

THE Banner Weekly

COPYRIGHTED 1888, BY BEADLE AND ADAMS.

Vol. VI.

E. F. Beadle, Publishers, William Adams,

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY.

PUBLICATION OFFICE: 98 William Street, New York

No. 273

WHEN REST COMES.

BY EBEN E. REXFORD.

Some day at sunset you will go
And look away toward the hill,
And one dark spot upon the snow
With sudden tears your eyes will fill.
And what you see will be the sod
They heaped between my face and God.
But, oh, my friend, you need not weep,
To think of me beneath the mold;
I shall be wrapped in sweetest sleep,
Safe from the winter's storm and cold.
At peace with all the world will be
The heart of him you cannot see.

Death seems to me a night of rest
Before the endless morning breaks,
And surely, surely that is best
For the tired heart before it wakes
To life we cannot comprehend
Until our earthly sorrows end.

So weep not for the friend you miss,
Asleep upon the stormy hill,
Perhaps your friendly farewell kiss
Will linger in his memory still;
And if it does, his dreams will be
The sweeter for the memory.

The Captain's Enemy;

OR,

The Evil Genius of it all.

A Romance of the Old East and the Wild West.

BY DR. NOEL DUNBAR.

AUTHOR OF "TRAMP SHADOWS," "DUKE DESPARD," "THE POINTING FINGER," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE SOLDIER ASSASSIN.

"You will do the work, mine friend?"
"Yes, I will kill him, Jew, for I hate him, and will thus have revenge, and get paid for it, too; but I must have one thousand dollars blood-money."
"It was mooch moneys for only kill a mans; but I was pay you."
"Then I will do the work."
"You hates him, you was say joost now?"
"Yes, I hate him, because he had me punished," and the speaker uttered the words in a low, savage tone.
"Maybe you was not goot soldier mans?"
"I was wrong, I admit; but he punished me and I never forgive an injury."
"Vell, here was five hundred dollars, and I gif you t'e balance v'en you was kill him."
"Good! I'll do it to-morrow night, when I am off duty, and he will return from the settlement then, so I can ambush him at Dead Man's Pass."
"Vell, I will have t'e monish ready, and be ready to go unimeself mit t'e train that starts to-morrow night."
"What have you against Captain Dudley Delmont, Jew?"
"That was no pizziness of yours, soldier-mans. I wants him dead, and pays you to kill him. Come to mine camp v'en t'e work was done," and the Jew turned away from the one with whom he had been plotting the death of a human being, and walked rapidly toward his own quarters.

The scene was a frontier fort in Nebraska, and the speaker wore a Jew trader and a soldier, wearing a sergeant's stripes upon his arm.

The former had a cunning, evil face, almost hidden by bushy hair and whiskers, and walked with a shuffling gait, while hestopped, as though from carrying a pack.

A few weeks before he had come in a wagon train to the fort, and the goods that he brought were really of the best quality and sold for a low price, so that he had done a good business; but the trader seemed to have other motives in coming to the fort than selling his goods, for he soon picked out his man, the sergeant, as one upon whom he could rely to become an assassin if well paid for the deed.

The conversation held with Sergeant Bainbridge, and which opens this story, proves that he had not mistaken his man.

The next evening, just after nightfall, a horseman was riding slowly along through a wild canyon, and upon a trail that led from the settlement to the fort. His head was bowed, as though in deep thought, and his horse was left to follow the trail at his will.

Suddenly a flash burst forth from among a clump of rocks, and as the horse sprang forward in alarm, the rider fell heavily to the ground.

An hour after the steed dashed up to the stockade wall of the fort, neighing wildly, and was recognized by the sentinel as belonging to Captain Dudley Delmont, one of the most popular young officers in the army.

A lantern showed that there was a red stain upon the saddle-horn, and the frightened actions of the horse also went to prove that a tragedy had occurred.

The alarm was sounded, and ten minutes after a search party went out to find what had happened.

"Yes, shot through the head," a scout remarked.

"Goot-by, mine frint; I must hurry on after the trains. Goot-by, and here was your monish. You was do your work vell," and the Jew grasped the hand of the soldier-assassin and rode on after the train.

"I have my revenge and one thousand dollars as balm to my conscience—ah! some one calls me—I am wanted."

"Great God! can I be suspected?" and great beads of sweat broke out upon the forehead of the assassin.

"You are ordered, Sergeant Bainbridge, to get a guard and stand watch over the body of poor Captain Delmont," announced a corporal coming up to where the sergeant stood near the stockade gate.

"All right, Corporal Felter," was the reply, followed by the muttered words:

"My God! that J, above all others, should have been selected for this duty! But I dare not disobey."

Ten minutes after he entered the quarters where lay the body, just as an officer turned toward him hastily, as though to bar his way.

But the eyes of the sergeant had fallen upon the body, and while a cry of anguish broke from his lips he fell heavily upon the floor, his senses stunned by some fearful shock.



"Brother, put them away, for, oh! I dread them so!"

CHAPTER II.

TOO LATE.

A HORSEMAN was riding slowly along a country highway, leading among the hills and valleys of Virginia.

It was near the sunset hour, and the deep shadows of approaching night were already stealing over the valley.

The scene was a beautiful one, for here and there vale and hillside were dotted with houses, almost baronial in their look of solid comfort, and around each were thousands of acres belonging to the "lords of the manor."

At the head of the valley, beautifully situated, stood a mansion of imposing size, and, with its towers and wings looking castle-like in its grandeur.

No other house was within a couple of miles of it, and its encircling acres were encompassed by thousands, which composed "the farm" of the estate.

But upon this grand old house rested an air of desolation and solitude, while the broad driveway, leading from the massive stone gateway in the valley, was weed-grown, showing that it had been long untrud.

Passing this arched entrance to the deserted estate, the horseman said aloud:

"Grand old Echolands is still without a master, I see. One of these days I may purchase it and dwell there, for its heir may not return within the time allowed by the will, and then it will be for sale."

"Come, good horse, we must hasten on, for darkness will catch us before we reach the Retreat, and what a surprise it will be to father and Beatrice, who little expect me!"

Having turned from the main valley road into one that branched off over the hill, the horseman had nearly reached the summit and was winding slowly along under a cliff, when, suddenly, from over his head, there burst forth the sound of singing.

He came to a halt instantly, while half a hundred voices, male and female, poured forth a melody, which, in that wild place and at that hour, sounded weird and strange, seeming like an angel chorus from the clouds, coming as it did from over his head.

Through the woods upon the ridge rolled the voices, the sound floating out over the valley, and the horseman sat like one entranced as the words fell upon his ears:

"Nearer my God to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!"

Until the last words of the beautiful hymn died away the horseman sat motionless in his saddle.

Then he said:

"Of course from the little burying-ground on the ridge yonder. One of our neighbors has passed away. Who can it be, I wonder! I will go there, for perhaps my father and sister are in attendance."

So saying, he rode on and, turning from the road into a weed-grown path that led along the ridge, he came in sight of a strange scene.

It was a spot hallowed with the graves of the dwellers in the neighborhood who had gone to their last resting-place, and thither were gathered half a hundred people, standing around an open grave, while, in the deathlike stillness that pervaded the scene the voice of the clergyman reading the burial service alone was heard.

The horseman dismounted, hitched his horse and walked noiselessly toward the spot.

A few on the outskirts of the crowd saw him, started back and left a way open.

With uncovered head he advanced to suddenly behold a slender form, clad in deep black, cling-

ing to the arm of a tall man and sobbing pitifully.

"My God! it is Beatrice, my sister! Can it be my father that is dead?"

He spoke the words half aloud, and they came through his shut teeth, and, in the moment of excitement, he seemed to forget the effect of his coming upon his sister and stepped forward, just as the clergyman uttered the last words of the service.

"Beatrice! Sister!" and he confronted the weeping girl.

There was a chorus of exclamations from all who now beheld him, and then one loud, piercing cry from the maiden, who reeled and fell into the open grave ere any strong arm could prevent.

A cry of horror came from every one at this, and one old woman gasped forth:

"Heaven help her! what an omen of coming evil!"

But, the horseman had already sprung forward and stepping down into the grave, raised his sister in his strong arms and bore her to a grassy knoll near by.

"Stand back, please, for she is in a deathlike swoon!" he said calmly, and the crowd fell back, all but a physician and two ladies who came to render aid.

It was a long time before the eyes of the young girl opened with returning consciousness, and then the horseman stepped out of her sight, not wishing to give her another shock.

"Doctor, have I been ill?" she asked faintly, recognizing the physician.

"You fainted, Miss Beatrice, but you are all right now."

"Ah! was it my brother who came before me, or his ghost?" she asked in a startled kind of way.

"It was your brother, Miss Beatrice, for he is not dead, as we all supposed."

"No, Beatrice, I am here in flesh and blood, and had I known that I was supposed to be dead, never would I have startled you as I did."

"But, poor father! he has passed away," and the young man clasped his arm about his sister, as she bent her head upon his breast and sobbed like a child.

Slowly the crowd departed, and the sister and brother were left standing apart while a couple of men filled up the grave, by which stood the clergyman and a tall man with a stern, saddened face—the same to whose arm the maiden had been clinging when her brother approached.

"This is a remarkable circumstance, Mr. Moore, and a sad one," said the clergyman, addressing the tall gentleman, whose pale face showed that he had been deeply affected by what had occurred.

"It is, indeed, sir, and I wonder not that Miss Delmont was so overcome, as I was really startled, as though an apparition from the grave had appeared before me."

"And all of us were, as we had no reason to doubt the story of Captain Delmont's death, as reported."

"But I rejoice that he lives, and his sister does not have to mourn for father and brother both."

"Now I will say good-evening, for I suppose you will drive home with your friends?"

"Yes, Miss Delmont was to have gone to her aunt's, but with her brother here now she will doubtless return to The Retreat," and bowing to the clergyman, as the grave was now filled in, Aubrey Moore walked toward the spot where the brother and sister stood, talking in a low tone.

At his approach the maiden looked up, her pale face slightly flushed, and she said:

"Brother, let me present to you Mr. Aubrey

Moore, whom you have heard of as father's secretary."

"I am glad to welcome you home, Captain Delmont, and back to life, as it were, for we all deemed you dead, and your coming unerved us all," said Aubrey Moore in a voice that was strangely soft and winning.

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Moore, for I have learned of your goodness to my father and sister since you have been a dweller at The Retreat. But come; night is upon us and we must drive home, alas! most desolate, now that our father is dead," and Captain Delmont drew his sister's hand in his and led the way to the family carriage, which stood waiting at the gate.

The negro footman rode the young soldier's horse, while Captain Delmont entered the carriage with his sister and Aubrey Moore, and the vehicle rolled swiftly homeward to The Retreat Plantation.

CHAPTER III.

THE RED DIAMONDS.

In the grand library, with its walls covered with timeworn books, sat three persons, the evening following the funeral of the old master of The Retreat.

Those three were Captain Dudley Delmont—a gallant officer in a cavalry regiment stationed on the far frontier—a handsome, noble-faced man of twenty-five, with a splendid form and courteous manners that had come down to him from several generations of courtly ancestors.

His face was bronzed by exposure and heavily learded, while his hair was worn somewhat long, falling upon his collar in wavy masses.

He was dressed in a fatigue uniform, and wore it with the easy grace of one who had been reared a soldier.

Aubrey Moore sat at the desk of the dead master, and held in his hand some papers.

His face was a study, in that no one could read it, and yet it was a face once seen never forgotten, with its stern lips, sad eyes and perfect features.

He was dressed in deep black, and when he spoke it was in a subdued voice, strangely musical in tone.

The third person in the library was Beatrice Delmont, the daughter of the dead master of The Retreat, the sister of the young soldier; and a most beautiful girl she was, too.

With the exception of Echolands, the deserted estate at the head of the valley, The Retreat was the grandest home in that section of Virginia, and Commodore Delmont—for he had been a naval officer—had been known to possess great wealth.

As Beatrice was away at boarding-school, and his son was in the army, Commodore Delmont had secured the services of a secretary, to get his affairs in "ship-shape condition," as he expressed it, so that should he die suddenly, nothing would be left undone, and his heirs could enjoy what he had left them.

This secretary was Aubrey Moore, a young man who had been recommended to him by his agents in Norfolk as in every way worthy of the trust.

And so he had proven himself the year that he had been an inmate of The Retreat, for from the first he commanded the respect and admiration of the commodore.

Several months before the death of Commodore Delmont, his daughter had graduated in a Northern school and returned home, and she, too, had become deeply interested in the secretary, and rumor had it she would one day marry him.

One day a bitter blow fell upon the dwellers in The Retreat, for news came from an army

comrade that Dudley Delmont had been thrown from his horse and killed.

The letter was dated at a frontier settlement, and written weeks before, so that all the commodore could do was to write to his correspondent to give him all the particulars that he could upon the subject of his son's untimely death.

Before an answer came Commodore Delmont sickened and died, and the appearance of the supposed dead soldier at the grave of his father may well have caused a surprise and been a shock to his sister, who felt that she was all alone in the world, with Aubrey Moore the only friend to comfort her in her double affliction.

"Before I ask you of my father's death," said Dudley, as the three sat in the library that night, "I deem it my duty to explain how it was that I was supposed to be dead."

"I was in the habit of visiting a brother officer, who, with his company, was quartered in a valley settlement, some twenty miles from the post, as a protection against Indian raids. Mortimer Bainbridge was as near to me as a brother could have been, and, strange to say, we were strikingly alike, and often were taken for each other."

"I had gone on a visit to Captain Bainbridge, when, as I entered the settlement, my horse fell heavily, from stepping into a hole, and threw me against a rock."

"It was believed that I was dead, and I was carried to the quarters of my friend, who must have at once have written to father, telling him the particulars, as you say, Mr. Moore, the letter was signed Mortimer Bainbridge."

"Yes, such was the signature; here is the letter," and Dudley Delmont took the letter and said:

"Yes, it is poor Mort's writing. But, to go on with my story: Captain Bainbridge left word that my body should be brought to the fort, and, mounting my horse, started to report to the colonel, as he believed, my death."

"Alas! he never reached there, for some cowardly assassin shot him on the way, whether from some personal motive of revenge, or mistaking him for me, I know not."

"His body was carried to the fort, for my horse had returned there, and so he was believed to be me, until his brother, a sergeant in the regiment, and a wild fellow, was ordered to guard the body, and upon entering my quarters recognized in the dead man his own brother."

"The shock caused him to swoon, for he was deeply attached to his brother, who had done much to redeem him from his wild ways."

"In the mean time the surgeon at the settlement had not ceased working to bring me around, and, though I had been thought killed outright, and lay motionless an irresponsible for hours, I at last showed signs of life, and the next day was pronounced to be quite out of danger."

"It was a sad blow to me to hear of my poor friend's death, by the hand of an assassin, and, feeling a good deal shaken up by my fall, I determined to come home on leave for a few weeks."

"I was delayed in coming, and, not knowing that Bainbridge had written to father, I supposed nothing was known of my accident, and hence was not prepared for the shock my coming gave you, sweet sister."

"But now, tell me of our dear father's death, for a bitter blow, indeed, it is to me."

"Beatrice was too full of grief to speak, and looked appealingly toward Aubrey Moore, who said:

"Perhaps I can tell you better, Captain Delmont, than can your sister, for I was with your father day and night, and he honored me by trusting in my hands the carrying out of his last wishes."

"I feel, Mr. Moore, that you are deserving of the trust," said Dudley, who saw in his father's secretary no ordinary personage.

"I thank you, sir; but let me tell you that after hearing of your supposed death, your father never seemed the same man, and in vain was it that he tried to draw him out of his grief."

"At last, as I feared, the end came, though sooner than we expected, and, believing you dead, your father left to my guardianship your sister, and the execution of his will, which, I regret to say, left all to Miss Beatrice, excepting a few jewels, one of which he generously made to me."

"I cannot wonder at it, Mr. Moore, as my father thought me dead, and Beatrice was therefore considered sole heiress."

"But, brother, the will must be broken, and half of our father's wealth is yours," said Beatrice, quickly.

"You are ever my noble sister, and as frankly as you offer, so I accept, knowing that I was considered dead by my father."

"But there is one thing, Captain Delmont, which I suppose you must claim, as, strange to say, your father left no word regarding them in his will, and your sister positively refuses to claim them. I refer to the jewels which are known as the Red Diamonds."

"Yes, I remember them but too well, and there seems a strange fatality about them, for they were taken from about the neck of a young girl, found dead in the cabin of a pirate craft which was captured by my father."

"She had taken her own life during the combat, and the necklace was stained with her blood. Father, therefore, called them the Red Diamonds, and took them as his share of the prize."

"Your father seemed to prize them, and one day showed them to me with the remark that they had proven fatal to more than one wearer."

"Yes, father gave them to his sister as a wedding present, and upon going home from the little chapel where she was married, with the jewels about her neck, the horses ran away and she was killed, the bride of an hour, while others in the carriage were unhurt."

"Her husband brought the Red Diamonds back to my father, who left them hidden away for years, and then gave them to my mother, to wear one night to the opera."

"Alas! they proved fatal again, for though the theater burned down, and though my father brought my mother out, in his arms, she never recovered from the shock, never regained consciousness, and once more the Red Diamonds were sent into exile and thus were, I suppose, forgotten by my father."

"And you will take them, sir?"

"Yes, if Beatrice refuses."

"I would not touch them on any account, brother, and wish that you would not," urged the maiden.

"I have not a grain of superstition in my nature, and will take them—yes, I will give them to the woman I marry as a wedding-present. Where are they, Mr. Moore?"

"The secretary are, and taking a key from his pocket unlocked a massive iron door set in the wall."

"From a drawer within he took out a large morocco-covered case, and unlocking it a superb necklace was revealed, of some fifty rare diamonds set in a miniature gold chain."

"Captain Delmont took up the Red Diamonds and held them before the light, while Beatrice shuddered as she exclaimed:

"Brother, put them away, for, oh! I dread them so!"

CHAPTER IV. THE LOST MINIATURE.

SWINGING lazily in a hammock, stretched upon the piazza of a lordly old mansion in Virginia, a young lady was reading several letters, which had been brought to her by the negro postman, who, at each week, rode to the landing on the Potomac to meet the mail steamer.

The house was a large, rambling brick mansion, built three-score years ago, and was situated in a glade, running back from the Potomac.

The situation was a beautiful one, and through a vista in the forest the river was in full view, a quarter of a mile distant, while an avenue sloped gently down to the banks.

River Glade—for such was the name of the estate—had been the home of the Yanceys for four generations, and at the opening of this story there dwelt there the owner and his daughter, who was his heiress, for a son, the only other child of Judge Yancey, had been lost, at sea some years before.

In the rear of River Glade mansion were the out-houses of the plantation and the negro quarters, while upon the hills and valleys, for a mile around were the fields and forest belonging to the estate.

Yesula Yancy was a belle in the county, her only rival in beauty and wealth being Beatrice Delmont of the Retreat, some ten miles distant from River Glade Plantation.

As she reclined there in the hammock, lazily swinging to and fro, the grace of her exquisite form and the beauty of her face showed that she held just claim to the title of a reigning belle.

She was attired in a white dress that was most becoming, and her masses of auburn hair were simply caught up with an amber comb.

Her eyes were large, black, and held an expression of sadness when the face was in repose, but lighted up brilliantly in conversation or excitement.

Now, as she read a letter she held in her hand, a look of anger rested upon her face, and she said sharply:

"How dare he do such a thing?"

A perusal of the letter aloud, for the second time, will give a motive for her words.

It was dated at New York, and was from an old schoolmate, who had married and was living on the Hudson River.

It was as follows:

"MY DEAR YESULA:

"Do you know I have found the lost miniature of yourself, or rather regained it?"

"When it was taken from my parlor some months ago, I was deeply distressed and naturally accused all present of having stolen it; but they pleaded innocent, and I knew not upon just which one to fix the guilt, so could only hope some day a guilty conscience might make the one who took it fetch his miniature with my name and address upon the back, and so he begged to return it to me."

"Ten days ago a package came to me by Express, which contained your miniature, and along with it a note from one Captain Dudley Delmont of the army, who is stationed upon the far frontier."

"In his letter Captain Delmont states that a friend of his, Captain Mortimer Bainbridge, had been shot down by an assassin, and upon his body was found your miniature with my name and address upon the back, and so he begged to return it to me."

"You remember poor Bainbridge, how desperately he was in love with you, and I never once suspected him of the theft."

"Poor fellow! He has met a sad fate indeed, and I forgive him, only wondering that your picture did not protect him from the bullet of the assassin."

"But there is more to tell, for last night a young cavalry officer, a friend of my husband, came to us, and he at once took up your picture and told us that he had seen an exact painting of it, most artistically executed, hanging up in the quarters of a brother officer in the fort—one Captain Dudley Delmont, a most daring and dashing officer."

"He said that the painting was exquisitely framed and had hanging over it a velvet curtain which shielded it from view and which could only be drawn aside by untying a silken cord, and he had seen it only by an accident."

"No! this means, to my thinking, that this handsome, dashing Captain Delmont, like poor Bainbridge, fell in love with your likeness, and though sending the miniature back, first painted it, for he is a fine artist our friend says."

"There was more to the letter, but not upon the subject of the lost miniature; but, we may add, it was the fact that Dudley Delmont had painted her picture and had it in his room, though varied, that caused Yesula to utter the words:

"How dare he do such a thing?"

"Then she mused, half aloud:

"How strange that I have never yet seen

Dudley Delmont, though our families, it is true, have been foes for two generations, and there is a grave between us, and of my father's digging, for he killed the brother of the commodore in a duel, when the two were rivals for the hand of my mother."

"And, that Dudley Delmont should paint my portrait is something I cannot pardon or forget."

"Were father to know it he would surely call him to account, and then another grave would have to be dug."

"I hate Dudley Delmont for this, and but that I knew a duel would follow, I would have father demand my portrait of him. I must get it in some way; yet how?"

"With this question unasked, Yesula Yancey arose from the hammock, her face flushed with anger, and the story of the lost portrait having suggested the idea, she took her easel and crayons and walked down the glade toward the river to finish sketching a landscape which she had been engaged upon for some weeks."

When she returned to the mansion, near the sunset hour, she was met by her father—a stern-faced man of forty-five, who had given up his seat on the judicial bench to live a life of ease at his plantation.

"My child, I have just heard from a neighbor that Commodore Delmont's son, Dudley, was killed out upon the frontier."

"Indeed, sir?" and the face of Yesula flushed and then paled, for she remembered that her anger of a few hours before had been against a dead man.

"Yes, and I feel sorry for the commodore, for I have always liked him, though I killed his brother in that duel, you know, twenty odd years ago."

"Young Delmont was considered one of the brightest officers in the service, and I happen to know that when your brother Bernard was a cadet at West Point with him, young Delmont secretly helped him out of some scrape, strange to say, when he knew of the feud between our families."

"Indeed, father, I had not heard of this."

"Nor I, until one of your brother's old friends told me of Bernard's mad acts there, and how he had been saved from expulsion by some one, whom it was found out afterward to have been Dudley Delmont."

Yesula bit her lips in a vexed way.

A Virginia woman, she had entered into the feud of her father against the Delmonts with heart and hand, and she liked not that her brother had received a favor from one of the hated name.

"He is dead, and I must not hold ill-will; but my portrait—what will become of that? I would like to see it, and I will," she said, with earnest determination in look and tone.

CHAPTER V. IN DEADLY PERIL.

WEEKS PASSED AWAY, after the news of Dudley Delmont's death reached the neighborhood, and Yesula Yancey was anxiously waiting for a letter from her married friend, Mrs. Courtney Jeffrey, of New York, to whom she had written, asking her to get for her the portrait painted by the young officer from her miniature.

Mrs. Jeffrey had written that she had placed the matter in the hands of her husband's friend, who was to return at once to the frontier, and Yesula anxiously awaited the result.

Then came the news of the death of Commodore Delmont, and Yesula in her heart felt deeply for poor Beulah, whom she had often seen, and could not but admire.

"I am sorry for this feud between the families, for I would like to go to her in her sorrow," she said to herself upon hearing of the commodore's death.

Then the neighborhood was startled by the sudden coming of Captain Delmont, believed to be dead, and the scene which had occurred at the grave of his father.

With Dudley Delmont living, Yesula Yancey's hatred of his name revived, and she was more than anxious to get from his keeping the portrait which he had dared to paint of her, and she wrote her friend, Mrs. Jeffrey, upon the subject at once, while she almost felt tempted to tell her father about the affair.

Several days after his return to the Retreat, Dudley Delmont mounted his horse, and, taking his rifle, rode away for a hunt through the hills, anxious by action or excitement to break the sad current of his thoughts, for his father's sudden death had been a bitter blow to him.

Just as he was about to ride away, his sister said to him:

"Brother, when you return I wish to have a talk with you, for I have a favor to ask."

"Certainly, Beatrice, now if you will," he answered, seeing that the face of his sister wore a look of anxiety.

"No, to-night will do, for we will then be alone, as Mr. Moore will not return until to-morrow."

"Very well, sis, I'll come back early," was the reply, as Dudley rode away.

He took the road down the valley, and not caring to strike out into the hills, held on down to the steamboat landing on the Potomac, remembering that it was mail-day.

He received a number of letters, which had been forwarded from the fort, and not considering them of immediate importance, rode on his way.

Here and there he brought down some game as he went along, and at last halted in a shady retreat for a rest.

Leaving his horse to graze upon the grass about him, he walked to the edge of a gliss, overhanging a small vale, and threw himself down upon the pine straw to read his letters.

For some time he was thus engaged, and then glanced about him at the scenery.

The scene he overlooked was the glade at the head of which was situated the Yancey mansion, and the view was a grand one.

Suddenly he heard a voice calling:

"Miss Yesula! Oh! Miss Yesula!"

He started as an answer came almost beneath his feet, an answer in a voice full of music and yet clear as flute-notes.

"Here I am, Chips!"

"Yes, miss," was the reply, and a negro lad of fifteen came from toward the mansion and advanced to where Yesula Yancey was seated, at the foot of the cliff.

She had a camp-stool and her easel, and was at work sketching the scene presented from her point of observation.

"Got some letters for you, Miss Yesula," said the negro lad, handing two to her.

Captain Delmont, from his place on the cliff, saw her rise quickly and seize the letters, while she cried:

"Yes, one is from Clarice Jeffrey, and I hope I will know all now about the portrait."

She hastily broke the seal, while the negro lad returned toward the house, after a glance full of awe at the sketch that Yesula was making.

Then aloud she read, and the words reached the ears of the young soldier:

"The picture was taken down from where it hung, and he has evidently carried it with him, as it is nowhere to be found in his quarters."

Though not comprehending what the words meant, Dudley Delmont saw that they caused the face of the maiden to flush with anger, and heard her exclaim:

"He shall not keep it! he shall give it up!"

As she stood there, her form drawn up to its full height, her face flushed and eyes flashing, she made a beautiful picture indeed, and the young soldier gazed enraptured at her.

He felt guilty in his heart of eavesdropping, and thus holding her at an advantage, for he was not one to do a mean act.

But his vicinity to River Glade Mansion had not struck him until he saw the negro approaching and discovered the maiden at her sketching below him.

The mansion was not in sight from his position, and he had left the river-road to ride along the ridge back to the valley highway and thence home.

The soft pine straw had prevented his step

from being heard by Yesula, and she had been so close in under the cliff that he had not seen her until his attention was called to her presence by the coming of Chips.

In justice to himself, the young soldier felt that he could do but one thing, and that was to retreat unseen and ride on his way homeward; but the beauty of Yesula Yancey was to blame that he failed to carry out at once his good intention, and, on the contrary, stood gazing upon her in rapt admiration.

After the angry stamp of her foot, and her outcries, she had resumed her seat upon her little camp-stool and again began work on her sketch.

And still Dudley Delmont lingered, watching her rapid work, but unable to see how artistic it was.

Was it Fate that held him to that spot, when he knew that he ought not to tarry?

It would seem so, for Fate often guides our footsteps and our will, against heart and reason.

At last, with a deep sigh, he was about to turn away, when his gaze fell upon something which caused him to start and look with even deeper attention than before.

At the side of the maiden, and not two feet away, was the old stump of a tree, and upon it was circled, with head raised to strike, a huge rattlesnake.

Intent upon her work Yesula did not notice her deadly danger, and the movement of her hand with the paint brush, seemed to have angered the huge reptile to strike a death-blow at his victim.

The warning rattle reached the ears even of Dudley Delmont, on the cliff, yet Yesula was oblivious to it, so lost was she in the work before her, or in her thoughts about the letter which evidently had annoyed her greatly.

One instant of horror to the young soldier, and then he threw his rifle to his shoulder, aimed quickly and fired at the head of the rattlesnake, as it was erect within a few inches of the shoulder of the maiden.

(To be continued.)

RETROSPECTION.

BY HARRIET ESTHER WARNER.

An aged woman with silvered hair
Wearily rocked in an old oak chair,
While around her the flames of firelight fall
Like weird ghosts on the grimy wall.
Her brows were marked by the lines of care—
She thought of those she held most dear,
And she drew the veil from the dreary past,
Her thought of life, and how long it would last.

Then life had been but a low of care,
That had marked its weight on her silvered hair,
And looking now toward the setting sun,
She wondered what good her life had done:
For the sorrows of those she held most dear
She had only words of love and cheer;
Hedged by poverty and bound by care,
She tried through love to perform her share.

She thought of her children, one by one,
That out to the battle life had gone—
She thought of him who had laid his crown
In the perfect faith of the promised crown;
And she sadly sighed: "I have much to bear;
Could I shut my eyes on the world of care
And touch the bank of the shadowed stream
Then life would end like a troubled dream."

"But it must not be; God understands,
And she bowed her head on her feeble hands,
And shut her eyes'neath the shadowed skies,
And oped them then up in Paradise.
Her dreams of heaven seemed to complete
With the perfect vision before her feet,
For fancy fails in its feeble flight
When we draw Heaven down to our puny sight."

'Twas the spirit world! Yet she was there,
With tattered garments and silvered hair;
But out from the mirage where she had toiled
Her soul like a lily rose unsoiled,
And it walked with her, now in cloth of gold,
And covered from heaven her garments old;
And the vision revealed the mighty whole
Of human life—an unshaded soul!

It was only a dream, and it passed away
Like a mist, and left behind the gray;
But the narrow road seemed rosy grown
To her who felt she was not alone;
And she took up her burden with willing hands,
And she said: "God understands and I know,
And I know the dream was in mercy given,
To pave, with peace, my path to Heaven."

The Cohort of Five; or, Dick Talbot's Great Clean-Out.

THE ROMANCE OF A JUST VENGEANCE.

BY ALBERT W. Aiken, AUTHOR OF "OVERLAND KID," "ROCKY MOUNTAIN BOB," "THE FRESH OF FRISCO," "BRONZE JACK," "THE LONE HAND," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XX. BLACK MAC EXPLAINS.

GREAT WAS the astonishment excited by the announcement of the ex-marshal, and the members of the crowd looked at each other in wonder.

"Say, I reckon I don't exactly understand this hyer," the mayor remarked, an expression of profound amazement upon his face. "Do you mean to say that you claim this hyer mine?"

"That is my platform!" Black Mac replied, in the most decided manner.

"Well, but I don't understand how that kin be."

"You will understand all the right when I explain the matter to you," the other replied.

"My claim is a good one, and I reckon you will allow that it is so when you come to hear the particulars."

"Oh, yes, I shouldn't be surprised," the official rejoined. "You allers had the reputation of being a level-headed man, and I reckon you wouldn't go into nothing of this kind without being sure that you had good ground to go on."

"That is my little game always. Be sure you are right, then go ahead, and that is the motto I believe in."

"Well, Mac, your appearance is a surprise to the town. We haven't heard from you in so long that we almost came to the conclusion you had either passed in your checks or else got out of this section of the country altogether."

"No, I have been in Tombstone all the time, but things did not work exactly right with me or else I would have been back here a long time ago. But I say, White, you have a pretty strong party at your back."

And the ex-marshal nodded toward the crowd who were watching the progress of the interview with the greatest attention.

"Yes, 'bout every man in the camp is to the fore," the mayor remarked.

You see the report of the jumping of the Heather Bell claim stirred the town up to the wildest pitch of excitement. Nobody knew that you had a hand in it, and the impression was general that some outside parties had seized the property, and you know the camp of old, of course; such a trick would stir the boys up, and we came to look into the matter."

Very natural under the circumstances," MacGregor observed. "But I reckon I can explain matters so the camp will be satisfied that I have good reason for all I have done."

"Oh, I haven't any doubt in regard to that, now that I know you are in command of this party of jumpers."

"And I am ready to justify my course at any time," Black Mac declared.

Well, I s'pose you had better spit out what you have to say as soon as you kin."

"All right, I am ready to do it now, and as the citizens of the camp are all assembled, I could not have a better opportunity to present my case, but under the circumstances, I think

I ought to require that if my explanation is not satisfactory to you and the rest, I shall be allowed to return to the mine. You see, I am really putting myself into your hands, and there isn't any reason why I should do that, for I am in possession of the property with a well-armed force to back my quarrel, and if I did not choose to put myself in your power it would take a right smart fight to get me."

"Of course, no doubt about that!" the mayor exclaimed. "I appreciate the situation, I assure you, and I am the last man in the world to wish to take any unfair advantage. What you ask is reasonable, and so I freely agree to it."

"Go ahead, then, and I reckon it will only take a few minutes to show the men of this camp that I have a better claim to this mine than anybody else."

"You shall have every chance in the world to prove it, and I am not acquainted with our friend, MacGregor, who used to be marshal of this hyer camp."

And then the two men proceeded to where the citizens of No Man's Camp were anxiously watching the conference.

All were on the alert when the two drew near and halted, and listened with the utmost attention to the mayor when he began to explain the situation.

Gentlemen, I reckon that isn't many of you hyer who are not acquainted with our friend, MacGregor, who used to be marshal of this hyer camp."

Two-thirds of the miners nodded assent; these were the old citizens who knew the man well; the others were new-comers who had made their advent in the town since the time when Black Mac held sway, but as nearly all had heard of him, for tales of MacGregor's prowess were still current in the town, he did not seem like a stranger to them.

"Our old pard hyer is the man who has jumped the Heather Bell claim, but he says he has a good reason for what he has done, and so I told him that as we had come for the express purpose of looking into the matter, it would afford him a first-rate chance to set himself right."

"I told him, fellow-citizens, that we were arter justice and did not want anything else, and in order to give him a fair shake in this hyer thing, I agreed that arter he got through with his explanation he should be at liberty to go back to the mine, no matter what decision we came to."

The miners looked at each other, as though every man was desirous of learning his neighbor's opinion before he committed himself, and it was apparent from the expression upon their faces that they considered this agreement to be perfectly fair.

Bulldog Bill, from long experience quick to discover which way the tide of popular sentiment was moving, took it upon himself to act as spokesman.

"I reckon, Mister Mayor, that you have done about the squar' thing," he remarked, with the air of a sage.

"If I know this hyer crowd, and I reckon I do as well as any man you kin scare up in the town," he continued, "justice is all that is wanted, and we air ready to give Black Mac the squares' kind of a deal."

"Yes, yes," murmured half a dozen voices.

"Well, gentlemen, all I ask is a fair show for my mine," the ex-marshal remarked. "I suppose I have acted a leetle hastily in jumping this mine, but I claim to have a better right to it than anybody else, and my experience in this world has been that if a man don't look out for himself, no one else will be apt to do it for him."

There was a general hum of approval, led by Bulldog Bill, at this sentiment, and the saloon-keeper seized upon the opportunity to remark that if a man did not look out for himself he would be pretty certain to "get badly left."

"Of course, MacGregor, it is of no use for any one to attempt to tell an old rouser like yourself anything about this camp," Mayor White observed. "The man does not live who knows the town any better than you do."

"You know the gait we generally travel. We don't keep much for law, but we go our pile every time for justice. Go ahead and state how it is that you come to claim this property and I reckon we kin git at the rights of the matter as well as any court in the land."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed some of the miners, while the rest nodded their heads.

All had perfect confidence in their own judgment, and a supreme contempt for lawyers and judges.

This doubtless arose from the fact that quite a number of these denizens of No Man's Camp had during the past some unpleasant experiences connected with the administration of justice in the "effete East."

"No rooze e'er felt the halter draw,
With good opinion of the law."

"Well, gentlemen, it will not take me long to define my position," Black Mac remarked.

You gentlemen who are posted in regard to the property know that this Heather Bell Mine was owned by Donald Maxwell, who was killed about a year ago, assassinated in the streets of this town by some secret foe who was never discovered. After his death the mine came into the possession of his sister, Miss Diantha Maxwell, she being Donald's only heir, and after awhile she married a man who calls himself Richard Talbot, a stranger, whom no one knows anything about; a man who made his appearance in the town on the night that Maxwell was killed, and under such circumstances that he was accused of the murder."

"But we couldn't fusten it on him, and so had to let him go," observed Mayor White at this point, and he spoke in such a way as to give the impression that in his own mind there was not much doubt in regard to Dick Talbot's guilt.

"The management of the property has fallen into the hands of this Talbot, and he acts as if he owns the concern, but he don't," Black Mac continued.

"Now my claim is this: just before Donald Maxwell was killed I loaned him twenty thousand dollars, and took a bill of sale of the mine as security, but not anticipating that there would be any need for me to have the document at hand, as it was agreed between Maxwell and myself that he should have a year to pay the loan, I sent the paper off to Tombstone to my lawyer for safe-keeping. That party started for a trip to Europe just about that time and only returned a few days ago, therefore until that time I couldn't get the document, and that is why I have not put in my claim to the property before."

"Got that 'ar paper with you now?" the mayor asked.

"Yes; here it is, and with the signatures of two witnesses attached," Black Mac responded, producing the document and handing it to Mayor White.

The official examined it carefully and the rest looked on with the greatest interest.

"Hyer's Donald Maxwell's signature, sure enough!" the mayor declared. "I have seen him write it many a time, and I reckon I would know it anyhow, and the witnesses are Leadville Mat and Bow-legged Billy."

These two men were in the crowd, and upon hearing their names at once stepped forward.

Quickly they identified their signatures, and both remembered being called upon by Maxwell to witness his signing the paper, but, as they stated, they had not any idea of what the document was.

"That was quite natural," the official remarked. "Maxwell was no fool, and he did not want his private affairs known all over the camp."

"I jumped the mine because I expected to find this Dick Talbot here, and I knew he would not give up the property without a fight, no matter how good my claim was," Black Mac said.

"I reckon you have sized him up about right from what I know of him," the mayor observed.

"Diantha, though, is the soul of honor, like her brother, and when I explained how things

were to her she admitted that my claim to the property was good and said she would not attempt to contest it.

"I was willing to do the square thing by her, seeing that she was not disposed to make trouble, so she accepted five hundred dollars and started for Tombstone where she has friends."

"Here's her receipt for the five hundred and a letter to you, Mr. Mayor, explaining her action."

White examined these papers with the same care which he had bestowed upon the bill of sale.

"These are all right and regular," he remarked, with the gravity of a judge. "Thar ain't no flaw into them as far as I kin see. I know the lady's handwriting as well as I do my own, and so kin swar to it."

"Well, fellow citizens, you have my statement now," the ex-marshal observed, "and all that remains is for you to decide whether I am in the right or wrong in seizing upon the Heather Bell property. I am not afraid to trust my case in your hands, for I know that you are all square men and will do me justice."

Black Mac spoke confidently, and in this he was justified by the expression visible upon the faces of the miners.

They had come forth prepared to give battle to the death with the men who had seized the mine, but now that they knew why the attack had been made they were not at all eager to be mixed up in the affair.

In fact, according to the evidence presented by the ex-marshal he had by far the best right to the property in their opinion.

The miners held a brief consultation, and then Bulldog Bill, as their spokesman, announced it was the opinion of the citizens that they had no call to interfere in the matter.

Black Mac thanked them for the decision and invited the crowd to take "something" with him, so back to the camp they all went.

The ex-marshal had won another point in the game.

CHAPTER XXI. PREPARING FOR AN ATTACK.

AFTER treating the miners to the best that Bulldog Bill's saloon afforded, Black Mac accompanied the mayor to his office, and they were soon joined there by the owner of the Little Brown Jug Saloon.

The three conspirators were in high glee over the success of their scheme.

"I worked to a charm!" Mayor White exclaimed.

"You kin bet yer life on it!" cried Bulldog Bill, emphatically.

"I am not surprised, for that was my calculation when I planned the trick," the ex-marshal observed.

"Thar's no denying that you arranged the thing to the queen's taste," the official observed, "but I reckon you would not have been able to carry the scheme through with so little trouble if this Dick Talbot had been in town, for he is on the fight bigger'n a wolf."

"Oh, there is no doubt in regard to that," Black Mac admitted. "It was my game, of course, to take advantage of his absence. I reasoned that sooner or later something would happen to take him out of the town, and I had made up my mind to jump the mine as soon after his departure as possible."

"There will be blazes to pay when he comes back and hears what has occurred," the mayor suggested.

"I should not be surprised," Black Mac replied.

"Oh, yes, this hyer Talbot has got the sand to make the biggest kind of a fight," Bulldog Bill remarked.

"When he comes back," the ex-marshal observed, in such a peculiar way that the attention of his companions was instantly attracted.

"Oho, do you reckon that thar is a doubt 'bout his coming back?" Mayor White interrogated.

"He will not return to No Man's Camp if some pards of mine succeed in a little game that they have on foot."

"That is a big idee!" the saloon-keeper exclaimed, admiringly.

"Do you mean to say that you have a party out to waylay him?" the official demanded.

"Oh, no, I am not giving myself away in that fashion at all. All I say is that some pards of mine have put up a little job, and if the game succeeds, Dick Talbot will not return to No Man's Camp."

"Yes, yes; but I say, Mac, there isn't any need of beating about the bush with your old pards," the mayor remarked.

"A man never loses anything in this world by acting cautiously," Black Mac retorted. "And besides, what is the use of going into details as long as I give you a hint in regard to the result?"

"This Talbot is a good man, you know," suggested White.

"Oh, yes, no one knows that any better than I do," the other replied, with a grimace. "I have felt his power and understand that when a man tackles Dick Talbot as to embarking in a difficult and dangerous enterprise."

"Well, what I was going to say was, suppose that this little plan of your pards' fails—suppose they are not able to prevent Talbot from returning to No Man's Camp—have you calculated upon that?"

"If I had not taken that chance into consideration, it would have shown that I was a mighty poor schemer," the ex-marshal replied.

"Oh, you kin trust Bulldog Bill to look out for all the chances!" Bulldog Bill declared.

"When such a man as this Dick Talbot is in question it is never safe to calculate upon his being wiped out in any ordinary fight. Men of his stamp seem, cat-like, to possess a dozen lives."

"Think that he will not return to No Man's Camp, for it does not seem possible he can escape from the trap which has been laid for him, but as the old adage, 'It is the unexpected that always happens' sometimes is very true, I intend to take measures so that if he wants to come back to fight me I shall have so great an advantage that he will not be able to accomplish anything."

"Now you are talking solid chunks of wisdom," Mayor White remarked. "In all matters of this kind it is always best to be prepared for everything."

"I agree with you there," Black Mac replied, immediately, and Bulldog Bill shook his head in an owly kind of way.

"Now then, we will suppose for the sake of discussing the matter, that Dick Talbot escapes this trap which has been set for him and returns to No Man's Camp."

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed the official, following the line of argument with the greatest interest, as also did the saloon-keeper.

"When he comes back and discovers that I have seized the mine, what will he be apt to do?"

"Raise a gang and go in to clear you out!" the mayor exclaimed.

"You bet yer sweet life he will be jest the chap to try that leetle game!" Bulldog Bill asserted.

"No doubt that is the plan of operations which he will adopt, and therefore, I must take measures to beat that game."

"You kin go yer bottom dollar onto it," the saloon-keeper declared.

"Well, in cogitating over this matter I came to the conclusion that the best way to keep Talbot from raising an army to fight me would be to engage all the best men in the town to serve on my side, and that game I have carried out."

"Mighty cut idee!" cried the mayor.

"You bet it is!" added Bulldog Bill.

"I have secured twenty of the best men in the town, some of them are with me now and the others look to Leadville Mat, Bow-legged Billy, and Johnny Sands, the Tiger of Tucson, for instructions."

"Yes, but twenty men don't use up all the warlike galoots in the camp," the mayor observed.

"I am aware of that, but it is about all I can handle at present," Black Mac replied. "And now what I want to know is how many more men can be secured up in the town—men who can be depended upon to hold up their end in a fight?"

"Prisco Nell, a queenly-looking, dark-haired, dark-eyed girl was behind the bar, seated in an arm-chair, with her eyes fixed upon the door when the party entered, as though she was on the watch for some one."

Old Gimlet Eyes.

A Story of the Cour D'Alene Boom.

BY BERT L. THOMPSON.

WHEN the winter stampede was made into the Cour d'Alene country, there was one man who went along with the crowd, although he did not seem to feel any of the wild excitement which prevailed among the rest. He traveled on snow-shoes, and dragged a toboggan with a generous cargo after him, and arriving at the camp immediately went to work to build himself a rough log shanty, in which he took up his quarters to await the tardy coming of the spring.

Popular Poems.

SWEET BIRKENSHAW.

BY A. MILLER.

As I wander at even'ning 'mong trees that are wavin' And hear the wild blackbird and mavis's ca', I see the sweet Avon the mossy stream lavin' And muse on my Mary, of sweet Birkenshaw.

GOLDEN KEYS.

A bunch of golden keys is mine. To make each day with gladness shine. "Good-morning!" that's the golden key That unlocks every day for me.

THE BABY AND THE SOLDIERS.

Rough and ready the troopers ride. Great bearded men with swords by side. They have ridden long, they have ridden hard, They are travel stained and battle-scarred.

WHAT IT IS TO BE FORTY.

To discover a sprinkle of gray in your beard, And a thinniness of crop where the upland is cleared; To note how you take to your slippers and gown, And hug to the fire when you get home from town;

Casual Mention.

THERE are said to be only four horses in Alaska, three at Juneau and one at Sitka. The assignees of a suspended Missouri bank found only a solitary nickel in the vaults when they assembled to count the cash assets.

THE LITTLE KERCHIEF.

It was only a wee, worn kerchief that lay in my trembling hands, As I sat by the window dreaming, and looked on the moonlit lands;

MY FIDDLE.

My fiddle!—Well I kind o' keep her handy, don't you know! Though I ain't so much inclined to tromp the strings As I was before the timber of my elbows got so dry.

CHAPTER XXII.

TALBOT APPEARS.

THERE was need of haste, as the conspirators discovered, for when the northern coach halted at the door of the Metropolitan Hotel that evening, an hour or so late, the first man to emerge from it was Richard Talbot.

Behind him came the two gentlemen, the Englishman and the German, who had been his traveling companions. The three plotters who were working against bold Injun Dick were not the only ones in the town who expected his arrival, and had spies on the watch, for the moment that Dick Talbot descended from the coach, a brawny middle-aged fellow, known locally as Old Man Mike Finnigan, and who held the position of bouncer in Frisco Nell's Golden Hairpin Saloon, stepped forward and addressed the new-comer.

"Glad to see you back ag'in, Mr. Talbot," he exclaimed, and he extended his hand in the most friendly manner. "Thank you, and I am glad to get back," Talbot responded, giving the hand of the other a hearty shake.

"This was the paradise of the poker players, and a large square table with plenty of chairs afforded accommodation to the men who generally assembled about nine o'clock in the evening to woo the goddess, Fortune. The curtain was half-drawn, and the pair, disappearing behind it, were concealed from the observation of those in the saloon.

Wild Dogs.

THE writer has had occasion one or two times prior to this to tell of the fierce nature and savage practices of the wild dogs which infest the mountains of the Upper Wind River. These dogs are not the common wolf of the Western prairies and mountains. They are something far more powerful and dangerous. Several years since a male Scotch grayhound and a female English bulldog ran away in company from Fort Washakie, made their home in the mountains, and these wild dogs of the Upper Wind River are their savage offspring.

Wild Dogs.

THE writer has had occasion one or two times prior to this to tell of the fierce nature and savage practices of the wild dogs which infest the mountains of the Upper Wind River. These dogs are not the common wolf of the Western prairies and mountains. They are something far more powerful and dangerous. Several years since a male Scotch grayhound and a female English bulldog ran away in company from Fort Washakie, made their home in the mountains, and these wild dogs of the Upper Wind River are their savage offspring.

ONLY TO SEE THEE AGAIN.

BY MARK WILTON LARKINS.

What would I give to be near thee, Once more thy form to see? What would I give just to hear thee Whisper my name as of old? All that is mine of life's pleasures— All that to me doth remain— Freely I'd give for the pleasure— Only to see thee again!

The Cuff-Button Clew.

BY A DETECTIVE.

ASIDE from my vocation, there is nothing for which I have a greater fondness than for horses—a fondness that has ever been mine; and how closely the two are connected, it is my purpose to show in this sketch. My father was a well-to-do man and, during my earlier years, every advantage for a thorough education was afforded me, so far as it was attainable in the common schools and a reputable academy. Having reached my majority, my father presented me with a very handsome sum of money, saying: "Henceforth, you will be your own man. At my death you would inherit a sum equal to that which I have given you, and I prefer that you have it now. Many a large fortune has been acquired by those possessing a far inferior start in life than is yours, and I trust you will make a good use of that which I give you."

tant information from the lad, and I left him firmly believing that the man was Mr. Hosmer, though the matter of his high combed such a belief. But it would be an easy thing for the boy to be mistaken in this respect. Intervening the conductor of the 7:30 train, he said: "I am well acquainted with Hosmer, and he certainly was not on my train last Wednesday evening. Yes, there was a man on the train who wore a sealskin coat and cap, but he was a stranger to me." The mystery was growing deeper; my interest in its solution grew stronger. I drove to Camden, hunted out the individuals with whom Mr. Hosmer had transacted business; learned that each of them had paid him a large sum of money and that he had started from Camden at exactly 6:25. The mysterious disappearance, then, was between Camden and Warfield. I informed the firm in whose service Mr. Hosmer had been with what I had learned, and its senior member at once came to Warfield, and began an investigation, to which end the services of the local officers were enlisted. The residences between Warfield and Camden are few, and no one, that stormy Wednesday, had seen any person traveling toward the former place, though one had been seen driving in an opposite direction in the afternoon—doubtless Mr. Hosmer. The efforts of the local officers were futile, and a skilled detective was employed, whose especial endeavors were to find the man who, wearing a sealskin coat and cap, had left Warfield on the train which Mr. Hosmer had desired to take. Stimulated by the reward of \$5,000 offered by the Boston firm for the apprehension of this personage, the detective did his level best, but in vain. Along in April, when the snow had mostly gone and the warm weather begun in earnest, at a certain point between Warfield and Camden, a terrible offensive odor manifested itself. A careful examination of the locality revealed, just over a wall running parallel with the highway, a sadly decomposed body—the body of Frank Hosmer. Two bullet-holes proved that he had been murdered, and the absence from the body of all valuables indicated conclusively that the motive for the crime had been plunder. The excitement previously created by Mr. Hosmer's mysterious disappearance was nothing compared with that caused by the knowledge that he had been foully dealt with. Renewed efforts were made by his firm, by his friends everywhere, by the authorities of Warfield and Camden to discover some clew to the assassin—doubtless the man in the sealskin coat and cap. Three of the best detectives in the country were employed; the reward for the apprehension of the criminal was increased to \$10,000. Nothing resulted from these efforts, however. In September, I was engaged to furnish a farm-house team to convey a large party to a pond some four miles from Warfield, where there was a picnic, and drove the turnout myself. Fastening a dainty ribbon around the throat of one of the young ladies of the party, I saw a pin that caused me to tremble in every fiber; and I could hardly refrain from impudently asking her where she got it. It was a plain band of silver, with cross-bars of gold, along which were set various gems; nothing particularly expensive or attractive, but it was precisely of the same pattern with a cuff-button which I had found in the sleigh used by Mr. Hosmer that Wednesday afternoon, and I could hardly refrain from impudently asking her where she got it. By careless inquiries I learned that it had been presented to the lady by one Walter Thursty, of Camden, who was paying her marked attention. I knew him well; that he was inclined to dissipation, though very agreeable in his ways; that, in order to obtain the means for gratifying his depraved tendencies, he had once forged his wealthy father's signature to a check for a considerable amount; that he had been guilty of other misdemeanors which, but for his father's influence, would have been severely punished. I went to Camden and learned that for several days prior to the memorable Wednesday, Thursty had been at home; that, on the same day, he had left Camden, to be gone nearly two months—where, no one knew; that, since his return, he had been very steady and apparently low-spirited. Taking all things into consideration, I made up my mind that he was responsible for Mr. Hosmer's death, and did not wonder at his "low-spiritedness," with the burden of a murder resting on his soul. I would show him the cuff-button and see what effect its sight would produce. Drawing the article from my pocket one day, I passed it to him, asking: "Did you ever see anything like this?" "I never saw a cuff-button like this, but know a pin whose pattern closely resembles it," he quietly answered, having examined the button. "The one you gave Miss Ellsworth?" "Yes," he replied, in a tone of surprise. "I saw the pin worn by Miss Ellsworth, and, knowing that you presented it to her, thought you might be the owner of this button which is exactly like it. I presume the pin was made from the mate to this button, as the pattern is so unique." "I think the pin may have been made from a cuff-button, very likely from the mate to that in your hand. I bought it of a pawnbroker in Portland." "Will you please give me his name and address?" He did so and, thanking him, I went from his presence, confident that he had not been connected with the crime. I visited the shop in Portland where he said he purchased the pin, and showing the Jew who presided over the establishment the button, put to him the question which I had asked Thursty. He distinctly remembered having purchased a button of its pattern the preceding winter from a man who had lost its mate; of converting it into a pin. Moreover, he knew the person of whom he purchased it and gave his name to me—James Denton, of Ashleigh. To Ashleigh I then went and found that Denton was a man who, having squandered an immense inheritance, "lived by his wits"—sometimes having an abundance of money, while at other times he was so reduced that he was obliged to pawn his clothing. Responsive to a note which I sent the proprietor of the hotel in Camden, I received the following: "CAMDEN, Oct. 6th, 18—. "DEAR SIR—"Reading the description of him concerning whom you inquire, I remembered having entertained such a person; and, consulting my register, found James Denton upon it, under date of January 17th. He left the hotel very suddenly, Wednesday, January 19th, directly after tea, how or for what place I never knew. "Respectfully, "AMOS GREGORY."

"He was a Boston drummer who left Camden for Warfield in the afternoon of January 19th last, the same day and at about the same hour that you left the same place." "Therefore, you think that I am—" "Mr. Hosmer's murderer," I interrupted. "I suppose I might put you to some trouble in verifying your suspicions," he observed, with the utmost sang froid, "but I will not do so. You are correct in thinking as you do, and my only wonder is that my crime has not found me out before this." "Let me tell you how it was: I went to Camden to see a gentleman who was heavily indebted to me, hoping he would pay me a part of what was my due, as I was in a terrible condition pecuniarily. He could not accommodate me, and I was prepared to take almost any means whereby to obtain the desired money. "Learning that a drummer well supplied with cash, was about to leave Camden for Warfield, I resolved to waylay and rob him; so I started from Camden in advance of him. I overtook and asked me to ride with him. I jumped into his sleigh and had gone some little distance when I drew a revolver—not intending to use it—and demanded his money. In the encounter that followed, the revolver was accidentally discharged and he fell back, gasping. Not realizing what I did, I shot him a second time, through the heart. Then, having removed all his valuables, I carried his body over a wall and left it, aware that, owing to the furious snow-storm then prevailing, no trace of the occurrence would be visible in the morning. I put on his overcoat and cap, came to Warfield, sent the horse and sleigh to their owner, and boarded the evening train." He was arrested, tried, easily convicted of murder in the first degree, sentenced to be hanged after three years imprisonment. He died in less than a year subsequent to his arrest. Later, I learned that Walter Thursty was the "gentleman" whom Denton visited in Camden; that he, Thursty, suspected his creditor—"debts of honor"—of criminality in connection with Mr. Hosmer's disappearance and—murder; that his fears in this direction effected a radical reform in his habits and rendered him "low-spirited." I received the \$10,000 reward, and was highly complimented for the detective ability I displayed. And so pleased was I with my success, that I at once renounced my business and joined the army of detectives, where I have since remained. My love for horses led me to engage in the livery business, and the latter led—indirectly, perhaps—to my present vocation, as you can readily see—verifying the truth of the statement in my initial sentence.

THE YOUNG YEAR.

BY PAUL PASTOR.

The year is young, The requiem that the angels sung For Time's dead child swells newly forth, For the new babe, the brighter birth Of buds and lights, of showers and floods, Of sunny fields and flowery woods, Betoketh that the year is young. The childish year will wiser grow; Ere dithershells the contentment know! Its buds will blossom into flowers; Rich fruit will hang in leafy bowers; Swift torrents from the sunlit hills Will sink to silver-rippled rills. The harvest's richer bands of gold Such amber treasures will unfold; And at the sunset close of day, Rose-clouds will kiss the mountains gray.

Dan Dunn, THE SOFT-HAND SPORT; OR, UNMASKING THE MASKS.

BY JOS. E. BADGER, JR., AUTHOR OF "MONTÉ JIM," "OLD '49," "THE MAN OF SILK," "TOP SAWYER SAM," ETC. BROCKY CHAPTER X. THAT ride to the mansion of the Merediths, on Quaker Hill, was anything but a delight to Nicol Faulkner, though no one would have suspected what a sea of ugly passions was surging beneath that polite, humble demeanor with which he tried to efface all disagreeable feelings which his share in that nearly fatal accident had given birth. Linnet never spoke a word. Even when directly addressed she contented herself with a silent bow or shake of the head. And though Stuart Meredith spoke often enough, it was after anything but an agreeable fashion. He seemed to divide the blame of the accident equally between the unknown rider of the bicycle and the young broker. And when Nicol tried to explain that unlikely slip of his horse, it only made matters worse. "You should know better than to own such a clumsy brute, sir!" the nabob stiffly retorted. "Or, if you must own such, you ought to know better than come near other people to endanger their lives, sir?" This is only a sample of what Faulkner was called upon to meekly endure during that ride, and brief though it was, as to distance, he never spent a more disagreeable quarter of an hour. When Belle View was reached he assisted Linnet out of the hack and ventured a gentle pressure of her little hand as he muttered something about calling to inquire after her precious health; but, if the young lady heard, she certainly made no reply, hastening at once into the house. And Stuart Meredith hobbled after her without even bidding Faulkner good-evening. Altogether, the broker felt that he had put in a most unprofitable day, and as he strode away bitter curses came through his clenched teeth. "And that infernal slyster, too!" he grated viciously, his hands clinching as though he longed to feel the throat of his rival between his sinewy fingers. "He had to turn up just when he wasn't wanted!" He stopped short at that, with a slight shiver. For the first time he realized that, only for the man whom he was cursing, all his golden hopes might have been destroyed—and the woman whom he vowed to make his wife lying a loathsome mass of mangled flesh! "And he traded on 'em—unless I cut in before him!" he scowled, as he strode swiftly down the street. But there was nothing of all this to be read in his face as, very early that evening, he ascended the marble steps leading to the front door of Meredith's mansion. And as the door swung silently open in answer to his ring, the soft flood of light from the chandeliers in the wide hall fell on a gravely smiling face as he asked for Miss Meredith. "As well as might be expected, sir," politely answered the tall servant in livery, bowing low, but making no signs of admitting the caller. "We hope Miss Meredith will be able to receive, to-morrow, but it is impossible, this evening, sir." "Bake my card, and say that I beg for just one moment's interview. I think Miss Meredith will see me," persisted Faulkner. "Sorry, sir, but it would cost me my place," was the respectful but firm response. "My orders are very strict. Miss Meredith was to be disturbed on no account whatever, sir!" For an instant it seemed as though Faulkner would raze an entrance, but the mad idea was dispelled almost as soon as born. Without a word he turned and strode down the gravelled way, his eyes aglow, his face hard and stern, his hands tight clinched.

"I told her I'd call. She heard me plain enough. Why didn't she then say that she didn't feel strong enough to receive?" he muttered, leaving the grounds. "Would she shut out that penniless slyster? If I thought—" He bit his words short off, as he caught sight of a gentleman rapidly ascending the slope below, and as he passed directly beneath a lamp, he caught his breath with a sharp hiss, for he recognized the very man he was cursing in his heart! With a swift motion Faulkner pulled his hat over his eyes and turned up his collar, stooping his shoulders and assuming a gait as different as possible from his natural one. All this in a single breath, as it were, and before Alford could possibly have detected his figure in that shade, much less recognize his identity. In this fashion Nicol Faulkner passed the young lawyer unrecognized, and then, as soon as the man whom he instinctively recognized as a favored rival, had passed sufficiently far to prevent suspicion, the broker turned back, dogging his movements. "He's going to call on her, curse him!" he grated between his teeth, the grizzled glow deepening in his dark eyes. "Did she make an appointment with the cur, when she jumped out and ran up to him, to-day? Will she receive him—Satan pity the slyster if she does!" Even as that vicious threat passed his lips, Nicol Faulkner saw Eric Alford turn from the paved into the spacious grounds, and hugging the terraced wall he watched eagerly, breathlessly, to decide his fears. He saw the young lawyer pass up the steps, and even fancied he could detect the musical jingle of the door-bell. He saw the door open as it had in his own case; then came a savage imprecation, for Eric entered the hall and the door closed silently behind him! For fully half an hour Faulkner lingered near, watching the door, dimly visible owing to the subdued light that came through its stained-glass panelling; but the young lawyer did not reappear. "That does settle it!" he grated, turning and striding rapidly away, heading down-town. "She did give him an appointment! She is just fool enough to fling herself at his head in gratitude for his saving her life to-day! Unless he's more an idiot than I think him, he'll make hay while the sun shines, and— But he'll never reap the harvest while my head's hot—never! I'll kill him, first!" And as he passed under a gaslight, the face of the young broker fully bore out his savage threat. By the shortest route Faulkner struck the cable line, jumping aboard without taking the precaution to stop its swift motion, sinking into a seat, paying no attention to the nods of recognition which more than one of the passengers gave at his entrance. His features were still stern and dark, still betraying something of the hot rage and bitter revulsion which boiled and bubbled in his busy brain. He left the car in much the same reckless fashion with which he had boarded it, crossing the broad pave and running rapidly up a steep flight of stairs in one of the many huge buildings which afford office room for the legions of real estate brokers who all seem to fatten on the narrow "boom" with which Kansas City then was blessed. He paused before a door, through the transom above which fell a soft flood of light; then turning a knob, he entered, only to stop short with a harsh ejaculation as his gaze rested on a burly figure tipped back in an office-chair, feet crossed on a desk, and with a cloud of vile-smelling smoke hovering above his head. "Who the devil—" "Only one of his imps, boss!" came a hoarse response, as the intruder wheeled about in his chair to confront the broker, with a grin. Broad shouldered, massive-chested, muscular beyond the generality of mankind, with broad face, deep red in hue and badly pitted with smallpox, with a shock of grizzled hair which had once been yellow; with small, deep-set eyes of gray, now in a setting of streaky red; roughly clad, with stained and rumpled linen; such was the man whom Nicol Faulkner confronted, at first with an angry scowl, then with a forced smile, but glittering eyes. "You, is it, Brocky?" he exclaimed, with something almost cordial in his tones, as he closed the door behind him. "Where's my man?" "Sent him out for more lish, boss," drawled the fellow, never offering to move from his seat, seemingly assured that his presence was heartily welcome, or else not caring anything about it. "You're too infernally stingy in your preparations for guests, or else you don't often have such a thirsty customer as myself! I emptied the locker in my first half-hour, and had to either send or go myself. So I sent. And told your steward to tell 'em to charge it!" "That's all right, Sam," nodded Faulkner, seating himself, furtively scanning the strong, repulsive face before him. "Make yourself at home!" "Which I'm mighty apt to do, boss!" with a coarse laugh. "What's all this I heard 'bout the nabob getting eternally smashed up to-day?" "There's nothing in it—only a simple runaway. Nobody hurt but the team. I was there, so you can take my word for it." "You, was it?" squinting through the smoke-cloud. "Seems to me I heard the name spelled different—more like that of young Alford—Satan roast him for a meddler!" "You don't love him any too well, Sam?" asked Faulkner. "Why should I?" flinging the stump of his rank weed spitefully into the cuspidore. "Didn't he do his level best to break up as neat a little family as I ever gathered under Brocky's wing? Didn't he even send half of them over the road? Love him? Yes—as a hungry cat loves a fat mouse!" "And I've heard he swears he'll finish the contract, too, Sam," the broker suggested, scanning that ugly face. "If he lives long enough," grimly laughed Brocky Sam. "You are not an angel, then, Samuel?" "Where's my wings?" with a hard laugh as he twisted his neck to glance over his shoulders. "And you're not greatly afraid of soiling those hands, Sam?" "Not if I know where to find the right quality and quantity of soap to wash them afterwards," now gazing steadily in the pale face of his opposite, his deep-sunken eyes beginning to glow. Faulkner shifted on his seat with visible uneasiness, but he managed to meet that stare unflinchingly. For fully one minute this endured, then Brocky Sam leaned forward, his hands supported by his knees as he bluntly demanded: "What're you trying to get at, boss? You ain't often so mealy-mouthed as all this comes to. You want a job done—then why in blue blazes don't you name it in plain words?" "If I know for sure I could trust you, Sam!" "If you don't know, don't try," drawing back with a shrug of his broad shoulders. "You've made a botch, somehow, boss. You've either kicked off the fat in the fire, or else let some one else do it." "There has been a hitch, but it was no fault of mine," sullenly. "That isn't the point, just now, though. You want plain speech! All right. You shall have it. How much will you take to kill a man?" Brocky Sam never changed a muscle, but stared reflectively into the pale face of the broker, for a few moments, before making answer. Then, in cool, business-like tones he responded: "That depends a good deal on who the man is, what he is, and how easy he can be got at. I didn't even hear you mention his name, boss?" "Will you do it? That's the main question!" persisted Faulkner. "Name your own price, and I'll never haggle. All I want is swift and sure work—no half-way measures!" "Them things comes high, boss," was the easy

drawl. "But I can furnish 'em, if you are willing to pay the price for 'em." "Didn't I say I'd pay?" with sudden irritation in face and voice. "Name your own figures, and I'll meet them without a murmur, I tell you. All I ask in return is that you do your share as smoothly!" "When I know the class of work, I'll know better how to set my price, you understand," impatiently retorted Brocky Sam, smiling. "What if I was to point out Eric Alford as the man?" "Then I'd offer to do the job up brown for heap less money than I'd name for any other man in all K. C." was the ready response. Faulkner drew a long breath of relief. Evil-hearted though he was, this was no slight task to manage, but, now that his last doubts were dispelled, he spoke promptly enough: "Then—I do mean Eric Alford! Now name your figures!" CHAPTER XI. TO TEST HIS FORTUNE. THE jealous-eyed young broker was not deceived. Where he himself had been denied, Eric Alford was promptly admitted, the servant bowing low and stepping aside to give him entrance, even before he could fairly shape the words which rose to his lips. "At home—to you, sir?" Eric flushed, for there was something in the looks and manner of the servant which told plainly as words that the story of his daring rescue had spread abroad to him. And it was not easy for the carefully-trained fellow to keep from thanking the gentleman who had kept that house from being filled with mourning. With a rapidity that gave him no time for "priming," as Dan Dunn laughingly called it, Eric found himself ushered into the second parlor, where the dim, soft lights indistinctly revealed the rising figure of fair Linnet Meredith. As the door closed softly behind him, the maiden came forward, both hands outstretched, looking more than ever like an angel in that "dim, religious light," as Eric Alford caught himself thinking. "At last!" she murmured, her sweet tones full of poorly suppressed emotion. "I have been watching and waiting until I almost began to fear you were never coming!" Strong as the young lawyer was, he felt weak and dizzy in that moment. With both her hands clasping his, with that lovely face—more lovely than ever in its paleness, he thought—looking half reproachfully into his misty eyes! "What a gentle, flattering reproach on her lips—did she mean to drive him clear out of his senses?" "You are very kind to say that, Miss Meredith," he managed to stammer, wondering if he could master the wild temptation he felt to catch that lithe, graceful, soft-robed figure to his bosom, holding her as he had held her once that day, only after quite another fashion: with her own free consent! "Would you have me play a part, Eric? Would you have me keep the whole truth forever hidden under the mask of cold ceremony? After all you have done this day? After saving my poor life, at the risk of your own?" almost passionately murmured the maiden. "I did what I could; but that was only helping, after all." Alford forced himself to utter with distinctness as they sought seats. "If it hadn't been for my companion—strong, quick, true to the core—I would have been perfectly helpless so far as rescuing you was concerned, had Miss Meredith."

"If it is a painful subject, why not put it aside for this evening—if not forever?" softly asked Linnet, her cheeks flushing.

"Because I have something to say to which this brief life-history is a necessary preface," was the instant response. "And yet, it is hard. For instance, you called me Eric Alvord, but a little while ago. You believe that is my name, but I have no actual right to it; I cannot say that I have a right to any name!"

Linnet partly started from her seat, but with a quick motion the young lawyer checked her impulse.

"Let me explain, Miss Meredith, after my own fashion, please."

"I am wholly ignorant of the date or place of my birth. I never knew father, mother or less near kindred. I may have sprung from the very gutter out of which a dear old gentleman picked me when very young—scarcely more than an infant, in fact! For aught I can say to the contrary, my parents may have been the veriest drags of society!"

"No other dare hint as much, after looking into your eyes, Eric Alvord!" impulsively exclaimed the maiden, her cheeks all aglow, her glorious eyes filled with a generous fire.

"Still, it may well be the truth, for all, Miss Meredith," with a faint smile as he bowed in acknowledgment.

"I often fancy I can recall different surroundings. It seems as though I had, in my earliest days, lived with honest, if not rich people. I can even trace the shadowy, phantom outlines of a fine house and extensive grounds! Yet—all that may be no more than a dream!"

"I have more faith than that! I believe it is a glimpse of the actual truth!" declared Linnet, emphatically.

"I fear your generous heart leads you astray" with another faint smile, his voice growing steeper, calmer, more matter-of-fact as he added: "For my benefactor—the kind old gentleman of whom I spoke, as having picked me up out of the gutter—told me he had spent both time and money very freely in striving to find out my antecedents, but wholly without success. He said that for years he had kept up his efforts to trace my past, but all in vain."

"Of course it was a severe shock to me when he told me all this, as he lay on what was too soon to prove his death-bed, but I felt most his admission that I was not his actual son. I had been brought up as such. I loved him as a father, as he richly deserved. If his blood had flowed in my veins, I could not have been treated more kindly, loved more truly!"

"In less than a week, Mr. Alvord was in his grave, and I was alone in the world. I knew that his income died with him, but I cared naught for that. I knew that I had no right to the name I had borne since childhood, but that gave me little trouble. I could only grieve for my dear benefactor—for my father! Even now I must call him that!"

There was a brief pause. When Linnet would have spoken, a motion of his hand checked the words that rose to her lips. Then he added:

"It was not until after I came here and settled down to business that I began to realize how truly unfortunate I had been; that I began to wish I had a name and birth to the record of which I could point without a blush. And as day followed day, this horrible blank troubled me more and more!"

"Shall I tell you why, Miss Meredith?"

"If you wish," was the response, but, low as it was, his ears caught the sounds and rightly interpreted them.

"It was because I began to realize what wonderful meaning there is in the one little word—love! Because, almost before I realized the truth, I fell in love with a young lady, proudest among the proud, of aristocratic birth, of great wealth, lovely as a dream, the most perfect of all her sex!"

"The pallor had faded of his face, and his eyes were glowing as though backed by living fire. And though the maiden tried hard to keep her eyes unwavering, they trembled and sunk before his gaze."

"She could not even pretend to doubt or misinterpret his meaning. In her heart she knew that this object of his great love was herself. And in her face she betrayed that knowledge, despite herself."

"But, Eric seemed willfully blind to even this glad truth, and if anything he drew a little further away. He even put his hands behind him, as though the better to resist temptation."

"I was just so insanely foolish, Miss Meredith," he added, his voice growing more and more unsteady as he proceeded. "If I had realized the truth in time, I believe I would have had manhood enough to flee from danger. I did try to do so, but—God help me!—I could not tear myself away even though cold reason told me I could never hope to win the consent of her father, should heaven be so gracious to me as to give me her affection in return for my mad, foolish love!"

"His voice broke off there, and he covered his face with his trembling hands. To start with a wild, breathless joy as a soft, warm touch caressed his fingers, and a low, sweet voice murmured:

"And that proud, aristocratic lady, Eric? Did you never think that she might be just as foolish—if you call true love folly?"

CHAPTER XIII

THE SAND-BAGGER'S DECOY. As Dan Dunn entered the darkest portion of his way, the two men who had shadowed him from the time of his parting with Eric Alvord, stole on silent feet nearer and nearer to him, until they were only a short distance in his rear when that trembling man so suddenly appeared to him in perfection. And as the detective came to a pause, in answer to her appeal, the two ruffians crept still closer, the leading one gripping tightly a terrible weapon—the silent, deadly sand-bag.

As though she saw this peril, the woman shrunk back with a sharp cry, half-turning as though to seek safety in flight, but, before she could do more, Dan Dunn sprang forward and caught her wrist, bringing her face close to his own.

"Dim as the light was, it proved sufficient for his keen vision, and his voice rung out sternly:

"It is you, Shady Belle? What little game are you trying to play off on an old rounder like me? Am I your game, or did you make a mistake in the man, Belle?"

That abrupt stride of his, carried Dan just beyond reach of the ruffian, who was on the very point of striking, and saved his life, for the moment.

The woman shrunk back, still murmuring something which Dan Dunn failed to fully comprehend; then her demeanor suddenly changed. Instead of trying to escape, she flung her free arm about the neck of the menacing man, clinging to him desperately, crying in choking tones:

"Save me—don't let him kill!"

Even in that peculiar situation Dan Dunn was not to be taken wholly unawares. He caught the sound close behind him, and, slightly ducked his head as he sought to fling off the hampering woman and turn—but too late!

"That for you, bloodhound!" came a grating voice, as the sand-club fell with a sickening sound upon his head, crushing him to the ground, almost carrying the treacherous woman with him as he fell.

With difficulty she saved herself, reeling back, bringing up against the blank wall.

"Give him another on my account, mate!" muttered the second man, viciously, as he came closer to the fallen detective.

The ruffian addressed stood with ready weapon, but Dan Dunn lay motionless as he fell, face downward, seemingly killed outright.

"He's got his fill, I reckon!" with a low, grating laugh as he bent over his victim. "Curse him! I only wish he had caught a glimpse of my face before he went down in a

heap! I'd like him to know how I pay off my debts!"

"Not any in mine, thank'ee!" grinned his companion, neither of them paying the slightest attention to the woman who leaned against the wall, her face showing white against the dark background. "If I know the debt is paid, that's plenty for me; in addition to the dug-bats!"

There was a moment's silence, during which Kit Melady—for he the taller villain was, with Don Fisher bearing him company in his vile plot for revenge and booty combined—felt of the body with practiced fingers. Then, with a short laugh, he muttered:

"It's all right, mate! I can feel the shape through his clothes! Lead a hand to drag him into the alley, and we'll soon finger the yellow-bos, after all!"

"That's biz!" nodded Don Fisher, grasping Dan Dunn by the limp right arm, rudely dragging him across the pave and into the denser shade of the alley, narrow and filthy, evidently running back only a short distance, never having been cut entirely through to the next street. "Tell Belle to watch for cops."

Kit Melady was already turning toward the white-faced decoy, a dark scowl upon his own features as he growled out viciously:

"What the foul fiend's got into you, anyway? How did you come to make such an infernal botch of it, at first?"

"His face—it was like meeting a ghost!" panted the decoy, one hand nervously loosening the shawl at her throat as though it choked her. "I never thought of—of meeting him!"

Kit Melady caught her arm in a savage grip, bending until his face almost touched hers, dark suspicion in his eyes as they fairly scorched in their fiery intensity.

"Who is he? What do you know of him? When and where did you ever have dealings with that fellow, girl?"

"With a desperate effort the woman rallied. 'I can't—not now—I hate him worse than you do, Kit! I'll tell you everything when there's more time, and—'"

From the gloom which shrouded the alleyway came a low but impatient whistle, and Kit Melady released his grip to mutter:

"Keep watch, then, and give us ample warning if anybody comes this way. I'll talk to you later!"

With a rude shove he sent the decoy along the pavement, then glided into the alley, where Don Fisher was impatiently awaiting his coming.

"You're taking your own sweet time, ain't ye?" he grumbled, showing his teeth after a sulky fashion from where he knelt beside the motionless body. "If it hadn't been for breaking rules, I'd have plucked the pigeon and been miles away by this. What was the matter with Belle, anyway?"

"That's what I'm going to find out—don't you bother your head over it too bad, mate! Sure, you didn't empty even one pocket before letting me know how long I was keeping you waiting?"

"I'll never tell you, if he don't," with a low laugh at the suspicion, which actually seemed to compliment his rascality.

Dark as it was where they now crouched like ghouls above their victim, neither of the rascals seemed at a loss how to set about their glad task of stripping from Dan Dunn the fruits of their dastardly crime. With them, long practice had learned fingers to take the place of eyes, and Kit Melady deftly examined each pocket and turned their contents over to his companion in evil.

"These were not many, or of much intrinsic value. A few loose coins of silver. A pocket-knife. A couple of keys, tied together with a cotton string. One derringer of heavy caliber, the mate to the one which had shattered the skull of Stuart Meredith's horse that afternoon."

"If this was all, I'd call it mighty poor pay for tough work," the shorter rascal grinned, summing up, while the busy fingers of his comrade were getting at the heavy money-belt.

"But there's plenty dingbats in that strip of hide—good luck our way!"

"Cheese your cackling, will you?" viciously snarled the tall crook, flashing a hot glance over his shoulder.

"Never chirp from Belle, and there's no danger, mate!"

Kit Melady drew the money-belt from about the waist of the unconscious man, giving it a slight rap against the stones, drawing forth a musical clink that set Don Fisher off into silent ecstasies of delight, judging from his fantastic gestures and grimaces.

"Sold ag'in an' got the tin!" he murmured, softly.

"I'd give double the amount rather than not have got even with the heavy-fisted cow-puncher, though!" grimly muttered Melady, rising to his feet with a start as a dark figure appeared at the mouth of the alley, pausing as though attracted by the sound of his voice.

"It's only the woman, mate!" muttered Fisher, catching the arm of his mate before he could strike. "It's only Belle, can't you see?"

"What is it—a cop coming? Spit it out, curse you!" grated the tall crook, leaping forward and clutching the decoy savagely by the arm.

"No one is coming, but—is he dead?" hoarsely muttered the woman, casting a fearful glance into the gloomy passage.

"Not dead, but sleeping," chuckled Fisher, irreverently.

"He must never awaken, then!" sharply muttered Shady Belle, and it was her turn to grip an arm almost savagely. "Better run the risk of killing him now than have to do it later. Better silence his tongue before it can utter a word to put the police on our track, I tell you!"

"Let him squeal! What harm can he do us? He never even caught a glimpse of our shadows, let alone our faces!"

"He did of mine, and recognized me, too!" was the swift interjection, as the decoy dropped the arm of her companion and slowly entered the alley.

With an instinctive glance up and down the dark street to make sure no one was approaching, the two thugs followed after, to find Shady Belle standing over the motionless body of their victim, her hands tightly clasped together, a curious look of mingled horror, fear, doubt and hatred showing in her pale face.

"You're dead sure he recognized you, girl?" asked Melady.

"Didn't you hear him call me by name?" "That does settle it, then!" and Don Fisher dropped to his knees by the side of the body, one hand rudely turning him from his side to his back, then feeling for his heart. "It's beginning to pump blood again, but I'll soon put a stop to all that—with thank'ee for the privilege, too!" he added, showing his teeth in a vicious grin as he drew a long, cruel-looking knife from his bosom, but only to have his hand clutched in the strong grip of Kit Melady.

"You fool! No red letters here, for the cops to decipher?"

"But—ain't we got to stop his jaw?" "It's his death, or the pen for us all!" urged the woman. "I tell you he knew me—he even called me by name, and—"

"And I'm wanting to know just when and where he learned that, too, my girl," with a short, ugly nod, then adding: "But no red letters, I repeat. They might tell altogether too much, and bitterly as I hate the devil, I'm not ready to run my neck into a noose just for the sake of seeing him croak!"

"What shall we do, then?" demanded Don Fisher, sulkily putting up his knife.

"Let me think a bit, and you, Belle, take a look at the street. It won't do to run any wild chances, just now."

Reluctantly the woman obeyed, but as she saw nothing either up or down the street to excite her suspicions, she returned to her evil companions, with hot impatience, as she awaited the decision of her master; for master Kit Melady plainly was, to both of them.

"I don't want to start a lot of police on our

track, just now. I've got too big a game in view for that. And so—That's the ticket!"

"You say so, anyway?" grunted Don Fisher, sulkily.

"Belle will go and hunt up a cop. She'll tell him she chanced to see a fellow getting laid out, up this way, and will fetch help to the cow-puncher. That will let her out, when he comes to himself, easy enough. Even if he has any suspicions remaining, it will be easy to clear them away. After all, he's ever such an ignorant cowboy! I doubt if he ever struck a city before this week!"

There was a brief silence after this hurried speech, and Kit Melady seemed to think the whole affair was settled, when Shady Belle laughed harshly.

"You're willing to let me run the chances, are you after I told you the fellow recognized and called me that name? Do you want to get shut of me that bad, Kit Melady?"

"Don't be a fool, Belle!"

"Take that same advice to yourself, and be sure it will fit your case better than mine," was the bitter retort. "I tell you, Kit Melady, you're either crazy or drunk when you even dream of such a clumsy trick as that! Do you call him a green cowboy? Then you're way off! Instead of that, he's one of the keenest detectives this side of the infernal regions! Don't I know him, to my sorrow?"

"Then you want to bid him good-by, right now and in a mighty hurry, my girl!" snarled Don Fisher, as his ugly knife again came forth: "for if he's that sort, then he's on our trail, dead sure! so I'll shunt him off, quick!"

(To be continued—commenced in No. 270.)

RETRIBUTION.

BY GEORGE W. BROWN.

My spirit is restless and lonely,
My mind overburdened with fear;
The sun of my life is fast sinking,
The shadows of night drawing near.

In gloom and in sorrow I ponder
O'er hopes that were mine ere I gave
The faith of my boyhood, of manhood,
To tempters who bound me a slave!

Who yields in his strength to his weakness
And his ambition surpasses'd;
Who tastes of the wine when 'tis pleasant
May drain from the dregs at the last.

Who scorning his honor and manhood,
Betrays the heart tender and true,
Has bidden to man's best endowment
A barren, a hopeless adieu!

[All Rights of Dramatization Reserved.]

Zulita,

The Queen of the Island Rovers;

OR,

Dishonored and Disowned.

A Romance of Sea Hearts and Shore Homes.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "MERLE, THE MUTINEER," "MONT-TEZUMA, THE MERCILESS," "OCEAN GIPSY,"
"PIRATE PATROL," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XLIII.

DON LEON'S VENDETTA.

THE rooms which Dunbar Kennon had secured in New Orleans were pleasant ones, and he had obtained a handsome suite, for he was to bring to them his bride, the Queen of the Island Rovers, and Harman and his young wife Lazuli were to be his guests also, while he remained in the city waiting for the sailing of a packet-ship for New York.

In answer to his invitation, sent, by the hotel servant, to ask Don Leon Lafonte, of Mexico, up to his rooms, that personage soon after put in an appearance.

He was a man of fine physique, with a face that was striking, if not handsome, and a quick, nervous manner that showed an active brain. He was handsomely dressed, wore considerable jewelry, and spoke English with a marked accent.

His black hair was worn long and a drooping moustache covered his mouth, while his eyes were dark and piercing.

"Walk in, sir, and be seated, while I hope you will pardon my not recognizing where we have met before," said Dunbar Kennon, pleasantly, to his guest, as the latter entered.

He stopped full in front of the American, did not take the extended hand, and replied:

"We have not met before, señor, though I have sought this pleasure for a long time."

"You speak Spanish, I believe?"

"I do, sir, and I would know why I am indebted to you for this visit," was Dunbar Kennon's reply, and there was some anger in his tone, as he did not like the manner of the alleged Mexican.

"You shall soon know, sir, when I tell you that I came to this port some months ago, hoping to find your vessel here, and then sailed for Cuba, where I learned that you were doubtless at Cartagena."

"I went thither, saw your brother officers and obtained information that you had resigned your lieutenantcy and sailed for home, via New Orleans."

"I caught a fast clipper and arrived here but yesterday, when I heard a brother officer, whom you met in the hotel, address you by name, and I knew that I had found my man."

"And why have you thus dogged my steps, Don Leon Lafonte?" asked Dunbar Kennon, his anger arising at the manner of his visitor.

"When your vessel was at Vera Cruz, more than two years ago, you fought a duel, I believe?"

"Is the affair of interest to you, sir?"

"It is."

"And why?"

"You fought a duel with a Mexican officer, a colonel of lanceros, did you not?"

"Did you?"

"His name was Colonel Santa Leon?"

"Yes."

"He was my half-brother."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, and you killed him?"

"I did, sir."

"We are a revengeful race, Señor Kennon."

that they would risk life to kill this professional duelist, your brother."

"My vessel was the first to enter port after this decision, and one of our officers on going ashore was promptly insulted by your brother."

"He was a particular friend of mine, an invalid at the time, and in no condition to fight a duel, so I resented the insult by knocking Colonel Santa Leon down."

"Of course he challenged me, and to his surprise I disarmed him, and the more to his amazement I gave him his life."

"But he demanded a meeting with pistols, and knowing his unerring aim, I determined to kill him or he could do as much for me."

"I did kill him, and my brother officers were avenged."

"I hope you are satisfied with my story, Don Leon Lafonte, and will let the matter rest as it is."

"No, sir, I cannot, and will not."

"I demand satisfaction of you."

"For what?"

"Killing my poor Leon."

"Señor, is not one death in your family sufficient?" was the significant query of the American.

"Not a dozen if honor is at stake, and I demand that you meet me."

"Suppose I refuse, for I am hastening home to a dying father and have most important matters just now pressing upon me?"

"No, señor, the Leons and Lafontes press a vendetta to the bitter end, and if you do not meet me I shall be compelled to say that you are a coward."

"You need not insult me, sir, for I am wholly at your service, as I see that I needs must be."

"If you will give me your address, I will send my second to you three days from this."

"It must be sooner."

"I am the one to select time and weapons, as you are the challenger, and I will meet you only on the third day from this."

"Our address, please."

"This hotel."

"Thank you, and now good-morning, Don Leon Lafonte, for I am desirous of being alone."

There was a dangerous light in the eyes of the young American which forbade the visitor to delay longer, and with a bow of marked politeness wheeled upon his heel and departed, Paul opening the door for him with a look as though he would like to assist him down-stairs.

CHAPTER XLIII.

STRANGELY WEDDED.

IT was some days, after the Spray was put on her changed course for New Orleans, before the icy barrier which seemed to have come between Dunbar Kennon and the lovely Pirate Queen was broken.

Leaking, as was the little vessel, and keeping one man constantly at the pumps, all were anxious to get to port as soon as possible, and all sail was crowded upon her.

In the loss of one of his men by execution, Harman was short-handed, and Dunbar Kennon at once offered his services, and they were accepted, the young skipper asking him to take charge of the vessel, while he himself acted as mate.

As Zulita also requested this, Dunbar acquiesced, while Paul took charge of the cabin and proved himself a most proficient cook and steward.

One night as Dunbar Kennon came on deck to take his trick at the wheel, he found that Zulita had not retired, but was standing near leaning on the taffrail, gazing at the new moon which was nearing the horizon.

The vessel was bowling along at a seven-knot pace under easy sail, and the sound of the pump forward was as steady as the tap of a drum on the march.

Harman was forward, having just been relieved from the helm by Dunbar Kennon, and had thrown himself into a hammock swung from the fore-castle to the foremast, while the only other person visible was the man at the pump.

"You keep late hours, señorita," said Dunbar Kennon, not at all adverse to finding her there.

"I could not sleep, so came on deck half an hour ago," was the answer.

"Not a word, or sign, since her letter, had she given to prove that she had written words of love to the man before her."

No one could have been more modest in her behavior, and she had won more and more his admiration and respect.

That she held over him a greater power than did Valerie Rossmore, outlaw queen though she had been, he could not but admit.

Now, as she stood there, after all that had passed between them, he felt certain that it was for him to speak, and he said:

"I am glad to find you here, Señorita Zulita, for now we can talk together."

She made no reply, and he continued:

"Have you had any reason to regret writing me the letter that you did?"

"No, not for that I fear you misunderstood it as unaimedly on my part," was the low response.

"No, not from you, living as you have done far from those who could have told you that it was for woman to be wooed and won."

"No, I only feel that what you told me you meant."

"I did mean it."

"Did you now?"

"Oh, yes."

"My sweet Zulita, had I been a dweller among your people your beautiful face and frank nature would have won my heart, and I would have longed to have your love."

port, as has been seen Dunbar Kennon secured his rooms at the hotel; but across his path drifted Don Leon Lafonte of Mexico.

But the priest was found and taken on board the Spray, and there in the little cabin a double wedding ceremony was performed, which made Zulita the wife of Dunbar Kennon, and Lazuli the bride of Harman Du Bose.

The three men comprising the crew had already been dismissed, happy with golden souvenirs bestowed upon them, and the little Spray was turned over to the purchaser to whom her skipper had already sold her, while Harman and his pretty bride accompanied Dunbar Kennon and Zulita to their pleasant quarters in the hotel, which Paul had made into a perfect bower of roses in honor of the happy event.

And yet Paul was not as happy as he looked, for though he greatly liked Zulita, he would shake his head ominously when alone and mutter to himself:

"What will Missy Valerie say and do, I wonder?"

And it was just this thought that troubled Dunbar Kennon too, while he also could not but bear in mind that he had a deadly appointment on his hands with Don Leon Lafonte the Mexican.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE TELL-TALE CREST.

IT was the third day after the double wedding, and the two handsome couples were the cynosure of all eyes in the hotel and wherever they went.

Among the Island Rovers, though Spanish had been the language of the people, English, French and Portuguese was also spoken by many, and both Zulita and Lazuli could converse quite fluently in both English and French, while their accent in the former gave a greater charm to them.</

Arriving at the hotel, they found Zulita and Lazuli anxiously awaiting them, for they had been told of the duel.

The next day when Harman made inquiries at the hotel, he found that Don Leon Lafonte had departed, going to one known whither, and soon after Dunbar Kennon, his lovely bride and Paul, went on board the packet ship, farewells were said to Lazuli and her husband, who were to make New Orleans their home, and the voyage was begun which must take the gallant young sailor to Cloudlands, when the truth must be made known to Valerie Rosmore that the man she so madly loved and had hoped to wed, was the husband of another.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE RETURN TO CLOUDLANDS.
DUNBAR KENNON reached his home just after the doctor had told Valerie Rosmore to have a talk with Captain Kennon upon all that he desired done after his death, as his life was fast ebbing away.

A few more days, the physician had said, will bring the end.

With a sigh Valerie had expressed the wish: "Oh, that Dunbar were only here!"

And almost following the utterance of the words, there was heard the roll of an approaching vehicle, a carriage drew up at the door, and in the one who sprang out Valerie Rosmore recognized in the moonlight, the one for whose presence she had just longed.

With a cry of joy she sprang toward him, and then stopped, for she saw him turn and aid some one else to alight, while Paul, who had sprung from the box, where he had been seated with the driver, held the door open for the second person to get out of the vehicle.

Offering his arm to the one whom he had aided to alight, Dunbar Kennon ascended the steps to the piazza, while Valerie saw that his companion was a woman.

With no thought of who that woman could be, she advanced quickly and said: "Oh, Dunbar how glad I am to see you again at Cloudlands."

"Only just now I longed to have you here, for your father—"

"Quick, Valerie, tell me of my father!"

"He can last but a short while longer," and Valerie seemed hurt at the manner in which she had been met by the heir of Cloudlands.

"My dear Valerie, I am indeed glad to get home once more; but let me present to you the Señora Zulita, and beg that you will show her to her room, while you come into the library, for I have something important to tell you."

His manner was kind and yet restrained, and Valerie knew not what to think.

Who was this Señora Zulita?

She was deeply veiled, and had spoken no word, merely bowing at her introduction to her. With no suspicion of the truth Valerie said: "No, no, not in the library, for your father is there, as he has refused to take to his bed."

"We will go into the parlor, and then I must break the news of your coming to him."

"Well, Paul, I am glad to see you home again."

"And I love you, Missy Valerie," replied Paul, as he grasped the little hand extended to him.

"Only the grasp of Dunbar's hand—no kiss, no fond word," murmured Valerie, as she turned and bade Zulita accompany her up-stairs, at the same time telling Dunbar she would join him in the parlor in a moment.

Too well bred to ask Zulita a question as to who she was, Valerie ushered her into a lovely chamber, bade her make herself comfortable and said that she would send her maid to look after her wants.

"I will order supper, Señora Zulita, and will come for you when it is ready," she said, as she left the room.

Zulita had merely bowed her thanks, hardly daring to trust herself to speak.

As the door closed she dropped into an easy-chair and said: "Poor, poor girl!"

"Now will come her sorrow indeed."

"I am sorry now, when I look upon her beautiful face, that she ever came across my path."

"No! no! no! I will not say that, for it was his destiny and mine to meet."

"But she is so lovely, and I feel for her in the sorrow that must be hers."

In the month which had passed since Zulita had been the bride of Dunbar Kennon, he had taught her much of the world into which he was going to take her.

There had been a number of passengers on the packet, and courted and admired by one and all of them, the beautiful young wife had begun to feel her power.

Arriving at New York, Dunbar Kennon had taken a carriage and hastened on to Cloudlands, and across its threshold he had brought a bride, where dwelt one whom he was solemnly pledged to wed.

It was a startling situation for him to face, and a bitter awakening to the truth he feared that it would be for Valerie Rosmore.

Going into the parlor, he stood awaiting her return.

He had schooled Zulita to tell her nothing, to leave all to him.

Valerie had told him that his father was dying, only a few steps away from him.

She had told him that the end was near.

It was indeed a thrilling situation in which he found himself.

Paul had hastened away to the servants' hall, and was to remain dumb until the terrible truth became known.

He pitied his master, and he felt for poor Valerie.

In the parlor, with the light of the lamp shining full upon him, Dunbar Kennon awaited the dread ordeal through which he must pass.

He was very pale, and yet perfectly calm.

He had made up his mind to tell the truth, in so far as he did not compromise Zulita.

MISSING SHIPS.

BY BERTHA BERTON.

"Ships at sea! will they e'er come back? Ever come back in this world to me? I sit on the north on an unknown track, Over a rough and stormy sea."

It was long ago that they went away— And heavy-laden with treasure rare; I have watched and waited for many a day When the skies were dark, when the skies were fair.

Ships at sea! they were ventures all— Some, sent forth with a reckless band, Some, with Faith, and an earnest prayer, Wreck'd, perchance, when in sight of land.

And yet, Hope whispers, some coming day May loom in the distance—a snowy sail; And of all the ships that I sent away One may be spared that has weather'd the gale.

The Sons of Thunder; OR, THE RIVALS OF RUBY VALLEY.

A Romance of Nevada.

BY LEON LEWIS.

AUTHOR OF "THE WATER GHOUL," "DARE-DEATH DICK," "THE COWBOY COURIERS," "THE RANCHER'S FOUR MILLIONS," ETC.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE TWO STAGE-DRIVERS.
WITH what wondering curiosity Nim Coggles thus turned his back upon his passenger and Captain Dash will be readily imagined.

But a greater surprise was before him. As he reached the trail to which his tempter had alluded he found himself intercepted by a man on horseback, who was evidently awaiting his coming.

"Hello, Nim," greeted this horseman. "Those clothes fit you nicely, and that wig is as fancy as you want; but you can't hide your manly beauty from me!"

Nim drew rein abruptly.

A first-class earthquake would have surprised him considerably less than did this bantering observation.

What could he do? Deny his identity or quarrel with the stranger on general principles?

"Who the deuce here you?" he demanded. "And how did you know I'm Nim Coggles?"

"I saw you changing your skin yonder, near your burning stage," explained the horseman. "In fact, I was near enough to overhear the edifying remarks with which this change was accompanied."

The horseman was indeed the concealed watcher of whom we have spoken.

After witnessing the scene we have described he had glided away just ahead of Nim until both were beyond the hearing of Captain Dash.

"Well, that beats me," muttered Nim, hardly knowing whether to treat the matter lightly or seriously. "Your voice reminds me of Cal Stevens, but your face is not Cal's by a long chalk! Will you tell me who you are?"

"I'll tell you if you will, Nim, since nobody's looking."

"Hit's a bargain!"

Nim took off his false beard and wig, and the horseman followed his example.

"Cal Stevens, true's preaching!" exclaimed Nim, in a guarded tone, with a keen glance around. "But what are you doing in that disguise, Cal?"

"Just about what you're doing in yours, Nim," answered Cal Stevens, who was another well-known and popular stage-driver, and who had long been Nim's most intimate companion.

"In a word, just what has happened to you to-day, Nim, happened to me a week ago yesterday."

"What! you were held up by Captain Dash?"

"I was!"

"And—and your passenger captured?"

"Just so, Nim."

"And you were bribed to leave Hamerica?"

"Just like you, Nim."

Coggles looked as if a rattlesnake had sounded an alarm beside him.

"The only difference in the two cases," added Cal Stevens, as he resumed his wig and false beard, "is that my passenger was a lady!"

"A lady, Cal?"

"Yes, Nim. And another curious fact is that the lady was Mrs. Hatton, the wife of the colonel, who had come on from the East to join him!"

Again Nim Coggles looked as if a thrill of terror had traversed his entire body.

"Let's get out of this," he proposed, nervously. "Hi want to talk with you."

He resumed progress quietly, replacing the wig and beard he had assumed, and Cal Stevens followed his example, riding beside him.

Nothing more was said until they were at least a hundred rods from the scene of the supposed colonel's capture and at a sheltered and retired spot which afforded them the sense of security they needed.

"Yes, I've been through this mill ahead of you," then said Cal Stevens, as he slipped to the ground. "Dash and his men stopped me on the Elko road and took Mrs. Hatton prisoner. Then Dash had with me about such an interview as he has just had with you, offering me a thousand dollars to go to the Sandwich Islands and be gone a year."

"And you accepted?"

"I didn't dare do otherwise. I think the villain would have murdered me on the spot if I had refused. But my resolution was taken to remain hereabouts and spot them. With a new suit of clothes, and a new wig and beard, I quietly took possession of a mining-shanty, in a deserted mine of the Humboldt Range, and have been watching ever since to see what would be the next link in the chain."

"Of course you were missed, Cal," observed Coggles, as he also dismounted. "Your horses were found making their way homeward without a driver, and a dozen rumors arose as to what had become of you. Some hinted at a sunstroke which had caused you to wander off to parts unknown. Others declared that you had taken a sudden notion to go East or West, while another report had it that you had suddenly been taken ill and been obliged to stop off at a farm-house."

"All of which is gammon," avowed Cal. "As you can see with half an eye, Nim, there is some deep scheme on foot against Colonel Hatton and his wife, and you are now both prisoners. Have you any idea who these rascals are?"

"Pity such a man as Colonel Atton should be murdered by them Mawmoms," resumed Nim, after a pause.

"And what a shame it'd be for us to go back on him, pard!" returned Cal Stevens. "You've no intention of taking that voyage across the ocean, do you?"

"Not the least, Cal. 'Ave you?"

"No more'n I intend to emigrate to the Canibal Islands!"

"It looks to me, you see, Cal, as if it were our bounden duty to remain 'ere until the colonel's out of the clutches of his enemies, if that day's ever booked to come," added Nim, earnestly.

"I agree with you, Nim. But you'll need to discard the clothes and the disguises furnished by Cap'n Dash, as I've done. He'd know 'em at sight. We must fit up all new. Take a drink from this flask, while we reflect a little as to our best course, and then tell me what we're to do."

"Hi don't need to chaw on this question as long as it takes to say so!" was Nim's rejoinder, as he proceeded to do justice to the liquid refreshment offered him. "You know where the Ruby Cave is, a mile south and west of the Gentle camp?"

"I ought to, pard. I've spent many a day there, looking for rubies."

"The same 'ere. You must remember that there are places in the rear of that cavern where everything is as light and clean and pleasant as any room at a hotel."

Cal Stevens assented.

"I've spent many a night there," he said.

"Hi, too! It's just the place we want for our boarding-house for the next few days. We shall be near the Gentle camp and hear all that's said about the colonel's disappearance. Possibly, too, we may be able to do something for the colonel's rescue."

"Of course, pard, and have help at hand in case we should need it. It's fully agreed, then! We'll hide in the Ruby Cave!"

"Yes," returned Nim. "We'll remain disguised, but it shall be in wigs and beards of our own selection. We'll go to Helko during the night, since this 'oss must be left there for Leavitt, as ordered, to keep them Mawms in ignorance of the fact that we've concluded to remain in Hamerica."

"And once in town, we can of course get a complete outfit of hair and war-paint," suggested Cal. "Let's mount and be off."

The two men mounted, but Nim Coggles hesitated so long to stir that Cal Stevens bestowed a more critical glance upon him.

"You're not afraid of being seen, I hope?" he said, indicating with a wave of the hand the darkness which was deepening around them.

"No, Cal. Hit's another 'ere than that!"

"Out with it, then. This ought to be an hour for confidence and plain speaking, pard," declared Stevens.

"Hand for plain hacting, too, old boy," avowed Nim Coggles, as he tore off his false beard and wig, and sprung to the ground, grinning then under his heel. "Somehow I feel we're in a hole, as if I were somebody's strange-looking and strayed cuss! Mind's made up, Cal—fully! I've lived all these years 'bout being hanybody's sneaking, prowling, double-headed and nameless pig in a poke, and I'm too hold to begin now!"

"You mean, then—"

"I mean that Nim Coggles has never been ashamed of his fingers," growled the veteran driver, "and that he intends to stick to it just as long as he sticks to hanything!"

"Good!" commented Cal Stevens, as he removed his false hair and threw it into the adjacent bushes. "If your mind's made up to go into hiding, I'm quite ready to take that course with you. Here we are, then, in our proper harness. What's the next thing to hitch to?"

"Why, we'll go to the Gentle camp, as straight as these 'osses can carry us, and let the boys know what has 'appened to the colonel."

The suggestion went straight to the heart and brain of Cal Stevens.

"I'm with you," he declared. "Let's do what we can."

"To begin with, you must be able to lead the way out of these woods," suggested Nim. "If so, the sooner you set up in that line the better."

"Follow me, then."

The couple were soon making for the old emigrant stage road—Cal leading the way—although this course took them very near the spot where Nim's long interview with Captain Dash had taken place, and where the captors of the colonel were still busy.

But suddenly Nim halted.

"See anything 'spicious?" asked Cal Stevens, hurriedly. "Is anything wrong?"

"Well—yes," answered Nim, slowly. "We ought to peep in on these villains and see what they propose doing with Colonel Atton."

"You alluded to my being familiar with this neighborhood," at length resumed Cal. "You'd think I ought to know a thing or two if you knew what tramping I've done during the past week in these mountains. The wandering Jew is anchored fast by comparison!"

"What a thicket we're in now, Cal!" muttered Nim. "Must be getting near the Mawms, too!"

"Yes. I'm going to leave you here, Nim, in charge of the horses," said Cal, as he slipped to the ground. "Wait here for me!"

And Cal glided away swiftly in the direction of the glare on the sky, which pointed out the whereabouts of Captain Dash and his men.

CHAPTER XLVII.

BERT AND HIS CAPTORS.
IN the mean time how had Bert Tabor fared in the rôle he had so daringly assumed?

As we have intimated, night was at hand at the moment of his capture, and this circumstance was not a little in his favor, the gathering shadows keeping out of sight the actual differences and contrasts his aspect really presented to that of the man for whom he had been taken.

Curiously enough, Bert was really favored by the light of the fire which had been kindled to burn the stage-coach.

The glare and glow of its beams, as it fell upon his powdered eyebrows and painted face, caused him to present that ghastly and wasted appearance which his captors were prepared to find in the real colonel.

No suspicion of the truth in the case seems to have occurred to any of the outlaws, not even to the couple who were so closely guarding him.

Not a word was addressed to him until Nim Coggles had been got rid of in the manner related, and Captain Dash had given some attention to the proceedings of his men, and then he came back to the prisoner.

"I hope you're not getting tired of waiting for me, colonel," he remarked.

"Not at all," returned Bert, still imitating the voice of the man he was personating.

"Sit down, sir," pursued Dash, with a wave of the hand toward a projecting stone, as he took possession of another. "I have a few words to say to you while the boys are finishing their affairs, and we may as well make ourselves comfortable."

ing. After the siege you have lately been through, you must feel pretty pale about the gills, although you seemed to be handy enough with your rifle on the lake-shore yesterday. My intention is not to handcuff you until you get quarrelsome, and not to attach you to anything until you show some intention of running away!"

"I appreciate the consideration you show me, captain," returned Bert, "but it's no more than I will do for you when our positions are reversed."

"Just so—when they are reversed," exclaimed Captain Dash, with a laugh. "Many 'moons' will doubtless roll over our heads before that happy day will dawn for you. But to business. Are you anxious to know why we have taken this liberty with you?"

"The question has presented itself, I admit," replied Bert. "But I had not thought of importing you for this information. You'll talk when you feel like it, no doubt."

The attitude of the prisoner was as nonchalant as his voice.

Bert was really taking things coolly.

Left in possession of his personal liberty of action, he felt adequate to the exercise of considerable volition in all the scenes which might grow out of the schemes of his captors.

"Well, I am bound to be frank with you," resumed Dash. "Yesterday we had the old Plute chief in our hands—"

"Who's 'we,' if you please?" interrupted Bert.

"The whole body of the Mormons in Nevada, as represented by their leaders."

"Thanks, captain. I can now place you. Go on. You were saying that you had the old Plute chief in your hands yesterday—"

"And consequently we hoped to learn from him where his people find rubies, and where is the lost silver mine. But he has now made his escape, and may evade recapture for some days to come, although we're sure to have him sooner or later, as these red-skins are too few in number to offer any serious opposition to us."

"But what have I to do with all this?" demanded Bert.

"Why, as we are in a fair way to fall of getting the desired information from Mee-an-kah, we are compelled to turn our attention to you."

"To me! And why to me?"

"Because you are just as well posted about all these matters as the red chief himself," explained Captain Dash, with smiling impressiveness. "You were adopted many years ago as a son by Mee-an-kah, who took a great liking to you. He told you all his secrets. You know where the lost mine is, and where rubies are to be had by the barrel. It is believed at the Mormon camp that Mee-an-kah has declared you his successor, that you have adopted his daughter; that it was by your advice and influence that the young chief, Teecoom, went abroad; and that the only consideration which keeps you and such men as Bert Tabor here is the fact that you are secretly shipping eastward and westward every day thousands and tens of thousands of dollars in rubies and bullion."

Bert could not help being amused.

"Why, you must think that we're in a fair way to demoralize all the treasure-markets of the world," he said.

"Yes, that's what we think," avowed Captain Dash emphatically. "We know you wouldn't stay here over night, if you hadn't pumped that old Plute chief completely dry of all his secrets!"

Bert would have laughed under almost any other circumstances.

"This is a clear case of professional jealousy," he said, "and I'm frank enough to add that there is not the least foundation for it. Mee-an-kah has never given me a particle of information about a ruby placer, nor about any lost mine. We know nothing of any such 'find' as you are pleased to give us credit for. And I may as well add, now and here, that if you have robbed me of my liberty with the intention of forcing me to give you any information about the mines of the Plutes, you are barking up the wrong tree. I've no information of the sort, new or old."

Captain Dash stared at his prisoner a few moments, as if he thought him an excellent actor.

"You'll have to excuse me, colonel, for doubting your word," he then declared. "It's perfectly certain that you must have some secret reason for remaining at the Gentle camp. I'd be willing to bet a thousand dollars against a cent that there is not a single claim on Ruby Lake which is paying expenses!"

"Admitted. But what of that? We're living on hope, as is usually the case with miners!"

"I should think as much! Such stuff as you have on the dumps tells the story. You've been running behindhand for weeks. Your smelter shut down last Tuesday, and not a fire has been kindled since. I hear some of you have got desperate and gone to panning, but did not get a color. The old pay-streaks have all played out, and no new ones have been discovered. You see how closely we watch you!"

Bert nodded understandingly.

He now knew at least one of the reasons why so many attempts had been made for the capture of Colonel Hatton.

The Mormons believed him to be the possessor of the secret of fabulous millions, and were eager to force him to share this knowledge with them.

As much was shown by the next observation of Captain Dash:

"What we want, therefore, is for you to tell us where the treasure is, and allow us to share it with you."

"But I tell you, Captain Dash, that we have no such knowledge as you ascribe to us," protested our hero, "and that it is impossible for me to accede to your wishes."

Captain Dash smiled twice in rapid succession, the first time in scorn and incredulity, and the second in anger.

"I am sorry to see that you have received my considerate treatment in such a spirit," he declared, as he arose, with vengeful glances at the prisoner. "But since you have taken this course, you need not complain if I modify my conduct, and at once order you into close confinement."

Bert arose quietly, moving a step or two nearer.

"You can do what you please," he said, "but I will at least know who you are!"

He extended his hand, stepping still nearer, and tore the crape from the captain's features, which were thus plainly revealed in the fire-light.

"Ah! as I supposed!" added Bert. "Captain Dash is merely another name for Smith Ruddle!"

(To be continued—commenced in No. 261.)

Science and Industry.

NINE cables connect Europe and America. Altogether there are now in use 113,000 nautical miles of cable.

TOM JAY, of Dahlonoga, Ga., raised four sweet-potato last year that was two feet six inches long and eight inches in circumference.

DURING the past seven years more than 200,000 acres in England have gone out of cultivation. It means a loss of \$300,000,000 to the landowners and farmers.

The switching engines of the Caledonian Railroad in Glasgow are to be provided with trumpets for signaling instead of whistles. The system will also soon be adopted in London.

A BOSTON man, who is a manufacturer of raspberry-jam, says that no raspberries at all are used in making it. What is used, it appears, are tomatoes, glucose and haysed and a little prepared raspberry-flavor.

It is said that scales for weighing diamonds are brought nearly to that delicacy of balance which would enable dealers to detect flaws in the stones by minute variations in weight. They weigh accurately the 640th part of a carat.

TURKEYS pay in Vermont—when everything else goes well. A Green Mountain farmer made a net profit of \$40.50 from a single hen turkey during the past season. That's better than raising wheat, or cattle—if you have enough turkeys.

A TREE was cut in the Skookum Valley, in Washington Territory that scaled 35,000 feet. At \$7.50 per 1,000 is the value of lumber there, the tree was worth \$262.50. It is said that the lumber lands in that locality will average ten such trees to the acre.

WORKMEN who were digging a ditch in Montgomery county, Ind., struck a stratum of earth resembling white clay, which turned black on being exposed to the air. Pieces of it thrown into the fire were found to burn fiercely. The substance is supposed to be coal of the first formation.

At a recent meeting of learned men in Berlin it was said, as a fact, that when a bee has filled its stomach with honey and has completed the lid he adds a drop of formic acid, which he gets from the poison-bag connected with his sting. To do this, he perforates the lid with his sting. The acid preserves the honey.

DR. GATLING has invented another gun, which he calls the "Police gun," and which is designed for use in riots. It is brass, weighs 78 pounds, is mounted on a tripod with a universal joint, works very much like the Gatling gun, and will deliver 1,000 shots a minute in any direction—sideways, up, or down.

CLAYTON SPRECKELS, the "ex-Sugar King" of the Sandwich Islands, who is now giving his attention to the encouragement of beet-sugar culture in Northern California, says that the beet-sugar industry can be established in almost every State in the Union, and that it will give a net profit of from \$50 to \$75 an acre to the farmers.

"It cannot be too widely known," writes a medical man, "that cream separated from new milk before it has been cooled by machinery is a substitute for cod-liver oil; and that if during cold weather those who have delicate constitutions and require concentrated nutrition, but who cannot overcome the nausea associated with cod-liver oil, will take this description of cream instead, they will find in most cases immense and lasting benefit. In several hospitals it has already quite superseded the

PODDLE COMES HOME WITH A CIGAR.

BY JO KING.

Now, Poddle, sure as I'm alive Your sense has wandered far, And if you haven't went and gone And come with a cigar!

In the Big Horn Range;

OR,

The Game-Trails of the Northwest.

BY LIEUT. A. K. SIMS.

It turned cold during the night and ice formed in our drinking-vessels. During our stay we always found the nights cool to chilliness, no matter how hot the day had been.

a secure hiding-place, and ensconced beneath these we peered out at the noble game that was slowly approaching. It was evident that they would pass beyond rifle-range, and we wondered how Grizzly expected to overcome this.

"The onset was so sudden, the surprise so complete, that I was hurled to the earth almost before I had time for thought, and the maddened animal commenced raining blows on my prostrate body with a force that could hardly be excelled by a pile-driver.

Jack of the Plains.

BY COL. J. E. DONOVAN.

I SHALL never forget my first meeting with this wild, nomadic son of the Southwest border. He had reined up his dark blood bay, which he rode so many years, upon a low bluff or rocky eminence of land overlooking the valley.

The red-men's yells bore a triumphant ring as they hemmed him in. Jack of the Plains realized his situation at a glance, and quick as a flash he decided upon his only course of action, never turning aside or wavering in his flight as he swept on straight toward the sharp, rugged ascent where it seemed impossible for a man, much more a horse, to gain a foothold.

wise his neck would have been elongated in an unbecoming manner, if not broken beyond repair. The clerk rushed forward and removed the rope from about his employer. That gentleman did little for some time but to recline supinely upon his back and groan in a pale, odorless tone of voice.