while both men were conscious of a change in their situation. Both were so nearly exhausted that it was some time before they fully realized its meaning. They finally awoke from a dazed stupor to hear the dull thud of picks and the murmur of voices. Far away were the sounds, but they brought an assurance of rescue, replaced doubt with certainty, and started the blood to flow anew.

They waited patiently—hours, it seemed. They dropped again into unconsciousness, and were as dead men

when those of the night crew, who had the courage to go down, pulled them out.

When they revived, they were stretched on the cool ground in the sweet, pure air of the outer world. It was broad day. Bright sunlight filled the vale, and touched the surrounding, fir-clad mountains with a glory fire. Douglas awoke to the thunder of the

stamp mill and the sputtering cough of the hoist engines, as the loaded cages were jerked up the shaft. And as he opened his eyes he found himself looking into the smiling, radiant face of Winnie Mason. His head was pillowed on her arm, and she was speaking softly in his ear.

"You're a brave man, and I am proud of you," she said.

Time Limit

WHEN Farmer Fairweight went to London on a flying visit to his grandmother, he made up his mind to see all the other sights as well. And after he had dutifully drunk tea with his ancestor, he issued forth on a voyage of discovery.

He discovered many things: That busses could go without horses; that you could walk for a whole hour without striking a field or an acquaintance; and, finally, that you couldn't hit a policeman simply because he compelled you to move out of other people's way.

As he was being taken to the station, he inquired what the policeman intended doing with him.

"You'll find out soon enough," said the policeman grimly. "Seven days, probably."

"Seven days! Ah, that's where I have ye, old bluebottle!" chuckled the farmer triumphantly, producing the return half of his ticket. "I've to go back on Monday!"

Wouldn't It Get You?

BEAUTIFUL, beautiful silken hair,
 Like the glowing sun on the moorland fair
 Or the moon o'er the shimmering sea!"
 And as he spoke he lovingly played
 With the nut-brown tress of the beautiful maid
 Who nestled upon his knee.
 "Soft as the down on an angel's wing"—
 He was rather good at this sort of thing—
 "Rich like the golden sand;
 Light as the shell of an exquisite pearl"—
 He paused in dismay, for that dear little curl
 Came off in his trembling hand!

Dangerous Book

WHERE are you off to in such a hurry?"

"To fetch the doctor for my husband."

"What's up with him?"

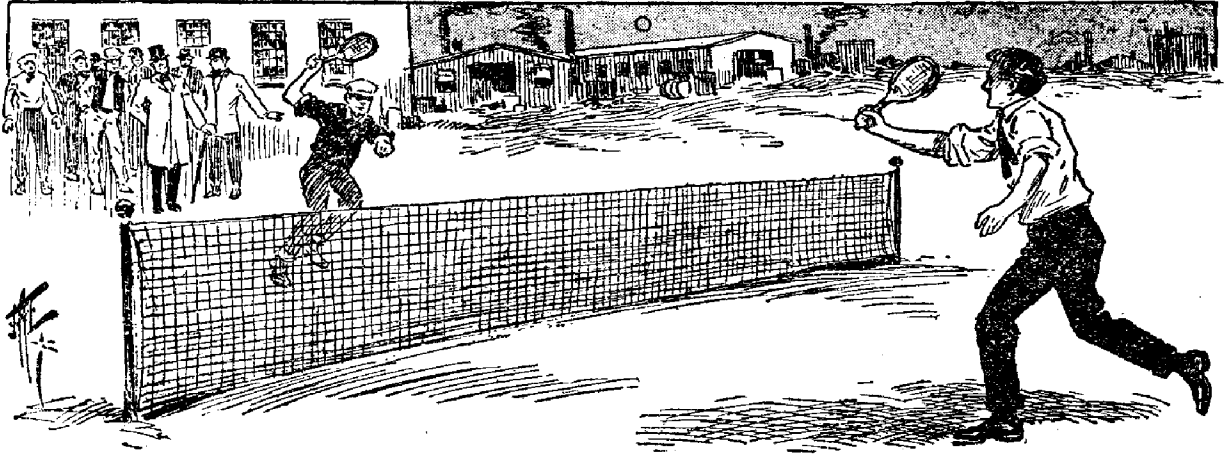
"He tells me he has got hepatitis, dyspepsia, rheumatism, enteritis, gastritis, appendicitis, nephritis, and cerebro-spinal meningitis."

"Where did he get all that?"

"Why, a man induced him to buy a medical dictionary, and he's just begun reading it."

The Tennis Court Decides

By
Robert Carlton Brown



ALL the boys in the I. X. L. shops were good fellows. The boss, old Heddles, set the example. He had worked his way up from apprenticeship in the shops to the office of general manager, and, unlike a great many successful men, he did not forget the ranks from which he rose.

One of his first unofficial acts was to organize two baseball teams, one composed of men from the shops, the other from the office force. Formerly there had been a distinct line drawn between the mechanics and the pen-pushers, but old man Heddles erased it. He got right out on the field himself, and umpired the games, imparting the spirit of good-fellowship and fair play.

Tom Gunderson was the most popular fellow in the shops, and he held himself a little above the office force, because they had been a bit snobbish before Heddles came, and it was Tom's way of getting even.

Whenever a new clerk came to the office Tom Gunderson scraped acquaintance with him, and held him up to ridicule before all the shop men, at noon hour, or at any time when the audience was large enough to pay him for his trouble. His pet aversion was young college men, who came straight from the university with very little

knowledge of things mechanical, and got work in the office at higher salaries than most of the men in the shops.

When Manager Heddles inaugurated tennis games at the noon hour, Gunderson had a new chance to show up the college men. He had played tennis for years, and he won and held the championship of the shops. So each new college man who came to the office was challenged by Tom, and they usually went down to defeat, which pleased the mechanics and irritated the office force.

During the spring of 1911 all the employees of the I. X. L. Company fought for possession of the four tennis courts at noon hour. Tom Gunderson was still the champion, but several promising stars had appeared on the horizon of the office staff, and rivalry was becoming keen.

"You shop fellows have had the upper hand in tennis too long," said Manager Heddles, one noon hour, when Tom had defeated four of the office corps. "There's a new man coming to work Monday. He was the champion athlete at Cornell, and I think he'll give you a good game of tennis, Tom."

"Swell chance for him," said Tom, wiping his hands on his overalls. "He'll come all fitted out with a ten-dollar racket, a jersey, white ducks, tennis

shoes, and all those things, and I'll beat him out, just as I stand." Tom pointed to his black work jacket and heavy shoes. "It don't take outfits to win games. I can put it all over him in my shop clothes."

"All right," said Heddles. "I've warned you, Tom."

Before Monday morning interest in the arriving athlete had become intense in the I. X. L. factory.

"I'll bet he's one of those boobs with a stand-up collar and a pink-and-white face. He'll be easy meat for you, Tommy, my boy," said old Bill Taylor, Tom's bench mate. "They'll have a hard time in the front office handing it to the machinists."

"Worst of it is," said Tom Gunderson, "those college fellows always think they know everything about the shops, too. Most of them have taken mechanical-engineering courses, but all they've got is theory."

"Yes, that's the trouble; no experience like what we've got," said old Taylor, filing away laboriously at a pipe fitting.

"I'll put my initials on that college kid," boasted Tom Gunderson.

II.

MONDAY morning, a number of the machinists were on hand early, loitering about the office door, hoping for a sight of the new office man before the whistle blew.

But nobody saw him. Whenever one of the machinists had occasion to consult another that morning, they both talked about the new college man, and what Tom would do to him. Noon hour came. In ten minutes' time all the shop force had finished their lunches, and were waiting at the tennis courts for the new wonder to put in an appearance.

At last Manager Heddles came out of his office with a slim, well-dressed, pleasant-faced chap, who walked along briskly, and shook hands with the shop men as Heddles called them up to be introduced.

"This is a little surprise," said Hed-

dles. "My son, Jim Heddles, is the new man in the office. He'll be in the shops in six months if he doesn't make good in the office."

The college man laughed nervously at his father's introduction.

"Gunderson, I'd like to see Jim play you a game of tennis. If he isn't any good at it, I'd like to know how to get back the few thousand dollars I spent on him at Cornell," said the older man.

"Look here!" exclaimed young Heddles. "I learned more than playing tennis at Cornell, dad."

"Well, maybe you did. Go to it, boys."

The only preparation Jim Heddles made was to throw off his coat and pick up one of the tennis rackets belonging to the office force. He stepped out into the court to oppose Tom Gunderson, and the men from the shops and the office force, on opposite sides, held their breath and watched and waited.

From the very first Jim Heddles put it all over Tom Gunderson.

"You see," said old man Heddles slyly, "Jim hasn't been doing anything for the last four years but spend my money and play tennis, while Tom's been working like a man."

The shop contingent began to look very sad as their hero, Tom, lost the second game on a sizzling "Lawford," shot at him by young Heddles. Evidently the college man had better stuff in him than the machinists had given him credit for.

Tom "blew up." In an effort to get over as fast a ball as young Heddles, he hit wild, and once sent the ball flying over the gantry crane between the two big factory buildings.

The office staff roared as the ball hit the edge of a building, and bounced back onto the track of the electric crane.

"Leave it there," exclaimed Manager Heddles. "Here's another ball."

Tom Gunderson was mad; his wrath showed in his red face. He hit viciously, and did his very best to outpoint Jim. But the college man came off victorious.

"A love set," he cried at the finish. "Want to play another?"

"No," said Tom Gunderson, throwing down his racket, and fearing to raise his eyes to his companions. "I've got enough."

"You don't think so badly of this theoretical college man, then?" smiled Manager Heddles.

"Oh, he's no good!" Tom Gunderson tried to raise a smile, but he looked contemptuously at the young fellow who had beaten him. "Get him to try filing a couple of cubes against me. I'll file 'em so close they'll stick together. Let him try that."

"Oh, I haven't got the mechanical end down as fine as you have," laughed young Heddles. "I'll admit you're my superior at that. But even if I am a college man, and even if my father does think I'm incompetent, I've done a lot of work and had a little experience." He moved off toward the stairway leading to the gantry crane.

Tom Gunderson, thoroughly angry, followed him. "Well, I'll try out against you at anything in the shop," he exclaimed, fearing that he had lost his prestige among the machinists.

"We'll put that off till some other day. Let's hunt up that tennis ball now," laughed Jim Heddles, starting up the stairway to the crane, which ran like a bridge between the two big factory buildings.

III.

TOM followed Heddles, his jaw set with dogged determination. "I'll bet I've learned more right here in the shops than you've ever learned out of books!" he declared, turning, with a wink, to the fellows behind him, who were crowding up the stairway to see the fun. So far Tom had made a point in not being afraid of the boss' son, but the elder Heddles appreciated the soreness of Tom as much as anybody else, and excused him for it, in view of the fact that he had been the factory idol for years.

Young Heddles paused at the top of the stairway and shouted back, still smiling: "Oh, you've been cooped up

over a little bench. All you know is what goes on in the machinist's room. I'll bet you never even learned to run this gantry crane."

"No," admitted Tom reluctantly, standing beside the college man, and blushing in the sight of his companions. "But I'll bet you don't know any more about it than I do."

"Sure I do. I know that the power is furnished by dynamos down in the power plant there, and that the cars are run by power from a third rail."

"I know that, too," said Tom Gunderson quickly, inspecting the long steel rail at which Jim Heddles had pointed in explanation.

"But you don't know how to walk a third rail," said Jim Heddles, with a superior grin, looking down at the hundred or more men from the shops and offices watching them.

"Sure I do," said Tom, not to be outdone in anything.

"Well, there's the ball in the middle of the crane," said Jim Heddles, pointing to where the tennis ball lay, near the third rail. "Walk out on this rail, and see if you can pick it up."

"Don't you do it, Tom!" cried one of the men more familiar with the gantry crane and its operation than Gunderson. "It'll give you a shock."

"I know how to walk the rail if you do," exclaimed Tom Gunderson hotly. "You go ahead, and I'll follow. I can do anything you can do."

"All right," said Jim Heddles, with a confident smile. "I don't know how many volts there are in that rail, but I learned how to walk a third rail at college, and that's more than you ever learned in the shops."

"Go ahead, then. Talk won't carry you across the crane."

"Jim, don't be a fool!" cried Manager Heddles from below, as his son stepped toward the third rail and raised his foot. "That'll jolt the daylights out of you. It's charged."

"I know it"—Jim smiled down to his father—"I just want to show this machinist that I know as much about the factory as he does."

"Go ahead, then!" shouted Tom, beside himself with rage.

For answer Jim Heddles waved his hand and stepped lightly onto the third rail, running quickly along it, jumping off at the middle, picking up the tennis ball, and turning to the awed crowd, to cry:

"Now, come on, Gunderson. That's what I learned out of a book. Let's see if you can walk the third rail as I did."

Tom started forward. Three or four of his friends grabbed him, and tried to pull him back. But he was thoroughly angry, and would suffer no restraint.

He put his foot on the third rail.

Bang! He shot three feet in the air, and fell flat on the platform. A dozen friends rushed to his assistance. He sat up weakly, rubbing the back of his head, and crying: "Who hit me? Who hit me?"

Jim Heddles stood in the middle of the crane runway, doubled up with laughter, and the senior Heddles and the crowd below stood in speechless dismay and wonder.

"How the deuce did you do it?" cried Tom, rising halfway, and shaking his fist frantically at Jim Heddles.

"Easiest thing in the world," answered the college man. "Watch me."

He stepped lightly onto the third rail,

and ran rapidly back until he reached Tom's side. Then he jumped off and held up one shoe for Tom's inspection.

It was a rubber-soled tennis shoe.

"Oh," said Tom weakly, looking down at his own hobnailed shop shoes, of which he had been so boastful only a few days before. "I forgot; I didn't notice that you had them on. I didn't stop to think."

"That's another thing I learned in books," remarked Jim Heddles triumphantly.

"What is?" asked Tom.

"I learned to stop and think. I noticed that you had leather-soled shoes on, and I took a chance on your not thinking that my tennis shoes had rubber soles, and formed a perfect insulation against the current of electricity."

"Well, you've got me," said Tom, forcing a smile, and rising to shake hands with the boss' son.

Manager Heddles pushed his way through the crowd, and grasped the hands of both. "Let this put an end to all rivalry between you boys in the shop and you in the office. Jim," he said, turning to his son, "you've got a head on your shoulders. I wouldn't wonder if you'd be manager here some day, in spite of the fact that you are hampered with a college education."

Change of Symptoms

NOW, Nora," said the departing physician to the Irish girl, who was nursing a bad case of fever, "if the patient sees snakes again, give him a dose of this medicine. I shall be in at six."

The hour for his return arrived. The physician once more visited the sick patient, and found him raving. "He has been so," said the nurse, "for hours."

"And did you give him the medicine?" inquired the puzzled doctor.

Nora shook her head.

"But didn't I tell you to give it to him if he saw snakes again?" demanded the physician.

"But he didn't say he saw snakes this toime, dochter," replied the nurse confidently. "He said he saw red-white-and-blue turkeys wid straw hats on!"

Unpleasant Suggestion

I WISH," said the girl thoughtfully, "that you wouldn't use that expression, 'launched upon the sea of matrimony.'"

"And why not?" asked the young man anxiously.

"Well, you know what kind of time I always have on a sea voyage."

In the King Row

By
Lovell Coombs



IT happened so suddenly that Finnerty was still dazed. One moment the checkerboard, with its numbered squares and double set of men; the brooding lamplight, the quietly ticking telegraph instruments, the low, night noises from the woods across the track; then the pistol muzzle and black-masked face at the open window, and the two sharp words that sent his hands ceilingward.

Comprehension came as a stocky figure materialized, scrambled in across the instrument table, and dropped to the floor. Finnerty's eyes flickered anxiously toward the safe in the corner.

"You're on," observed a crisp voice. "Back your chair to the wall! Drop your right hand to the chair arm!"

Five minutes later, following a fruitless "third degree" regarding the combination of the safe—known only to the railway postal clerks—the lone occupant of the junction station found himself bound as he sat, while the unknown, on his knees before the safe, turned the knob and listened.

Just prior to the advent of the bandit, the game of over-the-wire checkers had been interrupted for the reporting of a freight up the branch. The ticking instrument ceased its chatter as

the man at the safe produced a brace and bit, and fell to drilling. There was an interval of silence, and the sounder clicked:

"You there, Fin? It's your move."

Finnerty turned toward the instruments helplessly. The question was repeated, then the station call. A flicker of hope that followed the repetition of the call quickly faded. There would be no train through for two hours, and his mere absence from the wire would probably not result in any endeavor to reach him before that time.

"You there, Fin?" again clicked the sounder. "What's the matter?"

Catching at the meager possibility of his silence resulting in the discovery of his predicament, Finnerty listened while the operator at Bathton repeated the junction call at short intervals. Then the spark of hope kindled as the instrument began repeating the letter of the dispatcher's call.

The Bathton operator was a rapid sender. At the buzzing succession of dots forming the letter "H," the grinding at the safe abruptly ceased. Turning, Finnerty encountered the gleam of a suspicious eye within the sinister mask.

"What's coming off there?" demanded the unknown sharply.

"One station calling another," responded Finnerty with frankness.

There was a momentary silence, and the rapid, buzz-bell repetition of H's broke out afresh.

The safebreaker dropped his brace and bit, and rose to his feet. "I didn't see you move," he said grimly, "but if I thought you had been up to anything there——"

He strode toward the table. At once the checkerboard caught his eye. To Finnerty's surprise, the discovery brought forth an exclamation, then a low laugh. The man, bending over the board, half turned.

"Now I'm on, my friend. I butted in on a game of checkers by telegraph, and the other man thinks something is wrong."

"Brilliant!" murmured Finnerty, with rash tartness. "Perhaps you would like to finish the game yourself?" he added, when his captor had remained over the board some seconds, as though pondering the problem there presented.

"That's just what I was thinking."

Finnerty started. Then he stared while the man in the mask picked up the checkerboard, bore it carefully across the room, and placed it on the floor beside the safe. A remark was lost in further surprise when the man returned to his side, and began loosening the cord about his right wrist.

"Yes; I'm going to finish the game myself—to keep that fool on the wire quiet. You are going to send the moves, very slowly, figure by figure, so I can tell whether you say anything else. I know how the game is played by wire. Between moves you are to hold your hand high in the air. And at the least suspicion that you are saying anything else"—the fumbling at the knot ceased, and the eyes within the mask glared into Finnerty's own—"at the least suspicion—you know what'll happen to you! Understand?"

"I guess so," conceded Finnerty.

"No guessing—you know!"

"Well, then, I know—and something else," Finnerty added mentally, with determination. The inspiration took

form as his hand was freed, and ordered held aloft.

"What explanation shall I make for leaving the wire so suddenly?" he asked ingenuously.

The eyes within the mask again glared within an inch of his own. "Young man, you begin a word of explanation, and you'll finish it in the next world! No, sir! You'll start right in where you left off, and the man at the other end can think what he pleases."

The cracksman returned to the safe. Kneeling in his former position, he recovered the drill, then paused to study the checkerboard. During the silence which followed, the operator in the chair fancied that there was a puzzled expression on the mask-concealed face. The impression brought a new hope. Perhaps the man could not play, or could play but a poor game. In that case, with his own strange actions on the wire, suspicion might yet be aroused.

"Whose move?" asked the mask.

"Mine."

"Huh! You're no great noise as a checker player. You'll lose out in the third move."

Another hope had fled.

Surprise and a half-conscious anger at the disparagement of his playing ability were still struggling in Finnerty's mind with plans for circumventing the safebreaker, when the latter looked up and ordered:

"Drop your hand to the key. Now, send slowly, figure by figure: Twenty-one, twenty-three."

Finnerty pushed open the key lever, interrupting a renewal of his own call by the man at Bathton, and while the cracksman listened intently, ticked off the figures as directed:

"Two-one, two-three."

"Hand up again!" directed the mask.

The silence which followed on the part of the instrument seemed aptly to express the Bathton operator's surprise at this abrupt reappearance of his checker opponent.

"Was that you, Fin?" he clicked at last. "Where have you been?"

Finnerty took quick advantage of the opening.

"You see," he said, nodding toward the sounder, "he doesn't believe it is I. He wants to know. I'll have to make some sort of explanation."

"You'll just repeat the move!" growled the safecracker. "Let him think what he pleases! He'll probably imagine you're drunk," he added sardonically.

With compressed lips Finnerty complied. And this time, to his disappointment, the Bathton operator accepted the situation with a tart "O. K.," immediately followed by a return move. The strange game was under way.

II.

WATCHED sharply by the bandit, Finnerty sent and called off move after move, the man in the mask continuing his drilling operations uninterrupted, save for the brief pauses required to make the moves, and to listen to the operator's sending.

After the first few moves Finnerty scarcely noted the progress of the game. Performing his part almost mechanically, he was searching every crevice of mind and memory for a means of securing the upper hand of the situation. Think as he could, there seemed but one outlet—the wire; and but the one way of utilizing it—the sending of something in addition to the moves of the game.

At first sight this might seem a simple problem, the bandit not being a telegrapher. But the brevity of the "move" messages—four figures—and the deliberate transmission required, made the addition of the shortest useful word practically an impossibility.

For a space Finnerty considered the substitution of two short words for a move; but this would have aroused suspicion by muddling the positions on the board. For similar reasons he abandoned a briefly entertained idea of playing the game himself, and sending out a call for help in lieu of the supposed moves. He doubted his ability to

remember the positions of the dimly seen checker men.

Finally, however, dogged persistence produced one possibility. It did not look easy, but catching at it with desperation, Finnerty determined to risk it.

As the first step, on transmitting the next move in the game, he did not raise his hand to its full stretch. Three moves later, without comment from the man at the safe, he raised it no higher than his head. Cautiously feeling with his fingers, he found, as he had hoped, that he could reach the wall, and the two descending wires of the station "loop."

The next step was the securing of an open pocketknife lying on the table.

Occasionally, convinced seemingly that the prisoner had learned his lesson, the safebreaker did not turn from his work when ordering a move. Watching for a recurrence of this relaxation, Finnerty, while withdrawing his hand from the key, made a furtive lunge, and secured the knife. The action passed unnoticed.

Carefully, then, and praying that the man at Bathton would take his time for the next move, he pressed the blade across the two wires behind his head, and cut firmly downward through the insulation. From the instruments came a jangle, as the steel reached and bared the copper strands, and a "cut-off" connection was made.

The bandit looked up. Finnerty bit his lips, to steady them. If the man ordered him to hold his hand higher, and saw the knife—

"Wasn't that a move?"

"A 'bug' on the wire," said Finnerty.

A breathless moment the mask eyed him. Then the hum of the drill resumed.

III.

OPERATOR BATES, at Bathton, was as mystified by the actions of his checker opponent at the junction as Finnerty had suggested to his captor.

"If it wasn't for the game he is playing," Bates observed to the night baggageman, lolling over the table beside him, "I'd swear Fin had some fire water

in his battery. He never played a better game.

"There!" he exclaimed, "just listen to that ham stuff!" Driving his chair back, Bates motioned disgustedly toward the heavily clicking sounder. "If Father Morse heard that, he'd turn in his grave. It sounds as though the beggar were sitting on the key, sending by bumping up and down on it. I can't make head or—"

Sharply Bates broke off. He sat erect. With a crash his chair rocked forward, his eyes fixed to the wagging sounder.

"What is it?" demanded the baggageman.

"I believe something's wrong! I caught the words, 'post-office safe.'"

The signals began to come more distinctly. "Listen!" cried Bates.

"Boring—hole—to—blow—it—open."

Both men were hanging over the instrument breathlessly, the baggageman's eyes on the operator, the operator's eyes glued to the sounder.

"I'm—tied—chair," he read on. "He's—playing—the—checkers. Making—me—send—moves. I'm—sending—this—by—pressing—wires—together—behind—head—with—key—open. Ask—H—send—down—engine—of—thirty—four—with—help. If—hurry—can—get—him. Keep—on—playing."

The wire closed, and in the former manner of sending came a move in the game: "Three-o, two-six."

The baggageman sprang for the door. "I'll get out the train crew," he yelled. "They'll be in the lunchroom."

"And call for volunteers among the passengers!" Bates shouted after him.

To Finnerty, at the junction, Bates shot back: "I'm on, old boy! Keep it up! Keep your nerve!" and whirled off into the dispatcher's call.

Three minutes later Bates was racing down the station platform, shouting the engineer's name, a scrap of fluttering "flimsy" in his hand. Five minutes more, and the engine of the opportunely waiting "accommodation" was snorting hysterically from the yards, bristling with trainmen and an eager contingent of excursioning stockmen.

Meanwhile, returning to his wire, Bates confronted a new situation. Two additional moves brought abrupt conclusion to the game of checkers, in favor of his safebreaking opponent, and Finnerty reported:

"He doesn't intend playing another game. He has the hole farther into the safe door than I thought. If he's not delayed he'll be ready to blow it in a few minutes. What shall I do? I'm at the end of my string."

Bates indulged in a clicking succession of exclamation marks, expressive of confusion, the while thinking deeply. His face brightened, and he sent back rapidly:

"Tell him I say he—that is, you—only won the game by a fluke. Say I was talking to another chap here, and made two blind moves, or he wouldn't have had a look-in. Tell him I'll beat him—you, of course! I'll beat him this time without breaking my king row."

"I," responded the instrument, in acquiescence.

During the momentous silence that followed, Bates gripped the key rigidly, and watched the sounder, straining forward. Undoubtedly his robber opponent was a checker enthusiast, a "fan," odd as it seemed. But would vanity and his love for the game be strong enough to trick him in such a situation? Would—

The sounder clicked upward. "H—i!" it rattled, in the telegrapher's wire laugh. And with a sigh and a smile Bates relaxed.

"He bit," the instrument clattered on. "He'll play. Says go ahead, and he'll beat you so badly you'll never come back. Is fixing his board. It's your move.

"And now, B," the instrument clicked more readily, as Finnerty mastered his novel key, "it's up to you to keep the game going until the engine gets here. Play all you know. Get him guessing. That stops him in his work for a few minutes. And it won't be safe simply to delay the moves, unless you follow with a good one. He's too wide awake. So play the game of your life!"

"I will," tapped Bates in reply. Set-

ting himself in his chair, he bent over his board with serious face, pondering the opening move.

Suddenly Bates sat erect. "By Jove, that's it!" Kicking the chair from under him, he sprang to the telephone.

"Police station, please! Hello! Sergeant Baker? Bates, at the station. Say, Baker, can you come down here right away, and help me out in a game of checkers? It's a matter of catching a safecracker down at the junction! I'll explain when you get here. And, say! Drop in at the fire hall and bring Billy Delaney with you. Good! Hurry!"

Within a few minutes Operator Bates was explaining the extraordinary situation to the two local checker champions. "So you see," he concluded, "it's up to us, by hook or crook, to keep the game going as long as possible, without taking the slightest chance of arousing the man's suspicions."

"Can he play?" asked the fireman.

"He's a crackajack—a regular checker fan, I take it."

With heads together over the numbered squares, policeman, fireman, and operator studied and debated the problem.

"Of course, the most natural thing to play for, under the circumstances, would be a tie," observed the sergeant. "But then, if he is a real player, he would see it as soon as it was in sight, and stop right there."

"How would it do, then," suggested the fireman, "to play for a two-king, three-king wind-up—ours the two kings, with one in either double corner? That would give him the advantage, yet, if the three of us watch ourselves, we should be able to stand him off indefinitely. I've spent half the night working for the move in the same fix."

"That's the game!" agreed the others.

IV.

AT the junction matters had fallen into routine, with the resumption of play. Stolidly, to all appearances re-

signedly, the bound operator sent and called off the return moves. Steadily and calmly, as though engaged in an accustomed and enjoyable dual task, the masked figure at the safe moved the men on the checkerboard, and spun the handle of his drill.

The opening half of the game, at least, he had played steadily, with the evident intention of speedily concluding it. Now, with the contest narrowing, he was beginning to pause occasionally to consider a move.

With rising hope Finnerty saw the pauses increase in frequency, and at last unconsciously the "checker enthusiast" rose above the "robber of safes," and with rising anxiety saw the number of men on the board steadily decreasing.

Chuckling, the safecracker sacrificed one checker man, and took two. With despair Finnerty noted that there were now but five men on the board, three of them the blacks of the robber.

But on the next move coming over the wire, the man uttered a smothered imprecation. While Finnerty leaned forward, tense with revived hope, he turned more fully toward the checkerboard. The plaint of the spinning drill subsided in pitch.

It had stopped. As one beside a somnambulist, Finnerty watched, and held his breath, and listened.

Lower the cracksman sank on his knees, regarding the board. He started to move, paused, settled back. Now, the drill was withdrawn, and placed slowly, unconsciously, on the floor. The relieved hand wandered to the drooping chin.

At the moment, faintly through the open window, came an engine's "crossing" whistle. Finnerty caught his breath with a gasp, the sibilant hiss of which drove the blood back to his heart. The masked figure at the safe moved, raised his head. Finnerty clutched the chair arms in an agony of anxiety.

"Now I think I have him. Fourteen-ten, please," came Bates' message.

Unconsciously Finnerty dashed the perspiration from his brow before

reaching for the key. Then he found he had forgotten the move. He glanced about.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Fourteen, ten, please."

A moment's nervous inclination to laughter, as the subconscious mind noted the exchange of courteous address, again delayed the transmitting of the move.

It was sent. Finnerty, recovering his former position in the chair, braced himself for the final five minutes of the ordeal. Would the engineer be unwise enough to whistle another crossing? Would he stop far enough away to avoid the telltale hum of the rails reaching the station? Would he come close enough to enable the posse to make the depot speedily? Could Bates prolong the game?

In anxious repetition the questions raced through Finnerty's mind as he followed every move on the board, and listened with straining ears.

A low rumble, half heard, half felt, reached him. The engine was over the bridge a half mile distant! Would the engineer whistle the crossing this side? No, thank the heavens!

The game was now moving more rapidly on the cracksman's part. Evidently he had a plan in mind, and was shifting

his men in order to "get the move." Breathlessly Finnerty watched.

Following a move from Bates, the player started half erect, as with elation. Finnerty clutched the chair arm. A move was sent, and one was received. With a low growl the bandit again drooped over the board. Again Finnerty breathed.

Then suddenly the player in the mask sat erect, with an "Ah!" that brought Finnerty forward in his chair.

"Now I've got him! Ten—six."

In despair Finnerty glanced toward the window. His lips closed convulsively over a cry.

With difficulty he clutched the key, and clicked off the move. The return move came. "Five—one," he translated.

"Ah! My game! My game!" In his glee the checker-playing robber of safes sprang erect on his knees—to sink back slowly, with twitching lips.

Framed in the window were a dozen grimly grinning faces; in front of them showed a battery of pistol muzzles.

"Yes, your game," observed Finnerty, not without a touch of sympathy for a fallen fellow enthusiast; "your game on the board—but my game for the safe. I got in your king row there, all right."

Important Chewing Match

THEY have peculiar methods of trying suspects in Bengal. One of these is called "trial by rice." Every person suspected was ordered to be present, and all turned up. First the people were made to sit in a semicircle, and were then given raw rice and told to chew it to a pulp.

After about ten minutes they were ordered to stop and eject it into a plantain leaf. All did so easily with the exception of three men. One of these three promptly commenced to cry and confessed everything, stating that another of the three was the chief instigator.

It is a curious fact that fear, arising from an evil conscience, prevents saliva coming to the mouth, with the result described.

The Retort Unmistakable

REVEREND GENTLEMAN: "Do you know, my friend, that half the cases of throat trouble are caused by people smoking those foul, dirty, short, black clay pipes?"

Son of Toil: "And do you know, guv'nor, that 'alf of the black eyes are caused by folks not mindin' their own business?"

Force Inscrutable

By
Johnston McCulley



CHAPTER I.

A CALL AND A RIDDLE.

AT four o'clock that eventful afternoon, Richard Wellington sat in the lounging room of a San Francisco club, and looked out at the passing throng. A page approached him.

"Telephone, sir; booth six," the page said.

Wellington got to his feet, made his way slowly to the booth, and took down the receiver.

"Hello!" he called.

"Dick?"

"Yes. That you, Betty?"

The voice that answered him was not the modulated contralto he loved to hear; it was a voice that thrilled with fear or excitement, or both.

"Listen, Dick. Please drop everything and come to me, at the house, as quick as you can."

"Anything the matter?"

"Yes. Please hurry."

"I'll be right up!"

Wellington sprang from the booth, ran to the cloakroom for his hat, and dashed out of the club building. He hailed a taxi and jumped in, calling out an address to the driver.

"As fast as you can," he said. "It is important."

The taxi dashed through the streets. Wellington felt his heart pounding at his ribs. He wondered what could have happened. It wasn't at all natural for Miss Betty Gladstone to be highly excited. He had known her four years; he had been betrothed to her for a month; and, in all that time, he never had known her voice to be charged with fear, as it surely had been when he talked to her on the phone wire. He wondered if her father was ill. He hadn't seen Betty for five days, for he had been out of the city on business, and had returned but an hour before she telephoned. He was at the point of calling her when she called him.

The cab stopped before the Gladstone residence. Wellington paid the driver, and sprang up the broad steps. Betty threw open the door. She was as beautiful, as charming, as ever, Wellington told himself at the first glance; yet her face was pale, and wore an expression of horror.

"What is it, Betty?" he asked, as the door closed.

"Come into the library, Dick!" said she. He followed her in; she closed the door. "Sit down." She pointed to

a chair before the long library table. Wellington dropped into the chair; Betty sat near him in another. "I've telephoned to the club three times, and every other place I'd be likely to find you," she began. "I knew you were due back to-day. Oh, if you had been here early this morning—or last night! But I thought it better to wait until you returned. I couldn't trust any one else."

"Oh, say, what's up, Betty?" he pleaded.

"I—I can't tell you, Dick."

"Can't tell me? What do you mean?"

"Dick," she said, bending toward him, "do you trust me?"

"I'd trust you with my life—you know that!"

"Then I want you to trust me now. I want you to do exactly as I say in everything—and not ask for an explanation until I can give you one."

"But, Betty——"

"We haven't time for questioning. We must make haste!"

"What do you want me to do?"

"You haven't any important business on? You can leave the city for a time?"

"I haven't a thing to hold me here at present. Leave the city for how long?"

"I can't tell. You'll go?"

"Certainly. But——"

"No questions, please. I must get to Los Angeles as soon as possible. You must come with me."

"To Los Angeles? Certainly, Betty. But your father——"

"Father left for Washington, on some government business, I believe, two days ago. I must go to Los Angeles—there are things I must do there. And I can't go alone. I want protection——"

"You are in danger?"

"No—not that! But I must have your help! When can we start?"

"There's a train at six o'clock. We can catch that, I suppose."

"Telephone now for reservations," she said.

He reached for the telephone. "Pardon me, Betty," he said, before taking

the receiver from the hook, "but won't this look peculiar? It isn't exactly proper for you to go traveling alone with me. It may look strange to others."

"This is more important than you dream, Dick," she said. "Father is gone, else I shouldn't have to make this trip. We are to be husband and wife in a few months, Dick; we've known each other for years. Surely we can ride on the same train just to Los Angeles. I'll leave word that I've gone to some resort for a week. You can tell them at the club that you're out of town on business, for you'll be that—on important business."

"And you can't tell me——"

"Not a thing now, Dick; please!"

He called the railroad office, and made his reservations. "I'll run down to the club and tell them I'm called away, and pack a few things," he said. "I'll meet you at the station at a quarter to six."

"I'll be there. You'll not fail?"

"I'll not fail," he said.

She went with him to the front door. He took her in his arms and kissed her. "You're frightened, Betty," he said. "Can't I share the secret?"

"Not now, Dick."

"Perhaps I could help you better if——"

"I'll tell you when I can. Please hurry."

He turned to the door.

"And, Dick——"

"Yes?"

"You have a revolver—a good one?"

"Yes."

"Put it in your grip. We may need it!"

CHAPTER II.

BETTY HAS A PULL.

THEY had breakfast on the diner next morning just before arrival at Los Angeles. When they left the train, Wellington was ordered to buy all the morning papers. He did so, and carried them back to Betty, who was in the waiting room.

"While I read the papers, you rush

out and engage the best automobile you can find," she directed.

"Where are we going?"

"I can answer that," said Betty, with an indulgent smile. "We are going to San Pedro."

He hurried away. Betty opened the papers quickly, and read the black headlines that told of a sea mystery off the coast of southern California. She read every word of every article. Only one paragraph seemed to change her manner; it was one telling of big bubbles that had been seen near the flagship of a cruiser fleet when that vessel was held in the grip of some unknown force.

"Yes—yes," Betty breathed.

In a few minutes, Wellington was back with a powerful car. They got in, and the auto hurried through the streets. When they reached the outskirts of the city, she turned to Wellington.

"Tell him to get there as soon as possible," she directed.

On and on rushed the motor car, along oiled highways, along dusty roads, past scores of pretty bungalows to which Betty Gladstone paid not the slightest attention. She always looked ahead, watching for the end of the journey.

Finally the car topped the small hill, and San Pedro was before them. The inner and outer harbors were filled with craft. In the distance four cruisers were at anchor, signal flags fluttering and wireless crashing. The streets were thronged; the docks and shore were crowded with people.

"Where now?" Dick asked.

"Stop any place," Betty directed. "Pay the driver and let him return to Los Angeles."

They stopped at a street corner, and got out. Wellington paid the chauffeur, the machine rolled away, and then he turned to Betty again.

"Now?" he asked.

"I must get on board the cruiser *Alaskan*," she said. "I must talk with the admiral."

"But you surely have read the news, Betty! You know of the peculiar oc-

currences down here? Nobody can board any of the cruisers now."

"It is because of those peculiar occurrences that I am here," she replied. "I must get aboard the *Alaskan*."

"The peculiar occurrences!" Wellington gasped. "It is because of them that you are here? What on earth——"

"Please don't ask me more now," she said. "Let us go aboard."

"But how?"

Betty turned and faced him. "You are a man, Dick," she said, "with a man's genius for making up your mind quickly and acting quickly, with a man's courage. Please try to forget that there is any mystery, that you do not know what I am doing, and go at things as if it was something you were doing yourself. Please take command, Dick, and when I ask you to do a thing, find a way to do it."

Wellington's face flushed. "Thanks for calling me to my senses, Betty," he said. "Come!"

He led her to a corner. He saw a merchant standing in the doorway of his store, looking out at the crowd, and hurried up to him.

"Is there a wireless station here?" he asked.

"Right back on the hill," replied the merchant.

"Thank you."

"Want to go up there?" the merchant asked.

"Yes; this young lady and I——"

"My delivery boy's just starting. You can ride with him."

"Thank you again," Wellington said.

The delivery boy drove up in front from the alley at that moment. Betty got into the seat with him; Wellington conquered his dignity, and sat at the back of the wagon, and let his feet hang over.

The boy whipped up the horse, and they made their way down the narrow, dusty street.

"Funny business out there at sea," the boy observed.

"Anything new this morning?" Betty asked.

"Nopè; only the cruisers can't move, they say. Every captain is scared, and

won't take a ship out. Captain Bob Miller's the only one with any nerve."

"Who is Captain Bob Miller?"

"He's got a steel fishin' launch, and he come over here from Long Beach yesterday. He's a hero! He was drinkin' somethin' awful yesterday and last night, but he's all right to-day, I guess. He says he's goin' back to Long Beach this-afternoon, but there won't any one go with him, you can bet."

They had reached the top of the hill. Wellington gave the boy a half dollar, and helped Betty to the ground, and they made their way to the wireless station as the boy drove on to distribute his groceries.

"We've got some important messages to send," said Wellington to the wireless operator, when he and Betty were inside the station.

"Nothing doing," the operator replied, smiling. "I'm sorry, but the government has seized this station because of what's happened. The admiral is sending out and receiving about as many messages as I can handle. I guess he's some seared."

"But the message is to go to the admiral," said Betty sweetly.

"I can't accept any messages for the cruisers; I can't send out any except those that come to me by wire from the navy department at Washington. Glad to accommodate you if it was possible, but it'd be as much as my job's worth, and more. I ain't anxious to have the government sore on me."

"Can't you just slip one message to the admiral? It has something to do with this unusual occurrence," said Betty.

"I'm sorry—but I can't."

"The government has the wire?" she asked.

"Yes."

"And if the navy department ordered you to send my message to the admiral, would——"

"I'd do it in a moment."

"I suppose I can send a message over the telegraph wire, can't I? The government hasn't seized that?"

"Sure; you can send all you want

over the wire—but not over the wireless."

Betty pulled off her gloves and seized a telegraph blank. She wrote a message addressed to the secretary of the navy, Washington, D. C. It was in code, except the first four words, and those words were: "Tell Captain Henry Gladstone——"

"What is it?" Wellington asked.

"A message to my father in care of the navy department; it is my father's private code," she replied.

The operator flashed the message over the wire to Los Angeles, and from there it was hurried on to Washington. There it was rushed to the secretary of the navy, who at that moment was in consultation with Captain Henry Gladstone, fair Betty's father.

The secretary and Captain Gladstone had a hurried conference, and there was excitement in the manner of each. Then the secretary wrote a reply and dispatched it. Over the wires it flashed to Los Angeles, and from there to the wireless station at San Pedro. The entire operation had taken not more than three-quarters of an hour, for all lines to Washington were being kept open for rapid service to southern California.

The operator at the wireless station heard his call, answered, and took down the message. He looked at Betty peculiarly as he handed it to her.

"Guess you've got a strong pull," he remarked.

Betty and Wellington read the message together:

HARLAN, Wireless Operator, San Pedro, Calif.: Accept and send to cruiser *Alaskan* or any of fleet any messages Miss Betty Gladstone files. Give her every assistance in your power.

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY.

CHAPTER III.

NEW WAY TO BOARD A CRUISER.

NOW," said Betty, "I'll write a wireless for you to send to the admiral."

She sat down at the little table, and Wellington handed her a dispatch blank. The telegraph sounder was ticking again, and the operator sat down to

transcribe the dots and dashes it recorded. He received two messages for the admiral, and immediately prepared to send them on to the *Alaskan* by wireless. Both messages were in the naval code.

Meanwhile Betty wrote her aëro-gram:

ADMIRAL B——, on board U. S. S. *Alaskan*: Must come aboard at once to see you on important matter. BETTY GLADSTONE.

When she turned toward the operator with the message in her hand, that gentleman was sending the other messages to the cruiser. But in a moment he was done, and hurried toward her.

He took the yellow slip, and soon Betty's dispatch was being hurled through the air, and being recorded by the wireless operator aboard the flagship.

Then Betty and Wellington walked to the door of the station, and stood looking down at the harbor, waiting. They did not have to wait long. Within five minutes the operator called to them, and when they entered he handed Betty a message. It was from the old admiral, and read:

Have received orders from Washington to see you and follow your instructions as closely as possible. Fear you cannot come aboard, as launch owners will not make trip. I cannot send for you since cruiser's launch is in grip of the peculiar force and will not move.

Betty pouted, then wrote another message for the admiral. It said:

Will try to get aboard. Watch for me.

Then she pulled Wellington out of the wireless station, and hurried him along the road that wound its way down the hill.

"What are you going to do, Betty?" he asked.

"Go aboard the flagship, of course."

"But if we can't get any one to take us——"

"We must find some one," she said.

"Very well. I'll try."

"First you'll take me to a hotel. Then you'll get two bathing suits—one for each of us."

"Bathing suits?"

"Don't ask questions, please. Hurry, and obey orders."

They walked rapidly into town and to a hotel, where Wellington engaged two rooms. He was told he could obtain bathing suits at the bathhouse near by. It was evident the hotel clerk thought the pair of them insane.

Wellington got the suits, gave Betty's to her, and threw his own in his room. Then he hurried toward the water front.

It happened that a certain Captain Bob Miller was on the dock, telling those assembled that he wasn't afraid of anything that roamed the sea, that if *he* were the admiral he'd take the cruiser fleet wherever he pleased. Wellington touched him on the shoulder.

"I'd like to speak with you a moment," he said.

Captain Bob followed him to one side, away from the crowd.

"You have a launch?" Wellington asked.

"Yes, sir; the *Nancy*. Only boat that can go from here to Long Beach. I'm the only captain with nerve enough to go——"

"Just a moment. Will you go out now, and take a couple of passengers?"

"To Long Beach?"

"No; to the cruiser *Alaskan*."

"You can't get aboard," said Captain Bob.

"Yes, we can. We have orders from the navy department——"

"Oh! Government folk, eh? Certainly I'll take you out."

Captain Bob's breast expanded. He'd take government folk out, of course! But Wellington was talking again:

"Where's your launch?"

"That's her at the end of the dock."

"Now, pay attention, captain. We want to slip away quietly. Understand? Get the launch ready, but let the crowd think you're not going to start for Long Beach for a couple of hours yet. Wait for me, and I'll be down in fifteen minutes with the young lady——"

"Young lady?"

"Yes. You are to take a young lady

and myself to the cruiser. You'll do as I said?"

"I'll be ready and waitin'," Captain Bob responded.

Wellington hurried back to the hotel. He rapped on the door of Betty's room, and Betty opened it. She was dressed in the bathing suit Wellington had procured, and over it she wore a long, light cloak. She had the collar turned up, and wore her hat and shoes.

"Get into your suit," she said. "Put on your raincoat and hat. Don't let the people know we have on bathing suits if you can help it. They'll imagine we are crazy."

"But why are we wearing them?" he asked.

"No questions," she said, laughing.

Wellington hurried to his own room, put on the suit, put on his shoes and hose, and put on his hat and coat. When the coat was buttoned nobody could tell how he was underdressed.

Five minutes later he left the hotel with Betty, and they made their way rapidly to the dock. Captain Bob was there, fussing about the engine of the launch. Only two or three men were near.

Wellington led Betty down the dock and to the launch.

"Get in," said Captain Bob. "I'm ready."

They got in. Captain Bob cast off. He started the engine, and the launch *Nancy* turned her nose toward the outer harbor. Captain Bob increased the launch's speed. Those on the docks and on the shore observed the flying launch, and identified it.

On and on dashed the craft. Some of the people on shore cheered. Captain Bob's face flushed with pleasure. He turned and glanced at the man and woman in the stern, and wondered just how high they stood in government circles.

They passed into the outer harbor, and started on the trip around the breakwater. Hundreds of glasses were watching the progress of the launch now. It had flashed through the crowd that Captain Bob Miller had nerve enough to go out and try to reach Long

Beach, and that a man and woman had nerve enough to go with him. Bob caught the infection, and felt himself a hero.

The launch turned, and made straight for the flagship. On and on it went. Wellington and Betty could see blue-jackets at the side, could see an officer here and there, saw that preparations had been made to receive them.

The launch came to within two hundred feet of the cruiser.

"Told 'em th' old *Nancy* could do it," remarked Captain Bob, with pride.

Then the launch stopped quickly, suddenly, with such force as to hurl water over the bows. The craft whirled until its nose pointed in the same direction as the bow of the flagship. And there the launch *Nancy* stuck, riding on an even keel, not budging an inch, though her engine raced and her screw churned the sea.

"Great salt water!" Captain Bob cried. He sat down in great disgust.

Betty Gladstone laughed, took off her hat, removed her shoes. Then she stood up and stripped off the long cloak. She stood there in the bathing suit, laughing down at Wellington.

"Get ready for a swim," she told him.

"What are you doing to do?" he demanded.

"Swim to the cruiser. The launch can't budge another inch."

"Betty! We don't understand this thing! We don't know what danger lurks beneath the surface. If a great ship can be made helpless by this unknown power, what will happen to a swimmer?"

"Nothing will happen to a swimmer—I know," Betty replied. "Are you afraid, Dick?"

"For you—not for myself, Betty."

"I know you are not a coward. This is just an ordinary swim, like hundreds we've taken together, except that the crowds ashore are watching us, and we're swimming to a cruiser instead of a landing stage. Come on, Dick."

"I'm afraid for you, Betty."

"Come, dear—I know."

Wellington groaned as he stripped off

his shoes and hose and removed his coat. He stood beside her.

"We'd better not, Betty," he implored. "You don't know what you are doing."

"I know exactly what I am doing," she said. "Come!"

She sprang over the side, went under, came up again, and waved a hand at him.

"Great salt water!" cried Captain Bob. "This thing'll get her, whatever it is."

Wellington took the plunge. Captain Bob, his eyes bulging, saw Wellington come to the surface and turn toward him.

"Wait there for us, my man," he called.

"I guess I'll wait, all right," shouted Captain Bob.

There was fear in Dick Wellington's heart as he turned and struck out after Betty. She was swimming easily, as he had seen her swim in bathhouse and ocean hundreds of times. Wellington swam strongly, came up with her. He looked ahead at the cruiser, now but sixty feet or so away.

"I hope to Heaven we reach it," he gasped.

"There's no danger at all," Betty replied.

Wellington looked again. Two junior officers were halfway down the starboard ladder. At the top an older officer was shouting orders at them.

Betty laughed again, quickened her stroke, grasped the base of the ladder. One of the officers aided her to mount, then turned to help Wellington. They ascended to the deck. There a gray-haired old man who wore an admiral's uniform met them.

"Miss Betty Gladstone?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied. "Pardon me, admiral, for breaking all rules of naval etiquette by calling upon you in this unusual costume. But it happened to be necessary. This is Mr. Richard Wellington, of San Francisco, my fiancé, who came down with me from home. And now, if you have a coat of some sort I may put on—the wind is rather chilly—we'll get down to business."

The old admiral made a noise that sounded suspiciously like a snort of humor.

"I am proud to have you come aboard in any costume," he said gallantly. "Glad to know you, Wellington. Kindly come to my cabin, both of you. If you want dry clothes, Wellington, one of my young officers can fit you out. But I'm afraid Miss Gladstone will have to dry out as she is, and make the best of it. This is a ship of war, and—er—feminine apparel is something we don't keep in stock."

CHAPTER IV.

THE THREAT.

CAPTAIN HENRY GLADSTONE, Betty's father, was known well and favorably to half the officers of the United States navy. He had seen service during the Civil War with Farragut. He had retired from active service soon after peace was restored, and had moved to San Francisco, where he became interested in a shipbuilding firm.

In time he prospered. He built up a fortune as he built ships. He was an authority on naval construction. He had devised many improvements on war craft. His firm had constructed several gigantic cruisers and a large number of torpedo-boat destroyers and submarines.

But now Captain Gladstone had been retired from business for almost ten years. Yet he was still hale and hearty, and still retained the mental power that had done much for his country's navy. He was still a man of patriotism. He was called frequently to Washington in conference with the chiefs of the naval department. His word always carried great weight.

So now when the old admiral faced Betty and Wellington in his cabin, his first words were of Betty's father.

"I fought with him under Farragut," he said. "I haven't seen him in more than two years now. I'd like to see him again. I was astonished when I received the intelligence from Washington that you were in San Pedro, and

that I was to cooperate with you in any way that I could. I feared at once that your father was ill—too ill to come to San Pedro—and had sent you in his place with some information, or something like that. I take it that your father has some idea regarding this peculiar phenomenon."

"Father is in excellent health," replied Betty. "He is in Washington now, in conference with the secretary of the navy about some matter. I started from San Francisco before father reached Washington, for he couldn't have arrived there until this morning."

"I had hoped you were here to explain this unusual occurrence."

"I am here to help dispel it," said Betty; "but I fear I cannot explain."

The admiral looked at her with a puzzled expression on his face.

"I understand what is happening," she said quickly; "but for certain reasons I cannot tell you. Even Mr. Wellington does not know. My father does, however. Since he is away, I did not dare wait until I could communicate with him, until he could get to the Pacific coast again. I took matters in my own hands. You must trust me, sir, and let me do things in my own way."

"What have you to suggest?" the admiral asked.

"I have read the morning papers. Is the story they tell true substantially?"

"I believe so."

"There is a—a something—that paralyzes ships, holds them still in a certain position?"

"That is it."

"And the big bubbles——"

"One of my officers reported them."

"Then what I feared is true. Indeed, I knew it before I asked the questions, for nothing else could——" She stopped, confused.

"Well?" the admiral asked.

"What has been done?"

"Nothing," said the admiral, "nothing—except that the fool department has ordered the remainder of the fleet here—here, where the danger threatens. Pardon me for calling it a fool of a department, but you are an officer's

daughter, and will not repeat my words, neither will Mr. Wellington, I am sure."

"The remainder of the Pacific fleet is coming, then?"

"Ought to be here to-morrow," said the admiral.

"All of it?"

"Cruisers, destroyers, submarines."

"Submarines, too?"

"Yes."

"And when they arrive——"

"They'll get tied up the same as the *Alaskan*, I suppose," said the admiral.

Betty laughed, and bent toward the old sea dog.

"Admiral," she said, "if you could get out of this scrape any way you pleased, what way would please you most?"

"I'd find out what this peculiar power, or force, or influence is, and remove it," he answered.

"You cannot do that," she said. "You cannot find out what it is—must not, in fact—and you cannot remove it. But I know what it is—and I hope to remove it."

"You? A girl? I beg your pardon!"

"It is all right, sir; it does sound peculiar, yet it is the truth. Would you like to move the *Alaskan* now, just to know that you can?"

"Would I?" cried the admiral. "You just show me how it can be done!"

"The other cruisers can move, can't they?"

"They can—for about three hundred yards—then they are promptly collared, and sent rushing back where they were anchored."

"Did you ever try to move two of them at once, in different directions?"

"No."

"Try it," said Betsy. "I happen to know that this peculiar power or force *can control but one ship at a time!*"

"What?" cried the admiral.

"It is a fact. Set all your four cruisers moving, and you'll find that only one of them will be bothered at a time."

"Pardon me, but there are a couple of launches near the *Alaskan* tied up as effectually as my ship," the admiral said.

"Because they are within a short radius of the *Alaskan*," said Betty.

The admiral opened his lips to reply, but an officer entered, and handed him two messages. The first one read:

Captain Gladstone rushing to San Pedro on special train. Tell his daughter to do nothing and risk nothing until he arrives. Further instructions later.

"Then I'll get to see your father again," said the admiral, handing her the message.

He unfolded the second one, read it, gasped, and read it again:

I get every wireless message you get. Your fleet and Captain Gladstone can do nothing. Tell Miss Betty Gladstone and the man with her to leave the *Alaskan*. Tell her to keep her tongue still and her hands off, or I'll hurl every cruiser on the coast.

The admiral handed the message to Betty. His hand was trembling.

"What does that mean?" he asked.

Betty turned pale, put her hands to her face for an instant.

"I can't tell you—can't tell you," she said.

The admiral arose and towered above her.

"Miss Gladstone," he said, "that message informs us that the devilish power or force that has been exerted here is the work of a man—it is not some phenomenon of nature. You know that man's name. You know how he does his devilish work. Do you not?"

"I—yes!" Betty gasped.

"Then tell me, in Heaven's name. Does he work from the land or sea? And how can I outwit him, how can I undo his work? Where there's a poison there's an antidote."

"I—I can tell you nothing," Betty said.

"Miss Gladstone!"

"Your message from headquarters," she reminded him, "says for me to do nothing, to risk nothing."

The admiral sat down in his chair again. "I beg your pardon," he said. "I had forgotten, for the time being, that I had superiors, and that they had issued commands. You think that your father will solve the mystery—when he arrives?"

"I think he'll do something," Betty said.

"But I don't want to stay here at anchor like a fool until he comes. If I can outwit this devilish force— You said it controls only one ship at a time, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"That is, the force can cover only a certain radius?"

"Yes," responded Betty.

"Then I'll have some fun," said the admiral. "I'll send orders to the other three cruisers, and we'll see what he'll do. He can get our wireless, can he? Well, I know something he can't get! We'll see if he can read a string of signal flags and a wigwag."

The admiral went on deck, and Betty and Wellington followed him. He called a signal officer, and soon a string of flags ran up.

"Stand by to take orders," it read.

Then a sailor made his way to the top of a turret, and presently was wigwagging the admiral's message to the *Jefferson*:

Cruiser *Jefferson* will weigh anchor and steam at half speed due west. If stopped by force, keep engines steady, prepared to move if force stops.

The *Jefferson's* "O. K." was flashed back; and the wigwag man began his message to the *Hamilton*:

Cruiser *Hamilton* will weigh anchor and steam at half speed toward San Diego. Anchor off Alamitos Bay if that point reached without hindrance.

The admiral turned to Betty and Wellington. "That'll send two of my ships off in different directions," he said. "I'll take the *Alaskan* north, if the force releases her. Then we'll see if all three cruisers can be controlled, and the fourth, left here, kept in position at her anchorage by this man-made phenomenon."

He laughed as he led the way back across the deck. Before they reached the side, a junior officer approached, saluted, handed the admiral a message. He read it; his face turned white for an instant.

"He is a devil, sure enough!" the admiral exclaimed. "Listen!" He read it to them:

"I can read your signaling, too. If you try to disperse squadron, I'll hurl the flagship on the San Pedro breakwater and turn it into a mass of junk!"

Betty sprang forward and gripped the admiral's arm. "Cancel your orders!" she cried. "Cancel your orders, or he'll do it! For he can—he can!"

She was terrified; there was horror in her eyes, in her voice. The admiral gave one long look at her, and read in her face that she spoke the truth. He ran, shouting, across the deck. An instant—and the wireless of the flagship crashed out a message to the other cruisers of the squadron:

Disregard orders just issued; remain at anchorage.

CHAPTER V.

A WAVE OF TERROR.

BETTY and Wellington stood near the rail waiting for the admiral to return.

"Tell me, Betty," Wellington begged. "I'll help you keep the secret. You know the meaning of all this—and your father knows. I'd naturally think that it had something to do with the government, with the navy, since your father has the knowledge—but the admiral does not know, and Washington does not know, else the department people there would wire instructions."

"You don't understand—you can't dream," she said. "It is terrible—terrible. And I can't say a word now—so please do not ask it, Dick."

The admiral came toward them across the deck. His face had a stern expression; the old sea dog was about at the limit of his patience.

And suddenly, before he reached them, the cruiser *Alaskan* sprang forward like a wild thing, snapping the anchor cables, causing a wave that almost swamped the cruiser's launch and the craft of Captain Bob Miller.

Startled cries came from the blue-jackets, from the officers. The admiral turned back toward the bridge. Betty Gladstone grasped Wellington by one arm, and gave a shriek of fear.

On and on dashed the flagship,

straight out to sea. For a mile it shot forward under the influence of the unknown, then the speed died down, the cruiser stopped, rolled with the waves.

From the bridge the admiral signaled the engine room. The engines were started; the great ship turned and steamed at half speed back toward the anchorage near the breakwater.

"Wanted to show us he was still on the job, I guess," the admiral muttered.

He looked back at the anchorage through his glass, and gave an exclamation. The cruiser *Hamilton* was in the grip of the unknown now. It was rushing forward at full speed; it stopped; it rushed backward; it described a great circle, then was still.

Next the *Jefferson*, then the *Adams*, felt the grip of the unknown. And, one by one, the cruisers were released from the force and allowed to creep back to their anchorages, fear in the hearts of officers and men.

When Captain Bob Miller found, after the *Alaskan* had been carried away, that the *Nancy* was no longer held, he put on full speed and dashed toward San Pedro harbor. Captain Bob had been hero enough for one day, and he needed liquid refreshment to quiet his nerves. But at the entrance to the inner harbor, the *Nancy* was stopped as if she had run against a stone wall. Captain Bob gave a squeal of fear. He felt the craft being rushed through the water backward. It whirled, it circled, it was carried a mile out to sea, and there it was released from that devilish "something" that had controlled it. Captain Bob put on all speed, and made for the harbor again. This time he reached it in safety, and took the *Nancy* up to the wharf. He made her fast and ran up to the nearest street.

There was a government dredge in the outer harbor. It was torn from its moorings, rushed through the water, and left alongside the cruiser *Alaskan*.

The water front was terrified again. The admiral of the cruiser squadron issued orders for his ships to remain at anchorage, and not to attempt to move,

and for officers to be on their guard to act quickly in case of emergency.

On the shore thousands watched through glasses and with the naked eye, waiting to see if the ships were to indulge in more antics. But nothing happened during the remainder of the afternoon. Night fell; the craft rode at their anchors securely.

Betty Gladstone was given a cabin on board the *Alaskan*, for, in spite of the looks of things, the admiral refused to allow a launch to attempt the trip to shore. Wellington shared the cabin of one of the junior officers. But scarcely any one slept.

Every one was up at break of day. Betty and Wellington were served with breakfast. The admiral had sent word that he would be in later; he was in the wireless room. And when the admiral did enter the cabin his face was white.

"What is it?" Betty gasped.

"The fleet," the admiral replied. "It's got the fleet—whatever the thing is. It caught 'em up the coast at about three this morning. It scattered 'em, run 'em in circles, almost carried one battleship on the rocks. It pulled a destroyer down—down on an even keel—until the water was rushing in and filling her, then let her go. The fleet is demoralized! But you were right, Miss Gladstone—this thing can control but one ship at a time. The fleet has been trying to keep together, and one by one a ship has been cut out of the line and carried away to one side to play circus. The last message came ten minutes ago. The fleet was one hundred miles up the coast then. So this thing that controls the ships is there—a hundred miles away. And so—if you want to go ashore——"

"Wait!" cried Wellington. "We don't know this force, remember. Perhaps—if we try to go ashore—it'll be turned on us."

Betty sprang to her feet. "We'll go ashore," she said. "If the force is working one hundred miles away—if it was less than a quarter of an hour ago—we'll be safe in going ashore. Will you get out a launch, admiral? It will be safe."

"Can't you tell me anything before you go?" the admiral asked.

"Orders from Washington, admiral, said for me to do nothing until my father arrived. And that other message. Do you remember that, admiral? It said for Mr. Wellington and me to go ashore, for me to keep my tongue still and my hands tied, or he'd hurl every cruiser on the coast."

The admiral ordered a launch. "Perhaps it is best," he said quietly. "Will you keep in communication with me, please, from the shore?"

"Yes," Betty said.

They followed the admiral to the deck. The launch was ready, waiting for them.

"Good-by for this time, Miss Gladstone," the admiral said.

He took her hand; he dropped it again instantly, because an officer was rushing toward him with a message.

"Wait, please; maybe this is something," the admiral said.

He unfolded the message, read it. It was from the secretary of the navy.

"Now we are lost," the admiral whispered. "You must be brave, Miss Gladstone."

"What is it? My father——"

The admiral handed Wellington the message, and he read it aloud:

Captain Gladstone injured, railroad wreck, in Illinois at midnight. Not serious, but unable continue journey five or six days. Tell his daughter to take matters into her own hands.

Betty gave a little cry, and Wellington clasped her in his arms. "The message says it isn't serious, dear," he said softly. "Be brave; you are the daughter of a brave man!"

"Gladstone laid up! What can we do now?" the admiral said.

Betty straightened herself and whirled toward him, biting her lips in an effort to keep back the tears.

"Do?" she cried. "I'll take matters in my own hands—as the message says, for all of it—this mystery, this horror and fear, this dread of what may come—all of it is my fault!"

"Betty!" Wellington cried, aghast.

"My fault!" she went on. "But I'll

right it! I'll right it—and keep the secret, too!"

"Poor girl!" the admiral said, putting an arm around her. "The shock has been too much for her."

She tore away from him. "I know what I am saying," she said. "And I'll be my father's daughter. I'll think of duty before anything else—before my father, who is hurt—before you, Dick, dear."

"What can we do? What can we do?" the admiral was saying.

"Do?" she cried. "Get into communication with the remainder of the fleet. Tell them to make their way here as well as they can with the interruptions they are having. But one ship can be controlled at a time. Get them here—anchor them in lines—in a circle—any way you please. Then watch for the bubbles—the big bubbles! Get your torpedo tubes ready! Get your heavy guns ready! Clear every ship for action! Watch! And when you see a bubble—*fire!* Do you understand? *Shoot around the bubbles!*"

CHAPTER VI.

TO DO HER DUTY.

IT was noon when the remainder of the fleet arrived. There was a squadron of battleships, eight more cruisers, eight destroyers, five submarines.

Messages flashed from the *Alaskan* to the other ships, and they took up the positions assigned to them as rapidly as possible. The admiral had placed them to the best advantage, so that, in case of the peculiar engagement Betty Gladstone had advised, there would be the greatest freedom for action.

But the peculiar force that had demoralized the shipping of the southern Californian coast was not idle. Here and there a battleship or cruiser or destroyer would be jerked from its position, carried out to sea, whirled in a circle, and released. As yet none of the little submarines had been touched. They hovered around their mother ship like frightened chicks about an old hen.

Betty and Wellington had gone ashore, dressed at the great hotel, and

made their way up to the wireless station on the hill behind San Pedro. The look of terror had not left Betty's face since she heard the message telling of her father's injury and placing everything in her hands. Wellington knew that she was laboring under great emotion, was fighting continually to keep back the tears.

Time and time again he begged for her confidence, begged to share the secret. But she always refused, always said that it was her fault entirely, always declared that her duty would come before everything—before her father, before the man she had promised to marry.

And so they remained at the wireless station, and through their glasses watched the fleet.

From half past twelve o'clock until half past one there was no excitement. It seemed that the peculiar force or power that had been at work had ceased for the time being. A launch from one of the battleships made her way through the water to the flagship *Alaskan*, and returned without hindrance.

The old admiral had been busy issuing orders, and every commander knew the part he was expected to play. The grim fighting ships had been cleared for action. At intervals along the rails of every one of them sharp-eyed petty officers scanned the surface of the sea.

And then, about two o'clock, from a point near one of the battleships, a big bubble arose to the surface. The forward turret of the big battleship next in line revolved, the muzzle of the fourteen-inch gun was lowered rapidly, there was a burst of flame, a cloud of smoke, a roar that seemed to strike against the hills back of the town with force enough to demolish them.

Near where the bubble had been seen a column of water shot up into the air for a great distance, and fell back to the surface of the sea with a crash.

The fleet waited; hundred of glasses were trained on the spot. Nothing was seen. Five minutes later two big bubbles came to the surface near the line of destroyers. Small guns rattled, an-

other fourteen-inch monster spoke, and hurled half a ton of deadly explosive into the water. One of the submarines threw a torpedo—a torpedo which, for some unaccountable reason, stopped suddenly, rose to the surface of the water, and rested there.

Another destroyer gave a shriek from her siren. She had been jerked out of the line, was being rushed through the water at a rapid rate. One hundred feet before her was a continual line of big bubbles, and into this line, as she rushed, her one-pounders poured their deadly hail, but with no effect that could be ascertained.

On and on went the destroyer; finally she described a circle and turned, and rushed back toward the fleet. One hundred feet ahead of her prow the line of big bubbles was always to be seen. Down the line she went, between the rows of cruisers and battleships. The guns of the fleet began raining shot and shell at the bubbles. A heavy pall of smoke hung over the water. Fourteen-inch guns boomed; one-pounders rattled; secondary batteries added to the din.

But the line of bubbles continued; the destroyer, in the grip of the unknown, dashed on. She turned again; her bow was pointed straight toward the breakwater. Her speed was terrific. The thousands of persons ashore held their breath. Officers and men of the fleet watched, horror in their faces. The helpless members of Uncle Sam's navy aboard the destroyer could only stand with folded arms, and wait.

Another hail of shot and shell struck the line of bubbles. On and on dashed the destroyer. She was traveling through the water at a greater speed than her engines ever had driven her, even on her trial trip.

Two hundred yards from the breakwater, and she still maintained her great speed. Then the line of bubbles turned to starboard quickly—turned away from the destroyer. But the little destroyer dashed on, unable to check her great momentum, her engines unable to overcome the force of her traveling in so short a distance.

There was a crash, the sound of rending steel, a chorus of shrieks and screams and cries. Like a bit of driftwood, the destroyer was hurled upon the breakwater with such force that the rocks tore a great hole in her bow.

Men scrambled and tumbled over that crushed bow, sprang into the water, swam and waded ashore, and turned to look with horror upon the destruction of their vessel. It was not horror at the fact that the craft had been destroyed, but at the manner of the destruction.

There were no lives lost; the remains of the destroyer were wedged on the breakwater, and would not sink. The craft could be saved if removed and towed to a port before a storm broke her up. Her commander was left alone on the ship, with an ensign and the wireless operator. The commander's nerve was shaken, but he was a commander for all that. He dictated a message. The admiral received it a few minutes later:

Regret to report destroyer *Milton* hurled on San Pedro breakwater by force unknown. Bow crushed; no lives lost, none injured. Must have assistance to save ship.

The admiral did not need that report; he had watched the whole thing. But in that moment of horror the commander of the destroyer had not forgotten discipline, had not forgotten the rules of the service. The admiral was thinking of one thing—that shot and shell had been poured at and around the big bubbles, and that the work of the peculiar force had not been stopped.

And then he was handed another message, this time from the unknown:

Shells nor torpedoes can harm me. And I can crush the flagship as easily as I crushed the destroyer.

Betty and Wellington, up by the wireless station on the hill, had watched the peculiar battle, the death of the destroyer. Betty had dropped her marine glass and turned away, her hands over her face.

"It is terrible—terrible!" she moaned.

"There, dear; you cannot help it," Wellington said.

"But it is all my fault—my fault."

"Nonsense, dear; it couldn't be. Won't you tell me what you mean by that? Won't you explain everything to me, trust me? There may be a way I can help you. I might be able to suggest something."

"No—no, Dick; I dare not," she said.

"Can't you trust me, Betty?"

"Yes—but it isn't that. What I know must remain a secret. You don't understand, Dick, dear. It must remain a secret—from every one!"

"Miss Gladstone!" called the wireless operator from inside the station.

Betty and Wellington hurried inside. The operator gave Betty a message he had just received. She opened it, and read. She reeled, and would have fallen if Wellington had not caught her in his arms.

"What is it, dear?" he asked. "Your father——"

"Not father," she answered. Then she stood up straight and strong. She looked the wireless operator straight in the eyes. "You understand," she told him, "that Washington has put this entire matter in my hands since my father's injury? This station has been seized by the government. You know the penalty for disclosing any message? Very well; destroy all records of this one except that which you must keep on file. And tell nobody what this message says. Do you understand? *Do not tell a soul!*"

The operator looked at her, then at Wellington, and back at Betty again.

"I understand, Miss Gladstone," he replied.

She looked him straight in the eye again, then faced Wellington.

"Dick," she said, "I am going down into the town. I want you to remain here and get any messages that may come for me regarding father's condition. The operator is to give you none except those."

"I'd better go with you, Betty," he said, when they were outside.

"No, please. I must go alone. If you love me, you will remain here, and do as I say. I have a duty to perform, Dick; and duty must come before anything."

She choked back a sob, and started away from him.

"Betty——" he called after her.

"Please, Dick! Remain there!"

"But where are you going? What are you going to do?"

"I am going to do my duty, Dick," she said.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The next section of this story will appear in the March mid-month TOP-NOTCH, on the news stands February 15th. Bear in mind, this magazine is issued every two weeks, and you do not have to wait a month for the next installment of a serial. Back numbers may be obtained of news dealers or the publishers.

Lucky to the Last

ROOK: "Taylor was always a fortunate man, but doesn't it seem wonderful that his luck should stay with him to the very last?"

Raleigh: "How was that?"

Rook: "Why, he was operated on for the removal of a pearl which he had accidentally swallowed while eating oysters, and when the pearl was examined it was found to be valuable enough to pay for both the operation and the funeral."

Nature Study

THE teacher had been reading to the class about the great forests.

"And now, boys," she said, "which one of you can tell me the pine that has the longest and sharpest needles?"

Up went a hand in the front row.

"Well, Tommy?"

"The porcupine!"

Talks With Top-Notch Readers

By BURT L. STANDISH

ON THE HORIZON



It is pleasant to know that so many of our readers do not rest content with enjoying the magazine themselves, but are eager that others may enjoy it.

So they pass the good thing along. Elmer E. Hinton, of 306 Citizens' Building, Cleveland, Ohio, is one of these. He writes:

I am not in the habit of criticizing, but I think your magazine is not being read enough in Cleveland. It is about time you were giving the sellers a shake-up, and demanding that TOP-NOTCH be placed in the "front window."

About three months ago, and only through an accident, a copy of your magazine got into my hands. I am just beginning to realize what a lot of good reading I have missed. The trouble was that I never received the initial copy.

When your "Sheridan of the U. S. Mail" came out, some time ago, I presented the postman with a copy containing it, and after reading it he became so enthusiastic that he has advertised it to all his fellow workmen at the downtown office. Most of these, he informs me, had never read a copy of TOP-NOTCH. Probably their trouble was the same as mine—namely, that the magazine had never been brought to their attention. This is the only criticism I have to make. As to the magazine itself, I do not think you could improve on it, and still keep the good will of all its readers. If this letter is worthy of the space, I would like to see it pub-

lished. It will help me in my work of getting subscribers for your magazine.



FROM a railroad man in Galveston, Texas—H. L. Brown—we have the following:

TOP-NOTCH as a rule is a mighty good magazine, but I wish to criticize "The Fade-away Car," by F. I. Anderson, in the January number. In the first place, an engineer doesn't get his orders from the towerman; there are three copies made of each order made; the operator keeps one copy, the conductor keeps one copy, and the engineer gets the third copy. It is hardly probable that a president's special would follow a freight train when both were ready to leave. A mogul is not a heavy engine, being only a 2-6-0; that is, two small wheels under the pilot, six drivers, and no trailers; they are generally used on roads that hardly ever have over a seventy-pound rail, and I know they don't require a one-hundred-and-ten-pound rail.

Fancy "double drops" are sometimes made, and it is possible to switch a car on a siding without stopping the train. When trains are run late they keep their original time-card numbers, superior trains paying them no attention, and inferior trains keeping off their time. If Hansen had been working for the railroad long enough to draw a pension he would probably be running a passenger train instead of a freight. Engineers don't give up their engines at the tower; they are responsible for them until they have been placed on the

"roundhouse track." The president of the railroad himself cannot discharge an employee who belongs to an order—and Gibbons belonged to the A. B. L. E.—without an investigation, and it is the charges brought against him.

I like stories about things that could really happen. Mr. Bertram Lebhar is my favorite, and I suggest that he divide his stories up in larger bundles; instead of giving him only twelve pages—as in the issue of January first—give him about twenty-five or thirty pages.

The above letter is another example of the need TOP-NOTCH writers have for accuracy in matters of technical detail. While some of the points to which this correspondent calls attention would not seem important to the general reader, they are of moment to the railroad man, who is familiar with the technical details of operation.

It is the reader who has special knowledge, as well as the less critically disposed one, that an author will consider—indeed, must consider—if he would turn out fiction suitable for our practical times. The author may say in his defense of this particular railroad story, that it was accurate in such details as were essential to the tale; but our critic, I am afraid, will not accept this as a sound defense, although two other railroad men writing of "The Fade-away Car" have called it a "corking good story."



EDWARD SPIEGEL, of Fort Wayne, Indiana, writes about a matter that has called forth other inquiries, and we will answer all of them at one time:

There has been a discussion in our family about those pearl-covered "Buddhas," referred to in Mr. Phillips' story, "The Burlington Buddha." I have read about it in another magazine, and so I argued in the affirmative.

I am an ardent lover of your "Lefty" stories and Lebhar's "Camera Chap" stories. I am not a knocker of T.-N., because I have not found any fault with the stories. If you were to cut out your short stories you would lose many readers. Mr. Phillips' "When Facts are Liars," and "The Burlington Buddha," are a good pair of stories, and both have splendid mysteries.

EDWARD SPIEGEL.

If Mr. Spiegel will look on page four of "The Burlington Buddha," he will find a description of the method used in forming the artificial pearl. This process for promoting the "building" of a pearl was applied in the thirteenth century, by Ye-jin-yang, a native of Hoochow. He seems to have been the first to learn that pearls are caused by irritants lodging in the oyster. The oyster builds a coat about the irritant, and this coat or covering is the pearl.

All manner of matrices are now inserted into the oysters, depending upon what shape of finished pearl is desired. Naturally, the Buddha is favored highly by the devout Chinese. The best specimens of pearl-coated Buddhas are to be found in the British Museum.

This artificial propagation forms the staple industry of several villages in China, centering around Soo Chow, over five thousand persons being employed in it.

There has been no attempt to create pearls in this country, probably because we do not have the time or patience of the Chinese. Often a matrix is allowed to remain with its "mother" for six years before a perfect coating is obtained.



FROM Walter H. Raynor, secretary of the Northwestern Research Club, of Detroit, Michigan, we have this:

TALKS WITH TOP-NOTCH READERS

I have been a reader of your magazine ever since it was first published. I certainly believe it to be the best magazine of its kind on the market, and that the proportion of serials, complete, and short stories are just about right to suit the average reader.

My favorite authors are yourself, Terhune, and Leibar, and I enjoy the stories of the others more than those usually found in most other magazines. Wish you could arrange to have a story taking place in Detroit, and have it woven around our automobile industry.

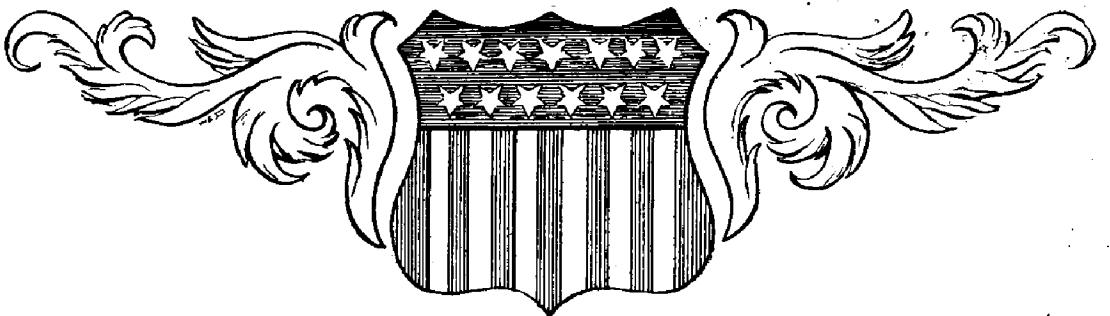
These actual-place stories that are so popular with you do not fall on the TOP-NOTCH editor's desk along with the autumn leaves that occasionally blow in at the window. We have to commission authors to write them. It happens that the mail brings one in now and then, but not one that we have been able to publish, because not up to the mark.

We are always glad to receive a story laid in any fair-sized town of the United States or Canada, provided the story is built in the way that our readers like. If this strikes the eye of any author who knows his business, and he is moved to try his hand, he will not write to ask what particular style of story architecture is needed to suit TOP-NOTCH readers. Instead of doing such a useless thing, he will take up a copy of the magazine, read it carefully, and learn just what sort of fiction we are

publishing; he will study the methods of the authors who are established favorites with our readers, and he will not ask any foolish questions of the editor as to what is wanted. He will teach himself, and thus pursue the only course that can lead him to the fount of knowledge. Thus it will be with the author who knows his business.

After studying TOP-NOTCH, he will see that, first of all, he must have a story to tell. He will not begin to write until he has a story. After assuring himself that he has a story, he will proceed to take account of the town that it is to be in, and arrange his scenes so that they will take in the local color of the city, calling places by their real names. And he will draw freely upon the real life of the town, whether it be New-Orleans, Los Angeles, Montreal, Pascoag, Rhode Island, or Ducktown, Tennessee.

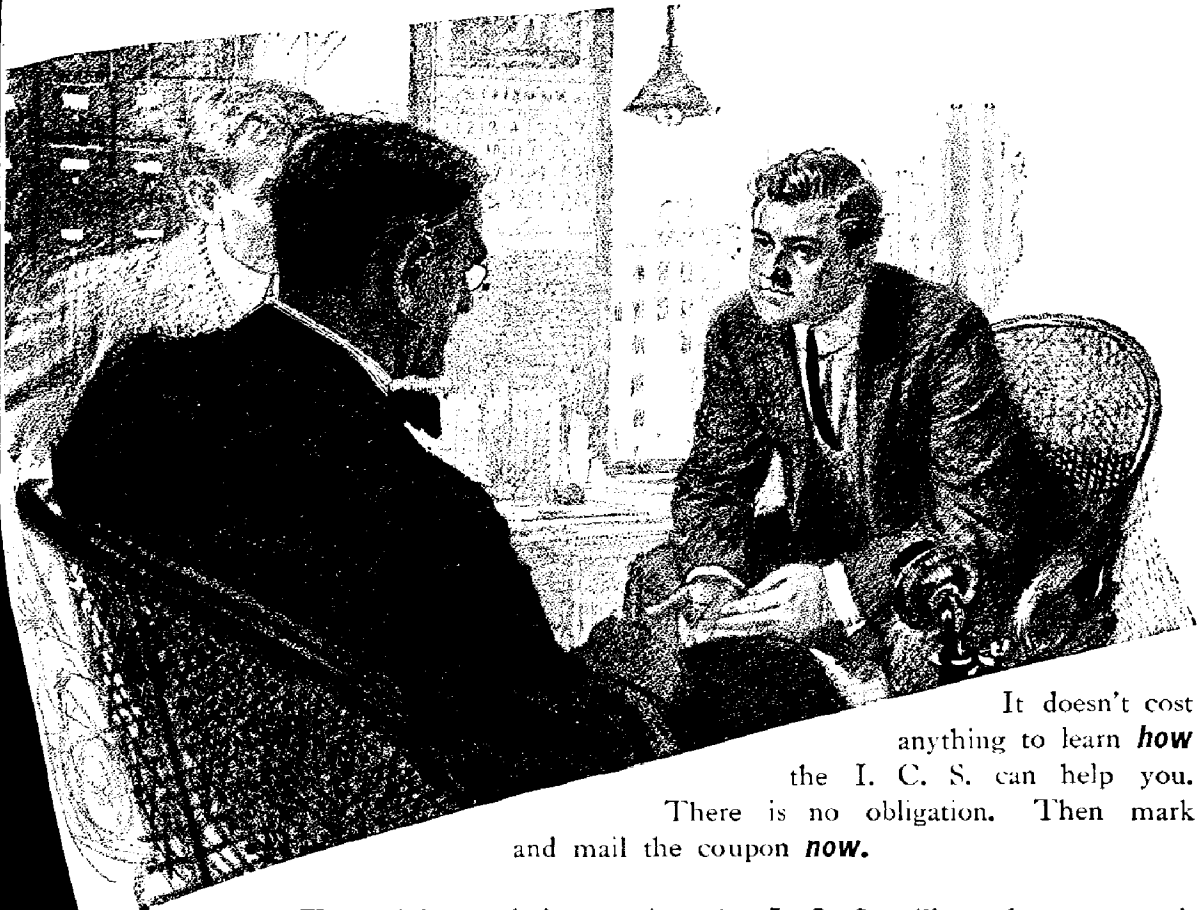
Another care the author who knows his business will take is to have a plot that gets stronger and stronger as the tale unfolds. And he will dress it all in becoming verbal clothes. From such a writer we should be glad to receive and pay for an actual-place story about Detroit or any other town—North, South, East, or West—of not less than twenty-five thousand inhabitants. This is an invitation to fiction writers who have attained proficiency in their art.



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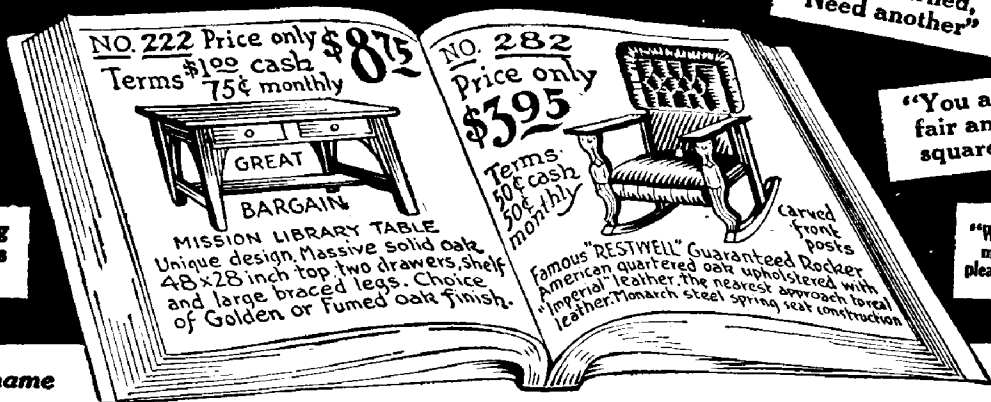
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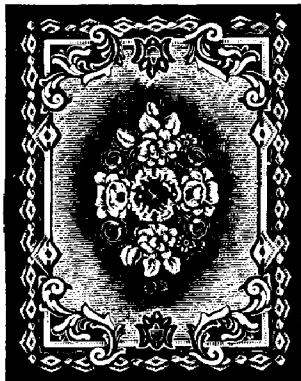
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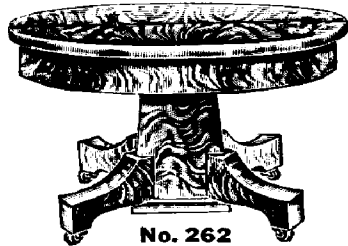
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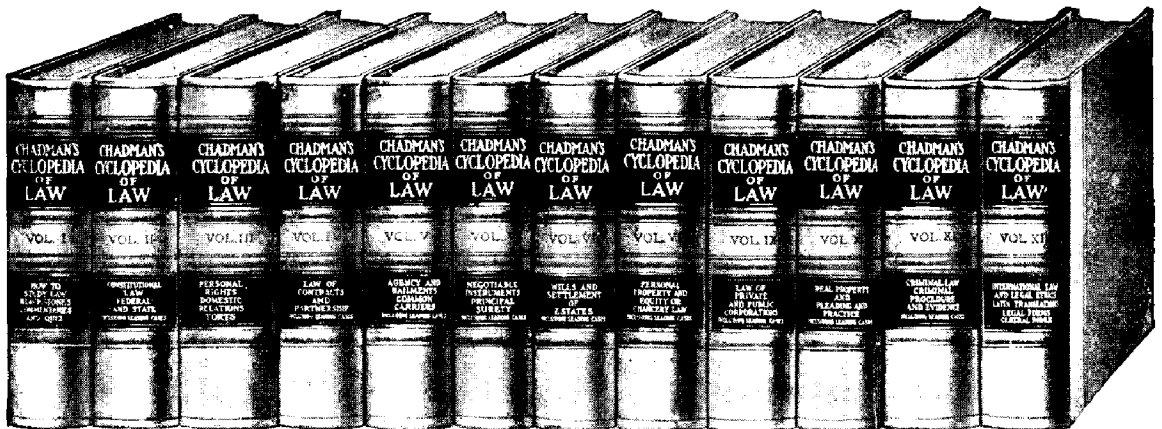
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