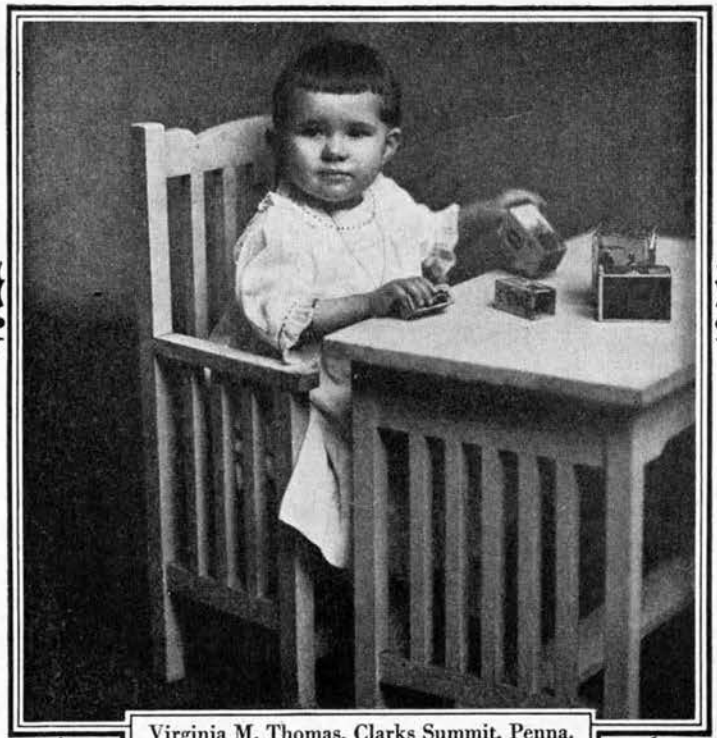
ARGOSY ALL-STORY WEEKLY

The Black Jarl

by Johnston McCulley

In the Brave Days of the Norsemen

10¢ PER COPY DECEMBER 1 BY THE YEAR $4.00



Virginia M. Thomas, Clarks Summit, Penna.

Mellin's Food

Mellin's Food, properly prepared with milk, furnishes every element a baby needs to grow and develop as Nature intends. That is why Mellin's Food babies grow strong, robust and vigorous.

Write today for a copy of our book, "The Care and Feeding of Infants" and a Free Trial Bottle of Mellin's Food.

Mellin's Food Co., 177 State St., Boston, Mass.

Radio Course FREE My new $45.00 Radio Course given free when you enroll for the Electrical Course—Mail Coupon.

Get Ready For a Big Pay Job

Be an Electrical Expert

Men like you are needed right now to fill big-paying jobs in the electrical field. There never was a time when opportunities for money-making were as good as they are now. Good jobs are open everywhere to men who know "what's what." Electrical Experts earn from $12 to $30 a day. Even the ordinary electricians get top-notch pay. Why don't you get in on this and get a real man's size job now? With my simplified Electrical Course I can quickly fit you to hold one. Read W. E. Pence's letter below. This is only one of thousands of such letters I have received.

Earn $75 to $200 a Week

You Can Be a Big Money Maker

I have trained over 20,000 men in electricity—thousands of successful men all over the world attribute their success to my training. I can make you successful too. In fact I will guarantee your success. If you will follow my home study course you can become an expert, drawing a fat salary, in the same time it takes you to get a little raise in the work you are doing now.

Jumps From $125 A Month to $750 and Over

READ the Story of W. E. Pence

W. E. Pence
in his working togs

Chehalis, Wash., Oct. 9.

Mr Cooke:—

When I enrolled with you less than a year ago I was a common mechanic earning $25 to $30 a week. Today I am an "Electrical Expert" with a business of my own that gives me a clear profit of over $750 a month.

I have more work than I can do. The people around Chehalis come to me to fix their starters, generators and ignition troubles because they know that I know how to do it right.

My success, I owe to you, Mr. Cooke. The thorough practical training which you gave me through your Easily-learned Home Study Course in Electricity has made me an independent, highly respected business man in this community. Sincerely yours, W. E. Pence.

Age or Lack of Education No Handicap

No matter how old or how young you are, or what education you have, there is a real future for you in electricity. If you can read and write I can put you on the road to success. I can help you to a position that will make people admire you and look up to you.

Cash In on Your Spare Time

Use your spare time to get a better job. Most of us have enough spare time every day to sell a little at about $10.00 an hour. Sell some to yourself at this price. Watch how quick you will earn the money back if you put the time into study.

Electrical Working Outfit Free

Every man who enrolls for my electrical course gets a big outfit of tools, material and instruments free. This includes an electric motor and other things not usually found in a beginners outfit. These are the same tools and the same material you will use later in your work. Everything practical and good right from the start.

I Guarantee Your Complete Satisfaction

I am so sure I can make a big pay electrical expert out of you that I guarantee your success. I agree under bond to return every cent you pay me for tuition when you have finished the course, if you are not satisfied that it is the best investment you have ever made. If you don't make good, this million dollar institution will.

Act Right Now

Let me send you my big free book giving details of the opportunities electricity offers you and a sample lesson also free. Mail the coupon and get this at once. Learn how other men "got themselves ready to hold good paying jobs" and how I can help you do the same. This is your big chance—take it.

L. L. Cooke
Chief Engineer, Chicago Engineering Works,
Dept. 179, 2150 Lawrence Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir: Send at once Sample Lessons, your Big Book, and full particulars of your Free Outfit and Home Study Course —all fully prepaid without obligation on my part.

Name.....

Address.....

L. L. COOKE, Chief Engineer
CHICAGO ENGINEERING WORKS, Dept. 179
2150 Lawrence Ave., Chicago

ARGOSY-ALLSTORY WEEKLY

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THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, and TEMPLE HOUSE, TEMPLE AVENUE, E. C., LONDON

FRANK A. MUNSEY, President RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer

Single copies, 10 cents. By the year, $4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; $6.00 to Canada, and $7.00 to Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered

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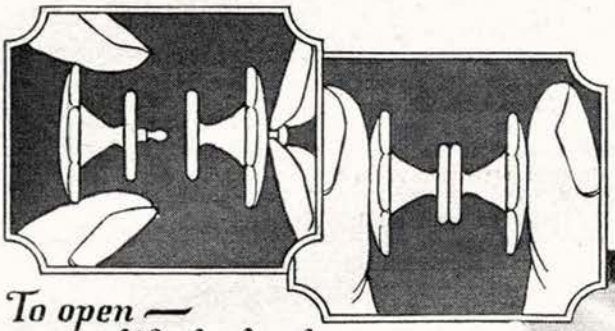


Closes like this and
Stays locked

To open—
lift the knob

An Up-to-date Gift

HE'S hoping for a pair of those popular new Sta-Lokt Links. The kind that press together, lock and *stay locked* until you lift the knob. Then they open easily—instantly. Sta-Lokt is the *perfected* separable cuff link. There are many two-piece links, but only one Sta-Lokt. Be sure and ask for it by name. From $1.50 to $7.00 a pair. Your jeweler will be glad to show them to you. Write for folders of Sta-Lokt designs, including the new Cuff-Line shape.

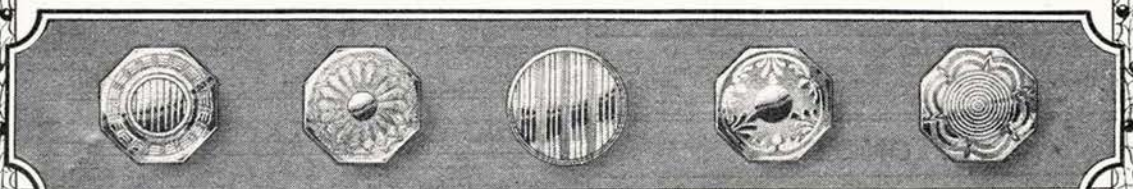
Pair illustrated has solid gold tops. In handsome gift box, $7.

TRADE MARK STURDY CHAINS

STA-LOKT Cuff Link

TRADE MARK G PATENTED REGISTERED

J. F. STURDY'S SONS COMPANY
MANUFACTURING JEWELERS
ATTLEBORO FALLS, MASS.
Makers of Sturdy Chains and Bracelets for fifty-eight years



Classified Advertising

The Purpose of this Department

is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needfuls for the home, office, farm, or person; to offer, or seek, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully

Classified Advertising Rates in the Munsey Magazines:

	Line Rate	
Munsey's Magazine	$1.50	Combination Line Rate $4.00 Less 2% cash discount
Argosy-Allstory Weekly	2.50	
Minimum space four lines.		

Jan. 5th Argosy-Allstory Forms Close Dec. 8th.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

AGENTS—CLEAN UP $100 WEEKLY WITH "NIFTY NINE", weekly average 100 sales—dollar profit each. 30—40 sales daily frequently made; demonstrating outfit cinches order. 30 other coin-coaxers, all daily necessities. Postal brings our unique plans. DAVIS PRODUCTS COMPANY, Dept. 58, Chicago.

AGENTS: Here's a winner. Take orders for Insyde Tyres. Positively prevent punctures and blow-outs. Guaranteed to give double tire mileage. Any tire. Low priced. One hundred thousand satisfied customers. Write for territory. AMERICAN ACCESSORIES COMPANY, B-501, Cincinnati, Ohio.

AGENTS—Earn $30 to $35 extra every week taking orders for our high class tailoring—during your spare time—made-to-measure suits from $14.95 to $39.50. Your own clothes at low wholesale prices. No experience needed. Write for our BIG FREE SAMPLE outfit. THE PROGRESS TAILORING CO., Dept. Z-104, Chicago, Ill.

Agents: Steady Big Income. Take orders for newest style written guaranteed hosiery. Complete line men, women, children's, including finest silks. Written guarantee with each pair. Pay you in advance daily. Experience unnecessary. Spare time will do. Write for samples. Jennings Mfg. Co., Dept. 909, Dayton, Ohio.

AGENTS—$15 A DAY—EASY, QUICK SALES—FREE AUTO—BIG WEEKLY BONUS—$1.50 premium Free to every customer. Simply show our Beautiful, 7 piece, Solid Aluminum Handle Cutlery Set. Appeals instantly. We deliver and collect. Pay daily. NEW ERA MFG. CO., 803 Madison St., Dept. 20-BP, Chicago.

AGENTS—OUR SOAP AND TOILET ARTICLE PLAN IS A WONDER. GET OUR FREE SAMPLE CASE OFFER. HO-RO-CO, 118 LOCUST, ST. LOUIS, MO.

AGENTS—$60—$200 A WEEK. Guaranteed Genuine Gold Letters for store windows. Anyone can put them on. Free samples. Liberal offer to general agents. METALLIC LETTER CO., 427A N. Clark St., Chicago.

WE START YOU in business, furnishing everything. Men and women, $30.00 to $100.00 weekly operating our "New System Specialty Candy Factories" anywhere. Opportunity lifetime; booklet free. W. Hillyer Ragsdale, Drawer 93, East Orange, N. J.

DO YOU WANT AGENTS AND SALESMEN to sell your merchandise? Men and women who are educated in personal salesmanship and know the house-to-house, office, and store canvassing proposition. These advertisers are getting them year in and year out, and there are thousands more for you among the 3,000,000 readers of the Munsey Magazines. Our Classified Service Bureau will gladly show you how to use this section most profitably and at the least cost. Write to-day to the Classified Manager, The Argosy Combination, 280 B'way, N. Y.

AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

$50 TO $150 WEEKLY WRITING JOKES, EPIGRAMS AND HUMOROUS STORIES FOR PUBLICATIONS. WRITE FOR DETAILS. AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF HUMOR, Office L, 414 Park Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio.

STORIES, POEMS, PLAYS, ETC. ARE WANTED for publication. Good ideas bring big money. Submit Mss., or write LITERARY BUREAU, 110, Hannibal, Mo.

FREE TO WRITERS—a wonderful little book of money making hints, suggestions, ideas; the A B C of successful Story and Movie-Play writing. Absolutely free. Send for your copy **now!** Just address Authors' Press, Dept. 19, Auburn, N. Y.

AUTOMOBILES

Automobile Owners, garagemen, mechanics, send for free copy America's popular motor magazine. Contains helpful, money-saving articles on repairing, overhauling, ignition, carburetors, batteries, etc. Automobile Digest, 500 Butler Bldg., Cincinnati.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

START AND OPERATE YOUR OWN BUSINESS. OUR system proprietary specialty manufacturing offers wonderful opportunity to make $100 to $500 weekly. Openings everywhere. Either men or women. We furnish everything and show you how. Big explanatory book, "The Open Door to Fortune" Free. Write for it now. NAT'L SCIENTIFIC LABORATORIES, 204 Monroe, Richmond, Va.

LARGE CORPORATION WANTS a Service Man in every town to paste up its signs on store-keepers windows. Excellent opportunity for reliable party. Steady work. No experience necessary. We also have attractive proposition for agents and salesmen. GUARANTEE SIGN SERVICE, 365 W. Superior St., Chicago.

BIG MONEY AND FAST SALES. EVERY OWNER BUYS GOLD INITIALS for his auto. You charge $1.50, make $1.35. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples. American Monogram Co., Dept. 54, East Orange, N. J.

WONDERFUL INVENTION—Eliminates all needles for phonographs. Saves time and annoyance. Preserves records. Lasts for years. 12,000,000 prospects. $15.00 daily. Free sample to workers. EVERPLAY, Desk 1212, McClurg Bldg., Chicago.

AGENTS. Make $10 to $20 daily, selling small kitchen necessity. Over 200% profit. Sells rapidly everywhere to nine out of ten women. New plan make sales easy. PREMIER MFG. COMPANY, Dept. 811, Detroit, Mich.

AGENTS: A Brand New Hosiery Proposition for men, women and children. Must wear 12 months or replaced free. All styles, colors and finest silk hose. You can sell at less than store prices. Write for samples. THOMAS MANUFACTURING COMPANY, Class 607, Dayton, Ohio.

AGENTS: $16 A DAY. Latest improved portable talking machine. Does more than machines costing five times its price. Built in just like a suitcase. Fully guaranteed. Pay you daily. Write PERRY-LUDLOW CO., S-1907, Dayton, Ohio.

AGENTS WANTED TO ADVERTISE our goods and distribute free samples to consumers; 90c an hour; write for full particulars. AMERICAN PRODUCTS CO., 9734 American Bldg., Cincinnati, O.

BE A SANITARY ENGINEER:—Get contracts for exterminating Rats and Mice. Big money, recommended by the Govt. and 500 Health Depts. We furnish everything. Avery made $1250.00 first 3 months, write quick for territory. FARMERS CHEMICAL CO., 823 Lincoln, Toledo, Ohio.

EDUCATIONAL

YOU read these little advertisements. Perhaps you obtain through them things you want; things you might never have known about if you had not looked here. Did it ever strike you other people would read **your** message—that they would buy what you have to sell; whether it is a bicycle you no longer need, a patented novelty you desire to push, or maybe **your own services?** Our Classified Service Bureau will gladly show you how to use this section most profitably and at the least cost. Write **to-day** to the Classified Manager, The Argosy Combination, 280 Broadway, New York.

MOTION PICTURE PLAYS

EXCHANGE PLOTS FOR $$—Photoplay ideas accepted any form; revised, typed, published, copyrighted. Sold. Advice free. UNIVERSAL SCENARIO CORP., 209 Security Bldg., Santa Monica and Western Ave., Hollywood, California.

MICHIGAN FARM LANDS FOR SALE

LAND OPPORTUNITY! 20, 40, 80 ac. tracts; only $10 to $50 down; bal. long time. Near hustling city in lower Mich. Investigate. Write today for free illustrated booklet. SWIGART LAND CO., Y-1245 First Nat'l Bank Bldg., Chicago.

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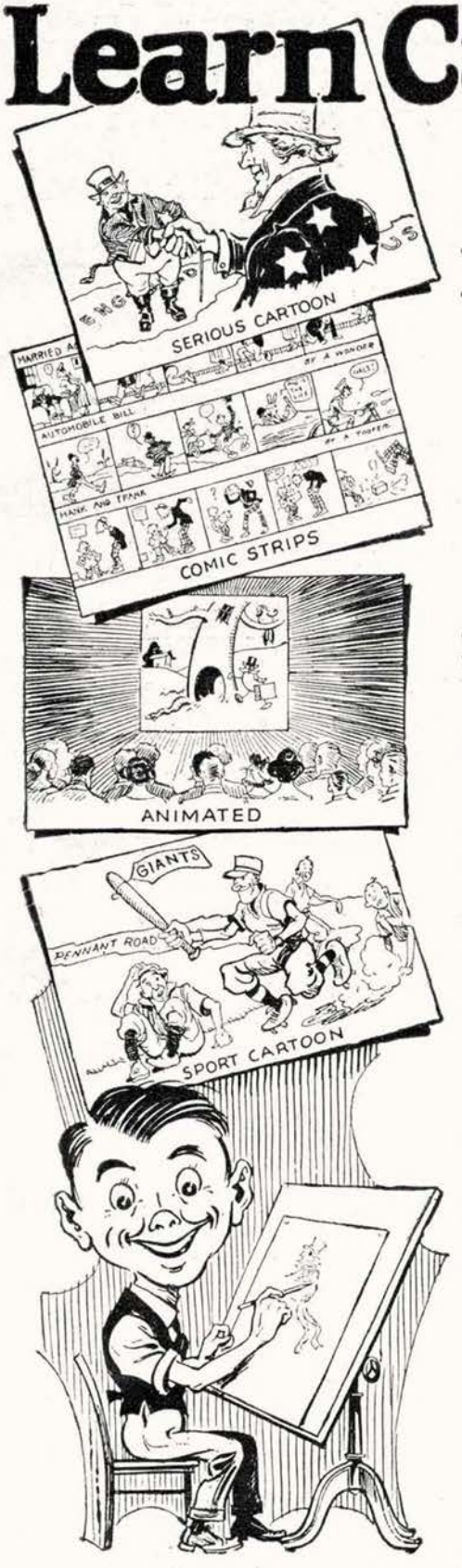
Learn Cartooning at Home



Earn $100 a Week

In This Fascinating Business

CASH in on the amazing ever-increasing popularity of cartoons! Thousands of cartoonists are needed to draw the vast number of political, religious, international, seasonal and human-interest cartoons. There is a crying demand too for men able to produce humorous cartoons, comic strips and sport cartoons. Advertising and animated cartooning offer two wonderful new and almost untouched fields. Never before have the opportunities in cartooning been so many or so varied. Never have cartoonists had such a wonderful chance to make big money. Now indeed is the time to study cartooning!

New Method Makes Cartooning Easy To Learn

Regardless of how little ability you have in drawing, you can now easily qualify for this attractive highly-paid business. Through a wonderful new method you can learn right at home in your spare time. Learning this way is more than easy—it is actually as fascinating as a game.

First you learn the important fundamental principles of cartoon-making. Then you learn the little secrets of originating ideas, of action, exaggeration, and expression—the little tricks which make cartooning easy to those who know them. Step by step you advance through every branch of cartooning until almost before you realize it you are drawing cartoons that SELL. Many of our students have sold enough work while studying to pay for the course many times over.

Just think of earning a splendid salary for such pleasant work. Successful cartoonists earn from $3,000 to over $100,000 a year. Yet enough cartoonists cannot be found to meet the tremendous demand. Right now there is a wonderful opportunity for *you* in this fast-growing uncrowded field.

Send for FREE BOOK

Find out more about the wonderful opportunities open to you in this attractive field. Learn more about this easy home-study method of learning cartooning. A handsome booklet has just been prepared which is crammed full of interesting information about cartooning, and describes in detail this remarkable method. It will be sent to you without cost, without obligation. Mail coupon for it TO-DAY!

Washington School of Cartooning

Room 4612, 1113-15th St., N. W. **Washington, D. C.**

WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF CARTOONING
Room 4612, 1113-15th St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Please send me without obligation your illustrated booklet on cartooning.

(Print Name Plainly)

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

If under 16 years, please give age .....

Classified Advertising continued from page 4.

HELP WANTED

RAILWAY MAIL CLERKS, STENOGRAPHERS, CLERKS, TYPISTS, wanted by Government. Examinations weekly. Prepare at home. Write for free list and plan 301, payment after securing position. C. J. O., 1710 Market St., Philadelphia.

WANT WORK AT HOME? Earn $18 to $60 a week RETOUCHING photos. Men or women. No selling or canvassing. We teach you, guarantee employment and furnish WORKING OUTFIT FREE. Limited offer. **Write today. ARTCRAFT STUDIOS, Dept. F, 3900 Sheridan Road, Chicago.**

HELP WANTED—MALE

All men, women, boys, girls, 17 to 65, willing to accept Government Positions, $117—$250, traveling or stationary. Write Mr. OZMENT, 198, St. Louis, Mo., immediately.

BE A DETECTIVE—EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY; good pay; travel. Write C. T. LUDWIG, 126 Westover Building, Kansas City, Mo.

EARN $110 TO $250 MONTHLY, expenses paid as Railway Traffic Inspector. Position guaranteed after completion of 3 months' home study course or money refunded. Excellent opportunities. Write for Free Booklet CM-30. Stand. Business Training Inst., Buffalo, N. Y.

WANTED—RAILWAY MAIL CLERKS. $1600. EXPERIENCE OR CORRESPONDENCE COURSE UNNECESSARY. WRITE, MR. SELBY, D4 WILLOW HILL, ILL.

BE A DETECTIVE, $50—$100 weekly, travel over world, experience unnecessary. Write for free copyrighted booklet, "The Successful Detective." AMERICAN DETECTIVE AGENCY, 1107 Columbia, St. Louis.

HELP WANTED—FEMALE

EARN MONEY AT HOME during spare time painting lamp shades, pillow tops for us. No canvassing. Easy and interesting work. Experience unnecessary. NILEART COMPANY, 2235, Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

LADIES EARN $6—$18 A DOZEN decorating Pillow Tops at Home; Experience unnecessary; particulars for stamp. Tapestry Paint Co., 128, LaGrange, Ind.

PATENTS AND INVENTIONS

INVENTIONS COMMERCIALIZED on cash or royalty basis. Patented or unpatented. In business 24 years. Complete facilities. References. Write ADAM FISHER MFG. CO. 249, St. Louis, Mo.

PATENT ATTORNEYS

PATENTS. BOOKLET FREE. HIGHEST REFERENCES. BEST RESULTS. PROMPTNESS ASSURED. SEND DRAWING OR MODEL FOR EXAMINATION AND OPINION AS TO PATENTABILITY. WATSON E. COLEMAN, 624 F ST., WASHINGTON, D. C.

PATENTS. If you have an invention write for our Guide Book, "How To Get A Patent." Send model or sketch and description, and we will give our opinion as to its patentable nature. Randolph & Co., 630 F, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS PROCURED; TRADE MARKS REGISTERED— A comprehensive, experienced, prompt service for the protection and development of your ideas. Preliminary advice gladly furnished without charge. Booklet of information and form for disclosing idea free on request. RICHARD B. OWEN, 68 Owen Bldg., Washington, D. C., or 2278-J Woolworth Bldg., New York.

PATENTS. Write for FREE Guide Books, List of Patent Buyers and Record of Invention Blank. Send model or sketch and description for our free opinion of its patentable nature. Reasonable terms. VICTOR J. EVANS & CO., 762 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

PHOTOGRAPHY

SUPERIOR QUALITY ENLARGEMENTS MAKE FINE CHRISTMAS PRESENTS. Sample 8x10, Sepia Enlargement from your negative, 40 cents. CARKHUFF PHOTO FINISHING CO., 2129 West Van Buren St., Chicago, Ill.

SONG POEMS WANTED

WRITE THE WORDS FOR A SONG. We compose music. Our Chief of Staff wrote many big song-hits. Submit your song-poem to us at once. NEW YORK MELODY CORP., 403-F Romax Building, New York.

TRADE SCHOOLS

EARN $10 TO $15 PER DAY. Learn Sign and Pictorial Painting, Showcard Writing, Auto Painting, Decorating, Paperhanging, Graining and Marbling. Catalogue Free. Chicago Painting School, 152 West Austin Ave., Chicago, Ill.

"WHY, that's my third increase in a year! It just shows what special training will do for a man. When I left school to go to work I couldn't do anything in particular. All I could hope for was just a job—and that's what I got, at $60 a month for routine, unskilled work. I stayed at it for three years, with one small increase each year.

"Then one day I woke up. I found I wasn't getting ahead simply because I couldn't do any one thing well. I decided right then to put in an hour after supper each night preparing myself for more important work. So I wrote to Scranton and arranged for a course that would give me special training for our business.

"Why, in a few months I had a whole new vision of my work and its possibilities. You see, I was just beginning to really understand it. I made some suggestions to the manager and he was immensely pleased. Said he had noticed how much better I was doing lately and wished he had more like me.

"Just after that an opening came and he gave me my chance—at an increase of $25 a month. Then I really began to grow. Six months later I was put in charge of my department and my salary went up again. Since then I've had two increases of $50 a month and now I've got another $50 raise!"

For 31 years the International Correspondence Schools have been helping men and women everywhere to win promotion, to earn more money, to have happy, prosperous homes, to know the joy of getting ahead in business and in life.

More than two million have taken the up road with I. C. S. help. More than 180,000 are now turning their spare time to profit. Hundreds are starting every day. Isn't it about time for *you* to find out what the I. C. S. can do for you?

Here is all we ask—the chance to prove it—without obligation on your part or a penny of cost. Just mark and mail the coupon printed below and full particulars will come to you by return mail.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2222-C, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please tell me how I can qualify for the position or in the subject *before* which I have marked an X:

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

☐ Business Management	☐ Salesmanship
☐ Industrial Management	☐ Advertising
☐ Personnel Organization	☐ Better Letters
☐ Traffic Management	☐ Show Card Lettering
☐ Business Law	☐ Stenography and Typing
☐ Banking and Banking Law	☐ Business English
☐ Accountancy (including C.P.A.)	☐ Civil Service
☐ Cost Accounting	☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Bookkeeping	☐ Common School Subjects
☐ Private Secretary	☐ High School Subjects
☐ Spanish ☐ French	☐ Illustrating ☐ Cartooning

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

☐ Electrical Engineering	☐ Architect
☐ Electric Lighting	☐ Blue Print Reading
☐ Mechanical Engineer	☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Mechanical Draftsman	☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Machine Shop Practice	☐ Concrete Builder
☐ Railroad Positions	☐ Structural Engineer
☐ Gas Engine Operating	☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
☐ Civil Engineer	☐ Automobile Work
☐ Surveying and Mapping	☐ Airplane Engines
☐ Metallurgy	☐ Navigation
☐ Steam Engineering	☐ Agriculture and Poultry
☐ Radio	☐ Mathematics

Name.....
Street Address..... 8-3-23
City..... State.....
Occupation.....

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada.

Aspirin

Say "Bayer" and Insist!

BAYER

Genuine

Unless you see the name "Bayer" on package or on tablets you are not getting the genuine Bayer product prescribed by physicians over twenty-two years and proved safe by millions for

Colds	Headache
Toothache	Lumbago
Earache	Rheumatism
Neuralgia	Pain, Pain

Accept "Bayer Tablets of Aspirin" only. Each unbroken package contains proper directions. Handy boxes of twelve tablets cost a few cents. Druggists also sell bottles of 24 and 100. Aspirin is the trade mark of Bayer Manufacture of Monoaceticacidester of Salicylicacid.

Novelty

Musical Instruments

Not toys—but high-grade practical instruments for Symphony or Jazz orchestra. Great for solo work at Club, Lodge or Legion gatherings or home entertainments. Anyone can play with a few simple lessons, furnished with each instrument.

Musical Pitch Fork — Glassaphone — Jazz-O-Nette
Mando-Zi Harp — Musical Saw — Hohner Sax

Free Trial Try any of these instruments for 15 days. If not satisfied, at our expense. Remarkably low prices. **Easy Time Payments.** Send today for new illustrated catalog describing complete line.

MUSSEHL & WESTPHAL
446 S. Water Street — Ft. Atkinson, Wis.

NEW-TREAD TIRES AT 40¢ ON THE DOLLAR

Send No Money!

Here is a real opportunity to cut your season's tire bill notwithstanding advances in prices. For a limited period only we offer our famous **New-Tread** Tires—**as illustrated**—at less than ½. Made of **NEW LIVE RUBBER** and built on the best carcases money can buy.

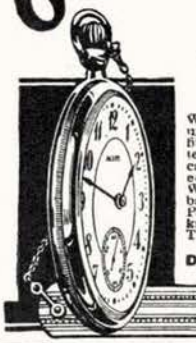
Special Sale Prices

Size	Tire	Tube	Size	Tire	Tube
28x3	$4.95	$1.25	36x4	$8.65	$2.35
30x3	4.95	1.35	32x4½	8.85	2.40
30x3½	5.85	1.40	33x4½	9.00	2.45
32x3½	6.50	1.50	34x4½	9.15	2.50
31x4	7.00	1.60	35x4½	9.25	2.60
32x4	7.50	1.85	36x4½	9.45	2.70
33x4	7.85	2.15	35x5	9.75	2.80
34x4	8.10	2.25	37x5	9.85	2.90

ALL OUR TUBES ARE NEW FRESH STOCK and Guaranteed for One Year. Shipment made same day order is received. Pay on arrival and if not satisfied, return **AT OUR EXPENSE.** Specify whether straight side or clincher wanted. **FIVE PER CENT DISCOUNT** when cash accompanies order. **DEALER AGENTS WANTED IN EVERY LOCALITY.**

STANDARD TIRE & RUBBER CO.
3259 S. Morgan St., Chicago, Illinois

$6.90 Save ½



20 YR 14 KT GOLD-FILLED CASE
10 JEWEL LEVER MOVEMENT

We give unusual values as we are large manufacturers selling direct to you. This watch fitted with well-known Consumate 10 jewel lever movement. 14 Kt gold-filled 20 year case latest thin model, engraved back and edge. Regulated to keep excellent time. Written guarantee of Satisfaction or money back with every watch. Send no money. Pay postman on arrival. FREE gold filled knife and Waldemar chain for LIMITED TIME ONLY

SUPREME JEWELRY MFG. CO.
Dept. 12117 — 434 Broadway, N. Y.

KNIFE AND CHAIN FREE

Relief for coughs

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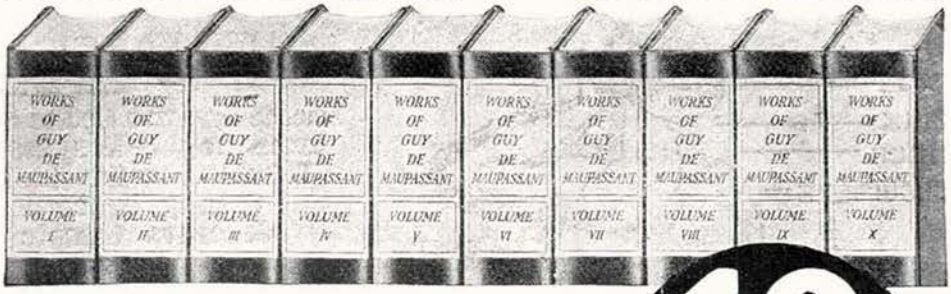

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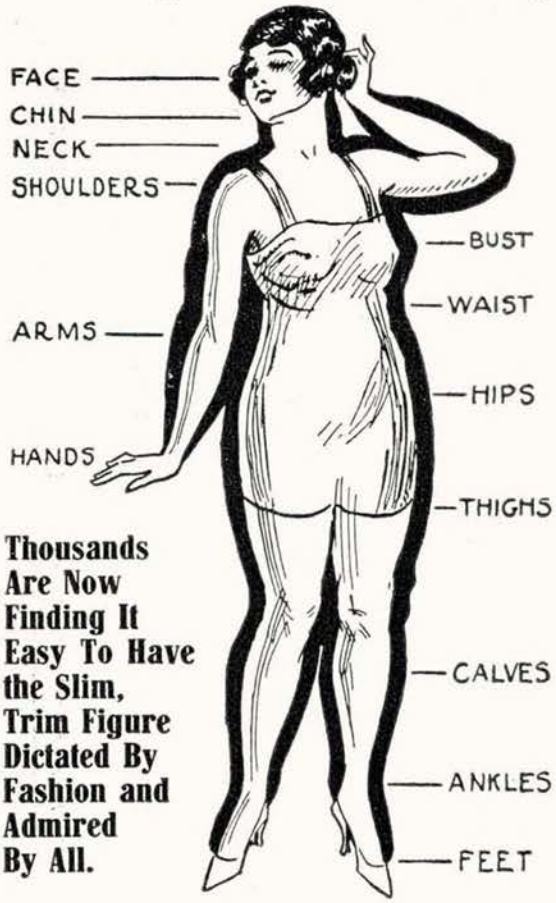

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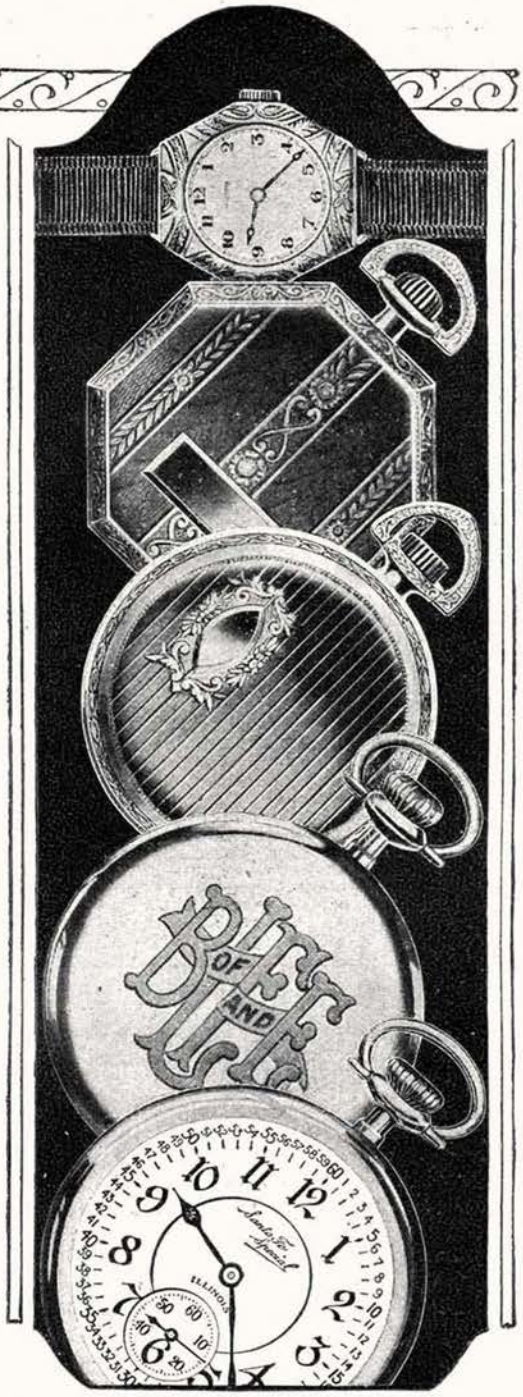

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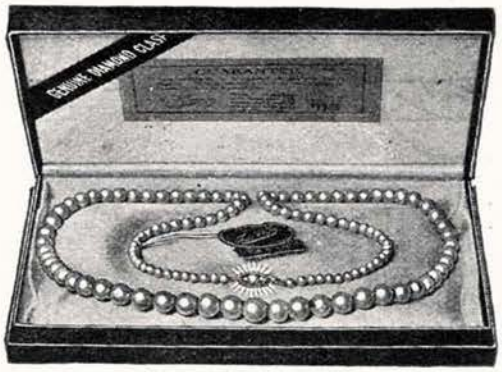

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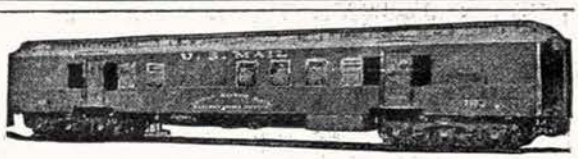

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ARGOSY-ALLSTORY
WEEKLY

VOL. CLVI SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1923 NUMBER 2

The Black Jarl

By JOHNSTON McCULLEY

Author of "The Mark of Zorro," "Hooked," etc.

CHAPTER I.

SVEND THE BLOODY.

BILLOW upon billow the mist rolled away from the fiord, up over the rocky beach, over the wooded slope, on and up into the hills where the dense green forest shielded black aisles in which wild beasts frolicked and evil spirits outcast by Odin and Thor held sinister sway.

Now the waters of the fiord danced and sparkled in the sudden glory of the rising sun, and sea fowl commenced their raucous squawkings as they breakfasted and fought. Sleepy thralls appeared about the great establishment of Svend the Bloody, the big log house at the edge of the dark forest with its half score of smaller out buildings. Smoke issued from vents in the sloping roof. The odor of scorching meat stole through the air.

The huge gates were thrown open and dogs charged forth to snap and snarl at one another as they took their morning run. Sheep and swine wandered slowly toward the edge of the wood for forage. Horses fed in the clearing.

The rays of the bright sun glanced from

metal as a man at arms shifted battle-ax from shoulder to shoulder. A shield maiden came forth in gleaming corselet and bright kirtle and heavy sandals, her fair hair streaming down her back and almost to her knees. She followed a trail through the brush to a rushing stream that tumbled down from the hills—the bathing place of the maidens, where they plunged, laughing and shouting, into the melted ice and snow.

Far away on the headland, a tall and slender thrall stood to his feet as the mist rose out of the sea, shaded his eyes with his hands, and looked long at the ship in the offing. Then he buckled his leather belt tighter, made certain that his sandals were secure, turned, inhaled a deep breath —and ran.

He was high above the shore of the fiord, yet he knew the country well. And not for nothing had he been named the Swift. His elbows glued to his sides, his head bent slightly backward, his torso held straight—he knew the proper method of running, albeit that it was natural with him and not a thing acquired.

On he ran, skipping brooks where the melted snow had come down from the headlands to swell the flood. He darted through second growth timber that had grown since the great fire in the forest years before. He sprang over jumbles of rocks and fought the tangling vines and tall ferns.

On he ran; and now he descended rapidly toward the level of the water. In the far distance he could see curls of smoke from the chimneys of the house of Svend the Bloody. The thrall's breathing was more rapid now, and the perspiration streamed down his cheeks and along his throat. His hands were clenched so that the nails bit into the palms. Still he ran, nor slackened his speed, knowing well what would occur if he did.

Presently he reached the rocky beach and went forward at a much greater pace, darting to this side and that to avoid the rougher places. Once he stumbled, but caught himself before he fell. Again he staggered, but when his knees and palms touched the ground he sprang erect again, crouched, and once more he ran.

Now he was compelled to swim a swift stream some thirty feet in width. Emerging on the opposite bank, he took a deep breath and hurried on. Dogs barked and ran to race with him, snapping at his heels. Other thralls squinted their eyes as he passed, for greater expression of interest was denied them and might bring a blow. Men in armor shouted at him, and men at arms, but the thrall gave no heed. He had important news for Svend the Bloody, and for no other man. And as he ran hope sang in his breast—hope of reward.

The ship had been reported just at dusk the night before, and had anchored to await the coming of the dawn. Svend the Bloody had sent his thrall to the headland to watch for the day and carry true news. Now, in the great hall of the house, Svend sat with his back against the thick wall, eating his morning meat. Cringing thralls served him. Magnus, his chief lieutenant, sat at his elbow and imitated him. There was no talk, no sound save of men eating with no regard for table manners.

The thrall dashed through the huge log gates and into the great hall. Almost breathless, he prostrated himself before Svend. Another hundred feet he could not have gone. He gasped for breath and hoped that his master would give him a moment before causing him to speak.

Svend the Bloody put aside the joint of half-cooked meat from which he had been eating. He scraped his giant hands on the edge of the board and looked down at the thrall. Magnus, his lieutenant, copied Svend's actions.

"Speak!" Svend commanded.

The thrall raised his head and gulped for breath with which to give the message.

"Master, I saw the ship in the first rays of the sun," he said.

"It is my ship?"

"It is, master!"

"The one that I sent to Gaul?"

"Even that one, master," the thrall replied. "I know the ship well. When she was building, I worked on her with the others. It is the ship, and none other."

Svend the Bloody got upon his feet and moved slowly forward. He was a giant of a man even in that land of giants, with the shoulders of an ox. His fair hair and shag-

gy beard were noted for their length. He clenched his hands and flexed the muscles of his great arms, then stood for a moment with his hairy fists planted against his hips, looking down at the thrall.

"It is the news that I expected," Svend said. "You made fair speed here as soon as you were sure?"

"I ran with all my strength, master, to fetch the news."

"You have done well," Svend the Bloody told him. "It is your moment of triumph! You, a thrall, a common slave, have carried important news to your master. You deserve a reward!"

The eyes of the thrall glistened.

"If only that I might see my Normandy again, master!" he begged. "If I might but have my freedom now, and permission to go to my home on some ship—"

Svend the Bloody suddenly laughed raucously, and Magnus joined in. The big jarl's merriment rang back from the thick walls. Though it was laughter, yet the thrall felt a shiver of fear.

"So you would leave your kind master and the fair land in which he rules!" Svend said. "Thrall, this is your hour of triumph, as I have said. You have done well. Were you to continue on earth, you might mar that fair record."

"Master!" The thrall was alarmed now.

"You are a swift messenger, and Odin has need of such," Svend continued. "We are not supposed to make sacrifices to him now, so our king, Olaf Trygvesson, says. That half-Christian monarch who is building him a city at Trondhjem would tell free-born jarls their manner of conduct in things religious. Yet such a deed as this of yours calls for a sacrifice."

"Master!" the thrall wailed.

"And so, Magnus," the jarl continued, turning to the man beside him, "we are compelled to conduct ourselves with strategy. An indirect sacrifice, as a man might say. Should not this thrall be sent to the thralls' Valhalla, wherever that is, in the moment of his greatness?"

"Nothing could be more appropriate, Svend," Magnus replied, laughing.

The thrall began whimpering. He was still trembling from his long, hard run. And now he trembled also for quite another reason. Svend the Bloody allowed the expression of merriment to die out of his face. His eyes narrowed and his brow wrinkled. He bent forward quickly and grasped the thrall, and lifted him from the floor.

"Master! I did my best—"

"Yet there must be a sacrifice, and you are the nearest," said Svend. "Fool, to think that it was good news you brought! By the hammer of Thor, it was ill news, thrall! Think you that I rejoice at the approach of the son of Haakon the Lover? Men may think so, but it is not true. And now you have heard me say too much, and so—"

"Master!"

"Your breath is half gone already, and 'twill take no great blow to rob you of the rest of it!"

Svend the Bloody drew back his right hand, doubled his fist, and launched it forward. There came a scream of pain, the crunching of breaking bones. Svend the Bloody tossed the quivering body of the thrall to one side.

"Not quite dead at the blow, but he will be before the sun is much higher," Svend said. "I wished to see whether I still could slay a man with a single blow. Magnus, we must out and welcome the ship. Be careful of your countenance, that men may not guess the truth."

"So he has come!" Magnus said.

"Do not taunt me with it! Can I do less than make him welcome, my brother's son? Is he not a jarl in his own right? Yet did his father wed and live his life in the southland, and now that he is gone the son returns to claim the rights of a jarl here. I fear that we may tread on each other's sandals."

"You have but to say the word—"

"And you would take your ax to him as he sleeps? It will not do! After all, he is my brother's son—and King Olaf might ask questions. Perchance this young man does not know that half my estates of a right belong to him. His father was called Haakon the Lover, because of his softness. The son may be as soft and can be bent to our will."

For a moment he paced back and forth, busy with thought, his brow a thundercloud. Then he stopped his pacing and raised his voice.

"Eric!" he called.

There was a moment of silence, and then another thrall came slowly through the open door. He was a giant, almost as huge as Svend the Bloody. Eric the Dumb, he was called by men, and there was good reason for it. He had been captured while but a boy, during a Viking raid in Normandy, and the horror of that night had struck him. Thick witted he was, his mind and tongue moving slowly. He did not remember his name and station. So Svend had named him Eric in derision, after a foe he hated particularly.

Eric the Dumb folded his arms across his great chest and stood waiting. His eyes strayed once toward the quivering thing on the floor.

"Take that carrion out of here and throw it from the cliff!" Svend commanded in a loud voice.

Then the jarl stalked from the room and into the open, followed by Magnus.

Eric the Dumb uttered a little cry of pain that could not have been heard more than a dozen feet away. He bent over the quivering body of the thrall and made a swift examination. Then he turned his head toward the doorway, and a flash of hate came from his eyes. The dying thrall had been his best friend, and Eric the Dumb would not forget!

CHAPTER II.

A MAN COMES OUT OF GAUL.

ALREADY the ship was coming down the fiord. She was a picture of a ship, some hundred and seventy feet from stem to stern and seventeen feet wide. Her sails were furled, and cascades of watery gems flashed in the sun as the big oars worked through the sixteen oar openings.

Down on the shore, those of the establishment of Svend the Bloody made ready the welcome. It was a long time since this great ship had been sent away, to loot, to trade, and to return to the land of his father Edvard, son of Haakon the Lover. Wherefore, women crowded the water front to greet husbands and sons they had not seen for long, some of them fearing and all hoping, for not always did all of a ship's company return from a perilous voyage.

Thralls rushed this way and that preparing for the landing. Shield maidens strutted back and forth across the rocky beach. Their eyes glinted as they looked at one another, and with reason. Edvard Haakonsson, so report said, was as yet unmarried. It was to be expected that he soon would take one to wife. And he was a man worth the winning.

Edvard Haakonsson was a jarl and heir to broad estates. Moreover, he had been born and reared in that land far to the south, where, it was whispered, men had delicious manners. They were great lovers, those men of the foreign land. And was not this Edvard's father known as Haakon the Lover?

Not a man or woman in the establishment of Svend the Bloody but knew the story. Years before, Haakon had gone on a Viking cruise, and he never had returned. He had met a maid in the land to the south, had wooed and won her, and there he had remained to make his home. The northland called to him in vain.

And now he was dead, and his wife also, and Edvard, their son, alone remained of the family. Wherefore he was returning to claim his place in the land of King Olaf.

There was much speculation among the maidens, and not a little among the men. Haakon the Lover had been a giant of a man, with long fair hair, a proper brother of Svend the Bloody so far as strength was concerned. Yet his great frame protected the heart of a woman. He had been kind alike to men at arms and thralls. He had been known to weep at the death of a close friend in battle. And a great love had softened him.

Edvard Haakonsson, these people of Svend's supposed, would be another such giant. Yet in his blood flowed the influence of the soft land to the south. Perchance his great frame, too, would hide the heart of a woman. Yet he was a jarl!

Now the great ship was approaching the landing place, and men and women shouted their greetings. Thralls waded out into the water, ready to be of service in the landing. There would be great casks of wine to be taken ashore and carried to the big house, they knew. There would be bundles of other things fetched from the lands to the south. The homecoming meant naught but much work for the thralls. Yet there would be a great feast at which Svend the Bloody welcomed his kinsman, and then the thralls would have their share, eating on the floor with the hounds.

Down to the beach Svend the Bloody stalked in company of Magnus. He had forced a smile to his face, and Magnus likewise. They stood aloof, and others gave them space.

"He will be a hulk of a man with the heart of a sheep," Svend said, in low tones. "Such a man was his father, my brother. My mother must have been under the curse of Odin when my brother was born. By the hammer of Thor—"

"The ship is handled well," Magnus put in, hoping to change the other's manner.

"Let us hope that she brings a cargo of profit, since she brings this other also," Svend whispered. "I must be under a curse myself. This, and the command to wait upon King Olaf at Trondhjem, and the activities of the cursed priests with their cross—"

"I have a thought!" Magnus said. "This nephew of yours, Svend, comes from a land where the Christians rule. Do you think it possible—"

"That he be a Christian?" Svend thundered. "A man of my blood? Fool my brother may have been, and soft, but he died in the grace of Odin and went to Valhalla in a viking funeral ship. That much I know! Would he allow his son to be a follower of the Christ? No more words of this! It were an insult even to ask the lad. And, after all, he is a jarl!"

Now the ship was near to the land, and the oars were in. The craft drifted slowly toward the landing place. The thralls were up to their knees in the water, to their thighs, their necks, waiting to help. On the deck of the craft were cheering mariners and men-at-arms. Frantic women called to their loved ones. Others lifted high above their heads babes that had been born since their fathers had sailed away.

The ship grounded, and the thralls pulled her broadside to the land. Over the side tumbled a score of men in armor, to wade through the surging waters and so claim the dry land. They shouted, brandished their weapons, laughed and called round oaths because they were home again.

Over the side of the ship the end of a landing stage appeared. Sailors thrust it outward and lowered it, until its end rested on the land.

"What is this?" Svend roared. "Is there a man aboard who cannot jump into the water and swim or wade to land?"

"Perhaps there are captive women," said Magnus.

"Even so! Has the day come when a man cannot pack a captive woman on his back? This is a touch of that southern softness, by the hammer of Thor!"

Svend the Bloody started to make his way toward the landing, and Magnus stalked at his heels. Svend was in an ugly mood, though he endeavored not to show it. He cuffed thralls out of his way. He struck a shield maiden aside, and she snarled at him, and put her hand to the dagger at her waist. Svend laughed and cuffed her again.

A child was in his path, and he kicked it aside. A girl, shouting to one of the sailors, was hurled back into the throng. So Svend the Bloody made his way down to the shore and the end of the landing stage.

"Hail, Edvard, son of Haakon the Lover!" the crowd was shouting. "Hail, Edvard Haakonsson!"

The ship was fast. At the top of the landing stage appeared her master. He turned to shout orders to those behind him. And then he walked slowly down to the beach, a giant of a man in armor and helmet, his fair beard blowing back over one shoulder. A dagger was in his girdle, an ax was fastened to his belt. The muscles stood out in knots on his bare legs beneath his mail.

Above him were other men-at-arms, swords and axes gleaming, bows, arrows, and spears near at hand. Some were armed with javelins, light and deadly weapons in the hands of those skilled in their use. They shouted, and then they were still. Their commander walked on down the landing stage, which bent beneath his tread.

"Hail, Svend!" he called, lifting a hand.

"Hail, Rolf! What of the voyage?"

"One profitable raid, and only five men missing," the ship's commander replied. "Much of value have we aboard to be landed."

"Once more you have done well," Svend declared. "And—my kinsman?"

"Is aboard and ready to land and be greeted," Rolf replied.

The ship's commander now was at the foot of the landing stage. Svend clasped him for a moment by the hand, then stood back and spoke in low tones.

"What manner of man?"

"A most peculiar one," Rolf answered. "He is one not to be judged hastily. A man may make his decision at a first glance, and find later that he has decided amiss."

"Let him land! We wait to welcome him!" Svend said.

Rolf turned and lifted his hand. Down the landing stage trooped half a score of men-at-arms, eager to be ashore. They touched the land and stood aside, making an aisle.

"Edvard Haakonsson, come to land!" Svend the Bloody called.

The throng ashore stilled its tumult. Every eye was upon the top of the landing stage. A man appeared there.

Came a gasp from those on the shore.

"He is black of hair!"

"A black jarl, we have!"

"And small! Little in stature!" a woman cried.

Edvard, son of Haakon the Lover, stopped for a moment at the top of the landing stage. He looked at those below him, and his teeth flashed in a smile. He stood in silhouette, and those below had their good look at him.

"By the hammer of Thor!" Svend swore, lightly.

For Edvard Haakonsson did not wear gleaming mail. His bare arms were not crowded with bracelets to show his jarl's rank. His legs were incased in cloth, and he wore a jacket. No helmet was upon his head, but that thing known as a hat. He was a picture of the lazy and woman-hearted land to the south.

Again he smiled, and then he swept down the landing stage like the breath of a gale. His movements were quick. His eyes were glistening, he glanced rapidly from side to side. He came to a stop before Svend and Magnus, and looked up at them.

"You are Edvard Haakonsson, my kinsman?" Svend demanded as though he hoped it were not true.

"I am. And you are Svend, brother of my father!"

"It is so," Svend agreed. "Welcome to the land of your fathers! May Odin give you long life and Thor lend you his hammer against your enemies! My house stands open for you!"

Without another word, Svend the Bloody turned his back and stalked through the crowd, Magnus beside him. Edvard Haakonsson followed beside Rolf. The crowd fell back to let them pass. Thralls gazed at the black jarl, wide eyed. Eric the Dumb showed a flash of interest, because this man was in part like the men of his own land. The shield maidens with their helmets of gleaming silver smiled upon him. Small he was, and black, yet he was a jarl!

They crowded forward closer to look at him. A girl stumbled and fell under his feet. But Edvard Haakonsson did not kick her out of the way and shower oaths upon her. He stopped, gave an exclamation, reached down, and gently lifted her to her feet. He brushed some dust from her kirtle, laughed lightly, and then walked on.

"By Odin!" swore Svend the Bloody, who had noticed the incident. "He is as soft as his father! Magnus, did you see?"

"I saw!" Magnus replied.

"He stoops—he, a jarl—to lift from the earth a maiden of no rank at all! These be soft southern ways! There are certain things that this pretty black jarl must be taught! I suppose he would pet a thrall!"

Magnus laughed. "Any of the shield

maidens could defeat him in combat," the lieutenant said.

Edvard had dropped a few feet behind and was looking back at the ship. And now Rolf bent forward and dropped a few words into Magnus's ear.

"Do not be too quick to judge!" Rolf said. "I am no weakling, am I?"

"By Thor—no!"

"And you would think me able to take care of myself?"

"That goes without question."

"Yet were it not for this black jarl I would not be with you now," Rolf declared. "Once he saved my life in combat, and once he saved the ship in a storm, when the men were terrified and on the verge of mutiny and would not work the vessel!"

"This man?" Magnus gasped.

"That man!" Rolf said.

"A man of his small body?"

"Yet in that small body, Magnus, my friend, he has a thing that not all men possess in a great degree," Rolf declared.

"What is this thing he possesses of which you speak?"

"Brains!" answered Rolf. "Brains!"

CHAPTER III.

A FEAST AND A COMBAT.

THROUGHOUT the long day, thralls worked at unloading the ship. Huge casks were carried to the storehouse of Svend the Bloody, and bundles of wares. The sailors and men-at-arms frolicked ashore. All made ready for the feast.

Inside the great house, Edvard Haakonsson was given an apartment of his own, where he refreshed himself after the voyage. And then he walked forth into the great hall again, to find Svend and Magnus and Rolf eating at the big board. He joined them, but he did not eat as they ate. Edvard, son of Haakon the Lover, had fastidious manners.

Svend eyed him for a time in silence, while Magnus grinned into his grease soaked beard. And finally the Bloody one saw fit to speak.

"Our customs and manners are different from yours, Edvard," he said. "It is proper that you dress and conduct yourself here as we of the Norse do."

"That is agreed," Edvard said.

"You should dress as a man-at-arms, and on your bare arm wear the bracelets of your rank. Such dress as you now wear is fit only for women."

"I can change to armor, kinsman!"

"Do so before the feast," Svend said. "We grow rough here at times when there is feasting."

"And you would do well to watch those about you," Magnus put in. "Some may entice you to combat, to try your strength."

Edvard turned to look full at him. "I shall be ready," he said.

Magnus grunted and returned to his eating. The fact that there would be a feast that night did not prevent him eating his fill now. Svend the Bloody put aside a picked bone and leaned back against the wall.

"It is well, Edvard, that you know something of the times here among the Norse," he said.

"I am eager to learn," Edvard declared. His manner was somewhat puzzling. He acted like a man who knew more than he betrayed. Svend frowned, but continued his speech.

"Olaf Trygvesson, our king, is a good man in many ways, yet peculiar," Svend said. "The Christians have won him over, and he would win the remainder of us from Odin and Thor. He is building him a city at Trondhjem, and he has commanded that all jarls await upon him there. We have been waiting but for your arrival before setting out.

"There may be grave trouble," Svend continued. "There are jarls who have adopted this new religion, hoping thus to get favor from Olaf. Harald the Just—may the curse of Odin be upon him!—is one such."

"And where lies his estate?" Edvard asked.

"Adjoining mine—that is to say but a night's march away," Svend replied. "We have been at warfare for countless moons. Our thralls fight when they meet in the woods. And here and there a dead warrior is found in the brush, with none to tell

the manner of his death. Between the establishment of Harald the Just and mine there can be naught but enmity! It is well that you, my kinsman, should know this thing."

"I shall remember it," Edvard replied.

"We go to Trondhjem to see Olaf, but we go prepared. I shall take men-at-arms with me, and thralls, and pitch a camp outside the city. Olaf is giving a fair. But his real intention is to urge us to peace. 'Twould not surprise me if it be a bloody fair. Olaf may turn against the gods and cling to this new cross, but, by the hammer of Thor, he cannot turn all the jarls with him! Only a few week-kneed ones, who curry favor at the foot of the throne! Olaf perchance will not live to see his beard grow gray. This is the year 998, as the new religionists count it from the birth of their Christ. For three years has Olaf reigned, and for two wears has he been building his city. He is constructing what he calls a church, for this new worship. 'Twould serve him better if he constructed means of defense."

Svend the Bloody spoke bitterly, but he was watching Edvard closely meanwhile. And this kinsman who had come out of the south did not betray anything but polite interest.

"To-night we feast. Then a rest, and then we go to Trondhjem," Svend declared. "We go to the fair—and what happens! Jarl, you are a man of proper years, yet you are not wed. Have you put eye on maiden?"

"Not to any purpose," Edvard replied.

"It were well you did so. The estates of your father are on the other side of mine, but years ago I combined them. It would be a difficult thing to separate them now. It is in my mind that we allow them to remain as they are, and at my death you shall be jarl over all. I have no son."

"The thought pleases me," Edvard said. "The estates are in good hands."

Svend smiled for the first time. "Then it is proper that you take a maid to wife," he continued. "Let not yourself be found in the years of age without male issue. There is in my household the maid for you. She is a distant kinswoman, Brynhild by name, a shield maiden."

"Brynhild!" Edvard said.

"A glorious woman, jarl! Big and strong. She can swim the fiord. She has slain a bear with her hands alone. She is tall and straight, with fair hair that hangs below her knees. She would bear you strong sons."

"But this woman perchance would not wish to wed me," Edvard said.

"Not wed a jarl? When she has nothing but good birth, no fortune of her own? Not wed you—if I commanded?"

"But perchance I would not wish to wed her," Edvard said again. "If my heart did not warm toward her—"

Svend the Bloody stopped him with a roar of anger. "Heart!" he cried. "You speak of this thing men call love? What has that to do with bringing forth sons? What you want is a woman of skill and strength, a worthy mother of jarls! No more of this now. You shall see her to-night as she sits among her maidens."

Edvard Haakonsson said nothing to that. He pretended to eat the meat before him. But his mind was working swiftly. He foresaw that he would have to handle this kinsman of his with velvet gloves. Svend the Bloody was a man used to having his own way and brooking interference from none.

He might have been enlightened had he glanced at Magnus at the moment, but he did not. For the brow of Magnus was black with wrath, and he darted venomous glances at both Edvard and Svend. Magnus long before had marked Brynhild, the shield maiden, for his own.

The remainder of the day passed without event and the dusk came. Out in the clearing great fires had been lighted. Inside the big hall torches were fastened to the walls, and things had been prepared for the feast.

Oxen, sheep, and swine had been roasted. Wine casks from the land to the south had been broached. Men-at-arms thronged the big hall, and thralls scurried here and there attending to their labors. Hounds barked and snarled and fought.

Edvard Haakonsson came from his own

apartment dressed as befitted the country. He looked more the Norse now, save for his dark hair and skin. He took his place at the table beside Svend, with Magnus on the other side of him. Rolf sat at Svend's other elbow, as was his right.

Never had Edvard seen such a feast as this! Huge chunks of meat were devoured, wine was guzzled. Intoxicated men grew rough in speech and manner. Thralls were cuffed, dogs kicked.

The shield maidens had a table of their own, and Brynhild sat at the head of it. Edvard had looked upon her. She was tall and strong and fair, yet the fact that she was a shield maiden did not prevent her being woman also. Perhaps Svend had whispered certain things to her. The space between her and Edvard Haakonsson was clear, and she looked continually across it.

"There is a maiden for you," Svend whispered. "Mark her well, kinsman. Wed her, and have her bring forth sons. Then, when I am gone, you shall inherit from me also."

"If he outlives you," Magnus snarled.

"I grow old, and Edvard has youth in his veins," said Svend.

"Yet youth has been slain."

"Brynhild will make him a fair wife. See how she looks at the youth even now."

Magnus saw, and growled low down in his throat. Brynhild was not the one to pass by a jarl and accept a jarl's lieutenant. Her eyes burned with ambition more than love. In her heart she despised the black jarl for his small stature, yet she gladly would wed with him.

The feast went on. Warriors were teasing the shield maidens now, and scuffling with them. Shrieks of merriment rang out in the great hall. Dogs fought at the sides of the tables, and thralls scrambled with them for bits of food.

Svend the Bloody lurched to his feet, a huge wine goblet in his hand.

"Drink!" he cried out above the din. "Drink the silent toast!"

Instantly all was still. Not a man or woman there but knew what he meant. And so the toast was drunk, and the names of Odin and Thor came in whispers from lips.

Svend sat down again, half a smile upon his lips. "Olaf may be a great man, but he cannot change every heart," he muttered. "We march to Trondhjem before the sun twice more has sunk beneath the western sea! And before we return perhaps we shall know more of the might of Thor!"

Men and women were leaving the tables now and wandering about the great hall. One by one the shield maidens stopped before the dais and bowed before Svend the Bloody. Brynhild was the last.

She moved deliberately before him, and once more her eyes sought the face of Edvard Haakonsson. And then she would have walked on, but Svend raised a hand and stopped her.

"Fairest of the shield maidens!" he proclaimed. "Our kinsman would greet you!"

Edvard got slowly to his feet. Svend had said it, and Svend was to be obeyed. He, too was a jarl, but Svend the head of the family by weight of years.

Down from the dais Edvard stepped, and went forward. Brynhild bowed low before him, though in her status of shield maiden she was not compelled so to do. By this added courtesy she showed the state of her mind, and big Magnus growled again into his beard.

And now Edvard, son of Haakon the Lover, did a peculiar thing. He reached forward and took one of Brynhild's hands in his own. He lifted it slowly, while men and women wondered, and gently he bent his head and kissed the shield maiden's hand.

There was a murmur of surprise, delight, horror. Brynhild flushed with pleasure. Edvard Haakonsson stepped back, and again he bowed, and then he spoke.

"Greeting!" he said. "My uncle has wonderful maids about him!"

That was all. He went back to the dais and his seat. The shield maiden walked on.

"Is she not a proper maid?" Svend asked, when Edvard had regained his seat.

"All are proper maids," Edvard replied.

Magnus leaned toward him. In his heart was hatred, but he knew that he must conduct himself carefully. This man was kinsman of Svend, and so was entitled to some consideration. Yet not even Svend could

prohibit the outcome of a quarrel. This was Norseland, where all men, be they jarls or thralls, stood by themselves.

"She is a wonderful maid," Magnus said in his beard. "She could pick you up, black jarl, and toss you over her shoulder."

"Possibly," Edvard said.

"When she weds, it should be to a man of might. By the hammer of Thor, she is for no weakling!"

All those at the table heard the words. Svend's face grew black, but he said nothing. Edvard turned his head and regarded Magnus as he might have a curiosity.

"Do I understand you to mean that I am a weakling?" he asked.

"You have not the size of a warrior, scarce!" Magnus sneered.

"Nor the strength?"

"Nor the strength!" said Magnus.

"Men have made mistakes before tonight," Edvard observed.

Magnus lurched toward him, and again he snarled. "Jarl," he said, "you have not your father's great body, and I doubt your strength. You have inherited more from your mother, a woman of that land to the south where women—"

"My mother is not to be mentioned by your lips!" Edvard warned.

"What is this? A man may not mention a woman? Are women, then, gods to be treated so?"

"They are to be treated with love and respect," Edvard said.

"Love? Respect for women? Jarl, your body speaks for itself. I doubt your strength. And now, after your words, I doubt the quality of your brain. Has your head been touched and weakened by the southern sun?"

Edvard faced him squarely. "Do you, by any chance, doubt my courage also?" he asked.

There was a moment of silence. Every eye in the great hall was upon those on the dais. Edvard, son of Haakon the Lover, had put the question, and Magnus could do naught but answer. An expression of glee came into the face of Magnus. Whatever happened after this, Svend the Bloody could not hold him to account. A man of rank had the right to protect his honor.

"Yes, jarl, I doubt your courage, also!" Magnus said.

Rolf, the shipmaster, gave an exclamation of surprise. Svend swore roundly. Edvard Haakonsson got slowly to his feet. A wine goblet was in his hand. A moment he hesitated, and then he flung the dregs of the wine into Magnus's face.

The uproar came instantly. Men sprang back against the walls. Shield maidens hurried aside, their eyes glowing. Thralls scattered out of the way.

Magnus roared like an angry bull as he wiped the wine from his eyes. He glanced once at Svend, who gave no sign. This thing was between men, and Svend could not take a hand in favoring one or the other. His new-found kinsman, he supposed, would soon be new-lost. In such event, the estates—

"We fight!" Magnus cried.

He sprang down from the dais and waited. Edvard wiped the wine from his hands carefully. He was not smiling now. His face was grim. He walked down to the level of the earth floor, and stood there with his hands at his sides.

"You are my uncle's valued man," Edvard said. "In such case, I have no wish to harm you."

"To harm me?" Magnus shrieked. "You shall die, jarl, by my hands!"

"Nor have I any wish to die at the moment," Edvard told him.

Svend towered to his feet. "What mean those words?" he cried. "Do you, of the blood of Haakon, my brother, turn from the face of a foe?"

"I turn from no man," Edvard replied. "It is but a test of strength and courage this man of yours demands, and I am willing to grant him that. It is not necessary that we fight each other with death-dealing weapons."

"Then what would you?"

"I can throw him!"

Another moment of silence, and then a roar of laughter, in which even the shield maidens joined.

"Throw him?" Svend shouted.

"Throw me?" Magnus shrieked. "I can crush your ribs with my arms. Far better you try the ax or javelin."

"I have chosen," Edvard replied. "The right is mine. The first insult came from you."

"You would wrestle me? In armor?"

"As we now stand."

Magnus scarcely could conceal his delight. This man would be a baby in his arms. He would crush the ribs of the black jarl, and toss him aside to die. Then he would claim the fair Brynhild for his own.

"Make your peace with the gods!" Magnus cried.

Then he rushed. But Edvard Haakonsson merely stepped aside and let him charge by. Magnus turned, growling his curses, and once more he rushed. And this time Edvard Haakonsson did not seek to evade him.

They clashed, their arms entwined, their legs mingled. There was a moment of quiet straining. And then the great body of Magnus whirled swiftly to one side, and he crashed to the ground. Edvard stood over him, hands against hips, breathing no heavier at all.

Silence for the space of a heartbeat, and then shouts of surprise. Magnus struggled to his feet, his face purple with wrath.

"It was a trick!" he roared. "I slipped in wine—"

Once more he rushed. His rage now was a terrible thing. That the black jarl had thrown him once was bad enough. And deep down in his heart Magnus knew that it had been no accident. The black jarl had a method of wrestling that was new.

Once more they clashed, and again there came that moment of silent straining. And then the body of Magnus was whirled aside again to crash against the floor.

Cheers rang up against the beams of the thatch. Svend the Bloody roared his laughter.

"Enough!" he cried. "Edvard, son of Haakon the Lover, you have methods of which we know nothing."

"A trick!" Magnus shouted again, but they laughed him down.

Rolf, the shipmaster, leaned toward the man at his side. "The black jarl has many such tricks," he whispered.

Edvard Haakonsson had stepped back, and again placed his hands lightly against his thighs. He was laughing lightly. Magnus lurched toward him.

"There are things besides wrestling," he said. "Some day we may clash again, and with weapons."

"When the day comes, you will find me waiting," Edvard said.

Magnus turned away, shouting for wine. His face was still purple with wrath. Men were laughing at him behind his back, he knew. Even the maidens had witnessed his downfall—and Brynhild with them!

Edvard walked aside. For a space he leaned against one of the walls, watching the scene. Men and women walked before him, eyed him. His status had changed somewhat, but still they doubted his quality. Brynhild stopped beside him.

"You are strong, jarl," she said, softly. "Magnus was right. It was but a clever trick."

"But it served," she said. "I am glad that I have found favor in your eyes. Your kiss still burns my hand."

Edvard looked at her quickly, laughed nervously.

"'Twas nothing," he said.

"Such a kiss nothing, before guests and thralls?" she said. "By it you elevated me to your station, jarl. I am your bride when you wish to claim me!"

"But I meant nothing by it," he explained. "In the land from which I come, it is but proper courtesy to greet a woman so."

She raised her head quickly, and her eyes flashed as she regarded him.

"Then I am no more to you than any one of the other maidens?" she asked.

"How could that be, since I saw none of you until to-day?" he replied.

"You do not want me, then?"

Edvard shook his head. "I am sorry!" he said. "I would be your friend—"

"There can be no friendship between us, jarl, after this!"

A moment she looked at him, and then she turned her back upon him and walked rapidly away. Edvard Haakonsson had made another enemy, and a vindictive one. For Brynhild sought out Magnus, and whispered in his ear.

"Kill me this black jarl when you have

the opportunity," she said, hotly. "And then ask Svend the Bloody for my hand. It will be waiting to clasp yours!"

CHAPTER IV.

AT TRONDHJEM.

BECAUSE of circumstances, Svend the Bloody did not hesitate in leaving Rolf, the shipmaster, in charge of the estate, with only the ship's crew and a handful of thralls as guards. For King Olaf had commanded all the jarls to appear before him at Trondhjem; hence none would be prowling through the forests with men at arms behind him, ready to fall upon the unprotected domain of a foe.

Two days after the arrival of Edvard, Svend the Bloody gave the word and the start was made. Svend, having some knowledge of the situation, journeyed as became a jarl of wealth and fame, the better to make an impression upon King Olaf and upon certain other jarls who might be close to the throne.

None knew better than Svend the Bloody that King Olaf had turned Christian, and some of his jarls and their households with him, and that Olaf was seeking to convert others. Yet there were stolid jarls like Svend, who clung to the gods of their fathers and turned against the cross. And this was to be their last stand at Trondhjem before the king. Either they won permission to worship as pleased them, or bloody war would follow.

Svend the Bloody led his host from the clearing and took up the trail through the woods. At his side rode Magnus, and at his other side Edvard. Behind them came men at arms, mounted and on foot, swordsmen and archers and spearmen. And then the armies of thralls, tugging with the oxen at carts that bore Svend's tents and booths, presents, weapons, foodstuffs.

They made a brave company as they won their way slowly through the woods, those in the fore sitting their horses regally, their armor glistening where the sun struggled through the tree tops, their huge swords clanking, their shields swinging, each man with a battle ax at his saddle bow.

Throughout the day they marched, and when the dusk came they camped beside a tumbling stream, pitched a few of the tents, cooked and ate and rested. Edvard Haakonsson, as became his rank, had a tent of his own, and Eric the Dumb to serve him. The choice had been a natural one, for Eric the Dumb had managed to be close at hand when the black jarl had wanted a thrall.

In Svend's pavilion that night there was a whispered conversation between himself and Magnus, while a sentry stood before the opening and another at the rear. Magnus the sly was not the one to overlook such a chance.

"It is in my mind, jarl," he said, "that it might be an ill thing to allow this Edvard to see the king."

"How so?" Svend demanded.

"Know you not the story of Olaf Trygvesson? He came of the race of Harald the Fair-Haired. Did not his mother carry him to Russia to escape the murder decree of the wicked Gunhild? Were they not captured by pirate vikings and sold as slaves?"

"But what has that to do with this affair?"

"In Russia he was well trained for kingship after his identity was discovered. Then he journeyed to foreign lands, to the one they call Greece, and there went through that mysterious rite that the Christians call baptism. That softened him, and because he had been a slave he felt pity for the lot of slaves."

"Still I do not see—"

"He also visited the land of the Gauls, and Normandy, and Scotland. He raided Britain. The mild winds of the southern countries softened him. And this Edvard is new come from there. King Olaf, once he meets him, will observe him well, talk with him, perhaps make him a favorite.

"By Odin!" Svend swore.

"He may whisper into the king's ear, jarl, that he would like an accounting of his father's estate."

"By the hammer of Thor! If he did that—"

"I see that you understand my meaning," Magnus said. "It would have been a

good thing if you had left this black jarl behind to guard the estate."

"But he has come with us," Svend replied. "And how am I to prevent him seeing Olaf? It is his right."

"Being a stranger, perhaps that task will be an easy one," Magnus answered. "Tell him that there may be trouble between the followers of the gods and the Christian jarls. Say that you must go to the king, since he has commanded, and that you leave this Edvard at the camp, in command in case of a surprise."

"By Thor! That is a rare idea!"

"I have a rarer one—to split the head of this black jarl some night while he sleeps!"

"Why not come face to face with him?" Svend asked.

"Give me but the chance!"

"It will not do. After all, he is my brother's son. I may have need of him. But I do not trust him yet. Therefore, say nothing to him regarding our policies."

"Do not fear I shall exchange words with him unless it must be done," Magnus said.

"However, it will be well to keep him from Olaf. I thank you for the thought."

"It was freely given," Magnus replied.

"I must face Harald the Just at Trondhjem, I suppose," Svend said. "Each time I face him, it is in my mind to lay open his brains with an ax. Thoughts of him disturb my sleep and bother my days."

Svend the Bloody sought his furs, and Magnus left the tent to go to his own.

In the morning the gay company moved forward again, and late that afternoon they came to the vicinity of Trondhjem. Svend was one of the last of the jarls to arrive for the fair. He growled angrily as he ordered his men to pitch the camp. He did not like King Olaf, and little cared he whether men knew it.

Svend had selected a good place for the camp, on the bank of the fiord and at the edge of the woods, close beside the road that ran into the town. Here was water and fuel, and a place easy to defend. Tents were pitched and pavilions erected. Fires were started, meat was roasted. Other jarls encamped in the neighborhood sent men with greetings, and Svend returned them.

They slept, and were up with the sun. Already the road was a trail of dust clouds as horsemen and footmen hurried toward the town. Jarls rode by with their guards, shield maidens smiled when they saw Svend's camp, thralls trotted beside the horses.

Svend the Bloody ordered out his men and had the horses made ready. Magnus stood to one side talking to two of his warriors. Edvard Haakonsson came from his tent, dressed in his armor, the bracelets of rank upon his bare arms.

"Kinsman!" Svend's loud voice called to him.

"Jarl?"

"It is my wish that you remain in the camp for the day," Svend said.

"Remain in the camp?" Edvard gasped. "When there is a fair and a king to be seen? When there are ladies—"

"It is a matter of urgency," Svend declared. "In these times, it would be unwise for me to venture into the town without ample men at my back. It would be unwise, also, to leave this camp without leaving some man of proper authority in command. I do not want some Christian jarl to lay waste my goods."

"I would make but a poor commander" Edvard said.

"It is my wish, jarl!"

Edvard's eyes flashed at the tone. For a moment he looked straight at Svend the Bloody.

"It is in my mind," Edvard said, "that it is my right to go to the town."

"Is there to be dissension between us?"

"Not unless it is of your foolish making, uncle! I am a jarl, the son of a jarl! It is my right to face the king! You have warriors fit to command the camp. What of this Magnus?"

"I—I wish him to go with me," Svend said.

"If he were here, I might go?"

"But he will not be here," said Svend. "If at least two of his lieutenants were here you might go. But I need my men-at-arms beside me. Your word, jarl! Your word that you will neither walk nor ride to the fair."

Again there was silence for a moment, and the black jarl seemed puzzled. But

presently he raised his head, and his eyes were twinkling.

"So be it!" he said. "My honored word that I will neither walk nor ride to the fair."

"And that you will not leave the camp!"

"And that I will not leave the camp, save if two of your lieutenants are here to command it."

Svend the Bloody said nothing more. He swung into his saddle and raised his hand. The others mounted after him. The thralls buckled their belts and prepared to run beside the horses. Magnus turned quickly to the two warriors with whom he had been talking.

"You understand?" he whispered. "Start with us, but drop out along the way. Return to the camp, and pick a quarrel with him. And then slay! He must be dead before we return. Make up what story you will, and Svend will not punish. Your tale will stand. There will be none but thralls to see."

Then Magnus mounted and cantered after the jarl.

Down the dusty road they went, headed for the town. Edvard watched until a bend in the highway sheltered them from his view. He turned back and sat down before his tent, and looked over the camp.

Half a score of thralls were going about their duties. Eric the Dumb was but a short distance away, watching the black jarl and waiting to be called. The light of adoration was in his eyes. Eric was slow of wit, but this man caused things to struggle through the mazes of his memory. This man had been in the country Eric had once called home!

The sun rose higher in the heavens. Edvard Haakonsson got up and entered his tent. The manner of Svend had puzzled him, and he was not a fool. He had given his word, and he would keep it, but he wondered why it had been asked.

Presently he heard horsemen in the camp, and went to the door of his tent again. Two warriors were dismounting, two of Magnus's trusted men. Were they to remain in the camp, Edvard might go to the fair and still keep his oath—providing he did not walk or ride!

He knew them both by sight, but not by name. Giants they were, and no doubt great soldiers. They stretched their shoulders, and threw out their chests and advanced toward him. A few paces away they stopped and spoke to each other, yet the words were for him to hear.

"When a man's body is small, so is his courage!"

"When a man apes the manners of women, he has the heart of one!"

"The fairer the hair, the fairer the honor," said the first. "A man with black hair is not to be trusted."

"It may mean something amiss in his ancestry," the second declared.

Edvard Haakonsson had smiled at the first two remarks, scowled at the third, and had become enraged at the fourth. He hurled himself forward and confronted them, his eyes blazing, his hot southern blood uppermost for the moment.

"You speak of me?" he demanded.

One sneered at him. "If the jarl so wishes to take it," he said.

"Do I understand that you question my courage, my honor, and possibly that of my parents?"

"The day is too hot for a man to repeat his words," said the second.

Edvard Haakonsson took a step backward and looked at them searchingly.

"You are of the company of Magnus," he accused. "Why has he sent you? Is he afraid to come himself?"

"What has this to do with Magnus?"

"Do you think that I am blind" Edvard demanded. "So it is a game, is it? A craven game! Yet two men against one is a compliment. Which of you desires to cross swords with me first?"

"The little jarl would fight," sneered the first.

Edvard whipped out his sword and lifted up his shield from before the tent.

"If a moment more passes, I term you coward!" he said.

With a roar of rage the man nearest drew his blade and darted forward. He was no mean swordsman. The second laughed at the ease of it. Yet he drew his blade, too, and stood ready, in case some accident happened.

The thralls crowded near, but not too near. Eric the Dumb crouched before the tent, making little sounds in his throat. The son of Haakon the Lover advanced.

The blades touched, and then the Norseman found a game he never had seen before. For the black jarl did not fight in the usual manner. He did not waste his strength in the weight of a downward stroke. He fenced. He darted from side to side, and his blade bit into mail. His opponent made great slashes that cut nothing but the empty air.

And Edvard Haakonsson was fighting like a man who intends to avenge an insult. There was deadly intent in his manner. The big Norseman gave ground again and again. He had strength remaining, but no skill to match the skill of the black jarl.

Again he whirled, and he grunted a word to his companion. Into the fray leaped the other man, so that Edvard was compelled to face them both.

"So!" he cried. "Assassination! A part of a foul plot! You came back to taunt me —and kill me! But the end is not yet!"

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

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MYSTERY

ONE by one my friends depart
Through a secret door;
I have seen so many start,
To return no more.
Where the kings and prophets went,
Thither they have gone.
Have they found a rich content
As they journeyed on?

One by one, with solemn tread,
Leaving me behind,
Friends have joined the quiet dead,
Whilst I, dumb and blind,
Wondered, pondered all in vain
Where they traveled far.
Did they wander in the rain
Till they found a star?

If they only could come back
For one little hour,
Smiling from the lonely track,
Noiseless as a flower!
I will come when I am dead,
(Knowing, love, your need);
Ah! how many this have said—
Said it oft indeed.

Silence! and the aching night;
Nothing through the dark.
Ghostly moths at candlelight
Blundering near the spark.
Emptiness, when but one word
Would have meant so much.
(What was that which strangely stirred?
Did I feel a touch?)

Charles Hanson Towne.

Red for a Million

By MAXWELL SMITH

Author of "The Hole in the Frame," "Zero Love," etc.

A NOVELETTE—COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

SALLIN smiled cheerfully at Viola. The word had just come to him. The promise of action was to his liking. Risky action, but lucrative. He contemplated it with the pleasure of the artist. For he was an artist in his own particular bent.

"We move to Norford, Vi," he said.

"Yes!" Her interest, too, quickened. Viola was his first lieutenant and his reputed wife. She understood the significance of moving to Norford. They had been waiting a long time to do that—for circumstances to adjust themselves and make the effort profitable.

"You mean that we can get the house you spotted?" she asked.

Sallin nodded. "It's being bought for us now." He looked out from their suite in the Commodore over the ragged scar of the subway excavation bordering blightingly on Pershing Square. That he should be looking upon that hole in the ground when the day arrived for him to go ahead on the Norford prospect seemed to be a favorable omen. His smile maintained and his eyes glinted. He reviewed the scheme for the execution of which he had waited so patiently.

"That's a hunch, Vi," he remarked.

She moved to the window beside him and laughed. "Let's hope," she said. "It's high time we put something over, Floyd. Since that Michigan affair—" She paused in thoughtful silence.

The Michigan affair had been bungled. It had cost Sallin two men—one shot dead in the get-away, another wounded and captured. It had come near to costing Sallin his liberty, and for many months had

caused him to lead an unobtrusive and unproductive existence.

Sallin drew her onto his knees. She snuggled her head against his.

"The angels are with us," Vi," he smiled. "I was getting ready to go after something—anything. The mob have been getting fidgety. Duke Taylor and Mint Odell are talking about cutting loose. Think I'm losing my grip, I guess. We can hold 'em with this Norford job cropping up at just the right moment."

"When we get away with this, Floyd"—her subdued blue eyes narrowed on him—"we'll be set up so we won't have to worry? We'll be able to quit?"

Coaxingly she moved her head from side to side against his, as she had a trick of doing, her mass of dark hair rubbing his graying thatch.

"If everything works out right—yes," he answered.

"You're going at it the way you doped?"

"With only one change that I see now." His eyes were laughing as they turned to hers. "We're going to make you over, Vi, before we hit Norford."

"Make me over? Why? I thought we were to stay quiet while we're there?"

"We will," he agreed, "but we won't be such hermits as we figured. Conditions have changed since we spotted that place two years ago. There's a little neighbor you'll have to cultivate. A girl called Bessie in the house next to ours."

"Why?" she asked again.

"Because one Frank Denton is sweet on Bessie," returned Sallin. "And Frank Denton is cashier of the Bank of Norford."

"Oh!" Viola got his drift.

"Besides," he added, "it's better to give them plenty of description to work on. They won't see me, but they will you. So," he grinned, "we'll let them have something brilliant to remember: we'll make you a red-head!"

Sallin did not think that he was calling upon her to assume too much of the risk. Neither did Viola consider that he was doing so. It was necessary that one of them should be visible to their neighbors. There had to be some contact.

A man cannot alter his appearance as easily as can a woman. About all he can do is let the hair grow on his face, or shave if it already is there. He has not at his command the many artifices that a woman may use: the expert application of cosmetics; the artful changing of the style of dressing her hair, and of its color; the introduction of a "birthmark," manufactured in a beauty parlor and easily removable when you tire of it; differently fashioned clothing and millinery; the addition, innocent appearing enough, of a veil or furs which can conceal half her features.

In half an hour a woman may change her appearance radically. Though he shaves a beard or grows one, a man must continue to expose distinctive features that cannot be changed—ears, nose, and eyes; the shape of his face, round, oval, or long. He cannot, without being conspicuous, heighten his complexion or reduce it; he cannot fix his hair so that the contour of his face is made different; nor can he achieve the deceiving result given by the substitution of a wide floppy hat for a toque.

Neither to Sallin nor the woman, therefore, did it seem that an unreasonable burden was being placed upon her. They divided the chances always. If it fell now to her to hold the spotlight—as much of the spotlight as they could not evade—that was entirely fair. The likelihood of success must be vastly diminished if, when they fled, a description of Sallin could be flashed over the country.

Viola accepted her rôle, then, without demur.

"I never have been a red-head, have I?" she laughed. They had a way, these two, of going light-heartedly into a dangerous proposition. "I'll have a strawberry mark on the left cheek, I guess, to match the carrots!"

"And tone up your complexion," he suggested further. "You want a fair skin, don't you, to go with red hair? Make yourself genteelly bright without being noisy. You know. Remember that you've just suffered a great shock—that tragedy is with us in the person of dear Floyd!"

"Leave it to me," she declared. "I'll make the picture. When do we start?"

"How long do you need to change your

spots?" he chuckled. "You can't do it overnight?"

She shook her head. "That 'll take a few days." She loosened her hair and let it tumble over her shoulders. "Being dark, I'll have to blond it some to make the henna take. Three or four days and I'll have it blazing. That's what, isn't it—a regular flaming top?"

"Yes. The wilder the better, so long as it looks natural." Sallin glanced at his watch. "Suppose you begin at once? Get the blondine and the red stuff, and whatever else you need, and begin making over while I talk with Heusler. I've sent for him. He'll be here in fifteen minutes or so."

Viola gave a final caressing rub of her head on his and got up from his knees.

"Sam is cast for the doctor?" she queried while she piled her hair back on her head.

"Uh-huh." Having given her her instructions, Sallin desired to devote the time until the arrival of Heusler to a review of his scheme.

Viola had expressed his own hope when she had inquired whether this effort might not make possible their retirement. Sallin figured that he had been taking chances long enough. He was due to put across a really big job and quit. His luck could not hold out forever.

The bungling of the robbery in Michigan, to which Viola had referred, had made him pause. He had wondered then if his luck was not overstrained. Superstitious, he had read in that failure a warning, because for years he had directed his mob with unvarying success.

With the patience that had ever characterized his operations, he had waited till the auspices should be favorable to tackling one of the bigger prospects on his list.

This Norford job he had schemed out minutely long ago. The elements in it were right. The engineering was well thought out in detail. All that had been lacking was the house that he had chosen while looking over the ground. That house now was available. The rest depended upon the degree of adroitness with which his plans were carried out.

Gazing across Forty-Second Street, Sallin noted again with satisfaction the excavation that was an eyesore. He did not find it such. To him it represented a hunch.

On her way out Viola paused. "How much will we draw out of it, Floyd?"

Sallin glanced at her dreamily. Then for a moment his lips tightened and his face hardened. He relaxed and, leaning back with his hands on the arms of the chair, he resumed his dreaming.

"A million!" he said softly. "A million sure, Vi—and maybe more!"

With a quick step she was beside him. Her head bent to touch his.

"A million!" she whispered with a long breath. She gripped his arm. Her dull blue eyes took on a sparkle. "The biggest yet, Floyd! We've got to put it over!"

"You bet we will!" He laughed quietly, confidently. "Just as soon as you become a red-head!"

II.

SAM HEUSLER was the man who acted between Sallin and certain other members of his organization. As the directing genius, Sallin took the precaution of remaining an invisible quantity to the lesser lights of his mob, to those who could execute daringly enough when told exactly what to do, but who had not the initiative or the ability to devise. It was advisable that he, as the "master mind," should be known only to his most trusted lieutenants.

In this case it happened that in the actual operation of taking a million dollars or more from the Bank of Norford he required the services only of Heusler and two others. These were Duke Taylor and Mint Odell, in whom he also had implicit confidence.

Aside from the actual operation, however, in the preliminaries he had need of several others, and these were of the type to whom he preferred to be unknown. Their mission would be among the people of Norford, among the extensive population of foreign-born mill workers.

Heusler looked big and clumsy in comparison with Sallin's slight figure. His round, stolid face was the opposite of Sallin's keen, lively expression which even in repose reflected the powerful, active, shrewd mind.

Usually Heusler served only as a scout, ranging the country to pick out prospects. The Norford Bank was one of his discoveries. He had reported it to Sallin as a straight job. Sallin, checking up on it to confirm the judgment of his scout, had seen the greater possibilities. Therein lay his genius—the faculty of looking deep and evolving a plan that should take advantage of everything that offered.

The undertaking upon which he was now embarking was to be the materialization of Sallin's dream. In the town of Norford he had perceived the essential conditions for the realization of his pet project, the ambition which he had nursed and pondered over eternally—to snatch a million dollars in a single haul. It was not exclusively applicable to this one town. Norford was to be honored merely because it was first to present the opportunity. The field had to be just right for the attempt. Norford satisfied in that particular because of its many foreign-born.

But the taking of a million dollars from a bank is something to be gone about circumspectly. There could be nothing precipitate. For that reason Sallin had been content to bide his time.

Especially there was the matter of his own location in the town. That had to come about naturally. Anxiety to get into a certain house might well excite suspicion. There must be no suspicion. For if he was to get the million he had to have time to bring it within reach!

Banks outside of the great cities do not carry anything like a million in cash; even in the great cities few do. In a place the size of Norford, with about forty thousand people, an institution such as Sallin was aiming at would have nothing approaching a million. A hundred thousand, or up to twice that sum, would be a liberal sum, except in an emergency, for a bank carrying the deposits of the Bank of Norford. Cash lying in a vault earns nothing.

Sallin, consequently, purposed placing the million in the Bank of Norford before taking it out. That is, he would be instrumental in placing it there.

Because this was to be his grand slam he was keeping the number of participants as scant as possible. That was why Sam Heusler was given an active part.

"You can get away with it, Sam," said Sallin. "You'll motor out from New York each day. That's all. Motor out and look as much like a doctor as you can."

Heusler murmured acquiescence. Personally he would rather have stayed out of sight. Had this not been scheduled as the great coup, he would have demurred. But he understood that if it were successful the reward would be adequate. And, as Sallin pointed out, the fewer that were in on it, the bigger would be the split.

"I'll take Taylor and Odell with me," said Sallin. "They can spin a nickel to decide which will be my valet and which the handy man round the house. Viola, of course, will be along. Just five of us."

"How about the outside men?" questioned Heusler. "Don't they—"

"That's where you have to watch your step," interrupted Sallin. "They're not to know what's coming off. Their job is to mingle with the people, the foreign element, get acquainted, and follow orders. Who are you going to get? Two or three will be enough. We'll give 'em a thousand apiece."

Heusler rolled a cigar between his soft fat hands. His rounded face wrinkled.

"I was thinking of Fiorella and De Real," he said. "They ought to be able to work their way into the foreigners. De Real has been in Russia. He's been mixing with a Bolshevik bunch in New York. That 'll give him an introduction. Fiorella can run loose among the Italians. Mostly Slovaks and wops in Norford, you know."

"They'll do," said Sallin. "Who else?"

"There's another Bolshevik called Kolinsky we could get. He'd be tickled at the chance it would give him. He could go round bragging afterward on how he helped smash one little flock of capitalists."

"That's the idea," approved Sallin. "If it looks like Bolshevist stuff that 'll keep it far away from us. There isn't any way it can connect with us, anyhow, unless you let slip something to these birds, but we can't be too much on the safe side. Have it look like Bolshevist stuff," he repeated, "and we'll be in good shape. We'll give them enough for expenses and on the face of

things they can plead that they are organizers for the radical crowd if they get into trouble. Worst that can happen to them then will be to get chased out of town as undesirables.

Thoughtfully, Sam Heusler stroked his plump cheek. His gaze ranged over his own considerable bulk. He was wondering how much he would have to appear in public.

"How long's it going to take?" he asked.

"Less than a month," said Sallin. "We may get through within two weeks. You'll send Fiorella and De Real and our other Bolshevik friend over to Norford at once. They'll need time to get proper standing. Don't tell them what their real purpose is until I give the word. That 'll be when we're ready for the smash."

"I won't," said Heusler. "But—how soon do we go there?"

"About a week." Sallin grinned. "We have to wait on Viola. She's out now getting the dope to make herself a red-head for a million!"

That night Viola applied herself to an intensive campaign with peroxide. After that came the plastering of her hair with a paste made from henna leaves as the Egyptian and Persian woman does to achieve the rich luster for which they are famed. And to hasten the process she held her head over a kettle steaming on an electric grill in her room while Sallin stood by and marveled at the transformation.

III.

NORFORD is what is known as a model town. While most of its population are mill workers it presents none of the blight of crowded tenements. They are a prosperous people; and were so even before the war brought them increased opportunity to labor at high waegs.

Their prosperity and the wise fatherliness of the authorities and the employers is evidenced by the almost unbroken residential aspect of the town. It is a place of green lawns and trees with ample space surrounding the homes, few of which contain more than two families. The mills lie off to one side, the erection of dwellings having trended away from rather than around them, to maintain the desired model atmosphere. With this development the business and shopping street came to be a pleasant tree-lined thoroughfare of modern buildings in keeping with the general plan and reaching well into the heart of the better residential neighborhood.

The house into which Sallin and Viola moved was only one street from the business artery. It was a neat two-storied structure set, like most of the homes in this district, in the center of two wide lots.

Its prime desirability, essentiality, from Sallin's point of view, lay in the fact that directly through the block from it was the Bank of Norford. It was for this that he had waited so long—to get the house that was in the proper relationship to the bank building for his purpose.

The street on which he located was peopled by business and professional folk. The arrival of the new household would thus have passed by with no more than the polite scrutiny that is given a newcomer, had it not been for the remarkable appearance of Sallin. That was sufficient to create curiosity among the most uninquisitive.

In the quiet of a summer afternoon, a limousine drew up with Sallin and Viola and Mint Odell, who had been lucky enough to draw the post of valet.

For a couple of days previously furniture had been going into the house. Duke Taylor accompanied it. A pardonable interest therefore had been aroused and on verandas round about the womenkind were seated to obtain an initial glimpse at their latest neighbors. The glimpse turned quickly into a frank and concerted stare.

Viola stepped first from the machine. She guided Sallin as he alighted—for Sallin could not see. His whole face was covered with bandages—also his hands! He moved with the groping step of a man recently deprived of vision; his head tilted upward pathetically as though by straining he would see; his hands outstretched fearfully, with an apparent dread that they might encounter an obstacle.

With Viola on one side and Odell on the other Sallin stepped gingerly up the walk to the house. The strange procession was

almost inside before the whispering observers, now patently curious, noticed another item of distinction: Viola's blazing red hair showing beneath her small, modish hat.

But for the spectacle of Sallin, Viola's hair must surely have been instantly the center of focus. It was a glory triumphant in the sunshine, compelling in its fieriness, and dazzling. She had indeed reached the peak of magnificence in carrying out Sallin's wish. She had attained a shade that was brilliant yet alluring in its burnished tone, that held the eye and made the beholder marvel, but did not offend.

It crowned her with a splendor at once ravishing and baffling. Which was admirably the effect she sought since the vividness of her hair distracted the gaze from her features and seemed to make them generally indistinct. Her eyes, for instance, of a pale blue that never was striking, now appeared to be of a complex tint and quite negligible; they would not impress themselves upon any one so that that person could report positively their color. Her mellowed skin, too, took from her violent hair a deceiving depth of luster; her brows, untouched and dark, mirrored a redness that was not really in them.

Viola had worked to perfection in reconstructing herself for this adventure. In her tender solicitude for Sallin, likewise, she was well schooled. Those who watched them enter the house on their arrival could not but observe the gentleness with which she aided his faltering feet up the steps; nor the sweet gesture with which she placed an arm about him as they went indoors.

Had they been permitted to look through the walls these good people certainly would have been more amazed than they were by the sorrowful picture of Sallin already given them.

No sooner was he inside than he started to emit muffled words through the bandages which covered even his mouth. His white-swathed hands wagged peremptorily for relief.

Laughing, Viola headed him upstairs. "Run and see that the shades are drawn," she instructed Odell.

As he went on she stopped Sallin on the stair landing. No one could see them there. With rapid fingers she undid a few pins in the bandages at the back of his head and the whole came away.

"Good Lord!" Sallin grinned wryly and mopped his face with his still enshrouded hands. "Whew! Believe me, Viola, it's hot inside that blanket. Why the devil couldn't we get a chance to pull this job in the middle of winter."

Viola pulled off her hat and placed her head against his in her favorite caress.

"I get the best of this, Floyd," she said gayly. "Being a red head is easy compared with being embalmed! But, say—you sure did give this countryside something to chatter over. I got a flash at some of them on their porches out of the corner of my eye and they were hanging over the rails, gaping."

Sallin joined her laughter. "Then they'll have to look their fill mighty quick, Vi," he asserted, "because we're going to cut our stay as short as possible. You'll find me smothered to death one time if I have to wear that trapping too steadily. Here"—he extended his hands—"get these nuisances off, too, and let me feel human again."

She unmuffled his fingers and they went on upstairs to the room where Odell had pulled the shades.

Odell grinned. "You're some freak in that get-up, chief," he remarked. "How's it feel to be all burned up?"

"Try being embalmed, as Vi calls it, for a few hours in this weather and you'll know," returned Sallin good naturedly. "Hello, Duke," he greeted his other aide, who appeared in the doorway. "How's everything?"

Duke Taylor didn't look any too cheerful.

"Soft for Mint," he declared, "picking the easy stunt. Say, chief," anxiously, "I don't really have to do *anything* that's regular work?"

"You're the cook and general houseman, Duke," smiled Sallin.

"You'll make a nifty cook," scoffed Odell. He referred to the Duke's appearance which had won him his nickname. "I'll sit by and coach you."

"Don't coach too hard, Mint," inter-

posed Sallin. "You'll get a crack at labor yourself once we get going."

"Yeh," said Taylor, "and we'll let you do double time for what I do while you're coaching!"

"Beat it, you two," put in Sallin. "I want to talk with Vi. You'd better chase out to the hotel down street, Min, and order dinner sent over. Don't worry, Vi will do the cooking. I want to live a while."

Odell and Taylor departed, the former crowing over his soft berth, the latter flinging back that he'd see Odell did his share. Their squabbling, however, meant nothing. They had been working too long together to quarrel over the tasks allotted. They respected one another's talents as they respected Sallin's ability to conceive and his generalship. Odell had earned his soubriquet from fellow craftsmen who conceded that if given half a chance he could carve a way into the mint! As a mechanic whose expertness was similarly misdirected, Taylor was no less capable. They were the aces of Sallin's mob.

When they had gone Sallin peered from behind the drawn shade at the rear of the bank he intended to make disgorge a million. His eyes brightened and he motioned Viola to look.

"There's the beauty," he whispered. "Here's where we'll show them something new."

Her head nestled against his. Silently they regarded the stanch building with its dead rear wall and heavily barred windows on the sides. The immensity of their task impressed the woman. She experienced a quickening of the pulse. This was the first job in which she had actively engaged at the consummation. In others she had gone ahead, spying and sizing up. It was the only time in years, also, that Sallin himself had taken the field.

He noticed her become rigid and her hastier breathing.

"Not nervous, Vi?" he asked.

"No—" but she laughed a trifle shakily. Not with fear, but excitement. "No; not nervous, Floyd. But—it's different, isn't it, when you actually get into the ring!"

Smiling, he put an arm over her shoulders while still they bent watching the bank building as a hunter watches the approach of unsuspecting quarry.

"It's different, Vi," he said earnestly, "but there's something in it that gets you. Wait till we're reaching out our hands—"

He drew back from the window. His voice lost its tensity. They had not arrived at that stage. There were preliminaries to be gone through before they would.

"See anything of little Bessie as we came in? The house to the right."

"There was a pretty girl on the porch," said Viola. "Blond, not tall."

"That's Bessie. We'll find an excuse to get acquainted with her. She'll be glad to be the first to hear all about Floyd's frightful injury! It 'll give her an edge on the other folks—and help us out. The sooner the quicker, Vi, so I can unwind myself—"

IV.

In the evening, Sallin, again "embalmed," sat outside with Viola. Her devotion to him was apparent to all who cared to look, but not too effusive. Sitting on the arm of his chair she leaned her head affectionately alongside his while she talked to him.

The picture was inspiring, as it was designed to be, and the consuming curiosity of the neighbors increased to learn what grievous mishap had befallen Sallin.

The top of his head, they noticed now, had escaped injury. That was because Sallin felt that it would be only an extra discomfort to swathe his head entirely. The covering of his face was sufficient.

Sallin did little more than nod or shake in reply. It was awkward talking through the encumbering bandages; and he was too hot to be conversationally inclined.

While apparently absorbed in him, Viola watched covertly for the opening that would give an answer to the curious. She wanted to introduce herself to Bessie Wentworth.

Miss Wentworth finally appeared and made herself comfortable in a porch swing.

"There she is now," Viola reported to Sallin. "I'll run over." She had not gone to the next house earlier because it was Bessie she wished to meet, not some other in the family.

"I won't stay long, Floyd," she added. "I'll hurry so you can get out of exhibition. They've seen enough of you for one day."

Sallin flapped his muffled hands and muttered unintelligibly. She couldn't be too fast to suit him.

It was growing dusk as Viola crossed the lawn. Bessie saw her coming and fluttered expectantly. She would not of course be rude enough to inquire, but she was just dying to know what frightful accident had happened to that poor man. Nevertheless, Bessie appeared surprised when Viola spoke softly over the end of the veranda.

"I wonder," said Viola, "if I might use your phone?"

Bessie jumped up. She wished there was more light in which to see that gorgeous hair. She stepped forward to where Viola, smiling faintly and hesitant, stood at the rail.

"Surely," said Bessie. "Come right in, please." She was doubly fortunate—she would see the Titian marvel close at hand, besides hearing probably about the man.

"I'm sorry to trouble you," murmured Viola, moving to the steps.

"No trouble," assured Bessie, keeping pace with her. It was a favor! Bessie was scarcely twenty years old, and she was positive that there was a thrill connected with the newcomers.

"I am Mrs. Sallin," Viola introduced herself as they met at the top of the steps. "They haven't connected our phone yet. We just moved in to-day, you know."

Bessie tingled. She was aware of the eyes directed at her from other verandas—envious eyes.

"I'm Bessie Wentworth," she returned, and her hand went out. As Viola took it she decided that Bessie was a lovable little creature. She sensed the eager interest of the girl, but did not hasten to satisfy it. She would let that come about as a matter of course.

Bessie piloted her visitor into the house.

"I wouldn't bother you," apologized Viola, "but the doctor will be here in the morning, and I have to get some things from the drug store."

"The doctor," echoed Bessie with slight insinuation. That was a lead; it ought to bring the story. A glimmer of horrified sympathy came to her face—sympathy that conveyed an irrepressible outspoken query.

They were at the phone in the hall. She withdrew while Viola talked over it, but she could not help hearing the order for surgical dressings, emollient oils and tinctures, and oiled silk. But that didn't tell her much. She half concluded to put an innocent question if Viola did not volunteer information.

"Let me call mother to meet you," she said as Viola left the phone. It was a sincere effort to be friendly, but it was also a pretext to detain Viola. "I'm sure she will—" She gave Viola no time to answer. "Oh, mother," she called; and mother responded.

Viola and the elderly woman exchanged commonplaces. Viola was invited to stay a while. She took the opportunity to accomplish the real object of her visit, without appearing to advertise her affairs.

"I'd love to," she said, and a sadness crept into her voice, "but I must get back to Mr. Sallin. He"—she gestured compassionately, lovingly, and her eyes blinked—"he isn't able to do much for himself, and the strain is wearing him out. I have to remain with him."

Mrs. Wentworth was not so backward as her daughter. She was a motherly soul. She could feel the weight of the tragedy that had so evidently stricken this couple.

"How"—she was genuinely affected—"how did it happen?"

Bessie trembled on tiptoe. It had been a master stroke, the summoning of her mother.

"An explosion," replied Viola without hesitation. "A gasoline explosion."

"Oh!" Now that the subject was up, Bessie poured a question on top of her ejaculation: "He must have been fearfully burned?"

"Terribly." Viola nodded somberly; then she smiled bravely. "But he is coming through all right. His eyes, by some mercy, were not seriously injured."

"And how—" repeated Mrs. Wentworth after further expression of horror.

"A spark from nowhere," answered Viola. "He was pouring gasoline from a

can into the car when—" She threw out her hands.

" And his face and hands—" prompted Bessie breathlessly.

Viola shivered a little. " Were, oh—I cannot describe it!" An air of thankfulness came to her again. " But he won't be so frightfully disfigured. At least we don't think so. He has just undergone a skin-grafting operation which the doctors say will make a wonderful difference."

" It is dreadful that his face should have suffered," said Bessie.

" Yes." Viola smiled wanly. " Yet we are grateful that it was no worse. It would have been had his cap not been pulled down and given some protection to his eyes." That explained how Sallin's hair had not been scorched off.

Viola glanced over at the house where he sat motionless, a bizarre figure with the white of his bandages showing in the faint light.

" I'll have to go," she added. " It was good of you to ask me to stay."

She had done well, she noted. Her recital had won their hearts.

Mrs. Wentworth caught her hand. " If there is anything at all that we can do," she offered, " don't hesitate, my dear."

Bessie caught Viola's other hand. She was somewhat ashamed of her morbid interest now that she knew how seriously poor Mr. Sallin was afflicted.

" I wish there was something we could do," she said impulsively. " You will let us know if there is."

Viola's smile was wistful. " It's dear of you to offer," she said gently. " I'd love to have you drop over and talk to me now and then. I won't be able to get away much—Mr. Sallin feels so helpless. If you will come sit with me sometimes—"

She broke off, and a light glimmered in her eyes. A man was coming up the path—a young man. She had not expected to make such rapid progress, to meet him so soon. She assumed that he was Frank Denton, cashier of the bank that was to yield a million, and she was right. She was departing, but Bessie restrained her.

" Oh, Frank," said the girl, and he came forward; " I want you to meet Mrs. Sallin, who has just moved in next door. Her husband has had a terrible accident. This is Frank Denton, Mrs. Sallin," she smiled prettily. " You—you'll see him often here."

Acknowledging the introduction, Viola laughed quietly, understandingly.

Denton grinned. " As often as possible," he declared.

" When I know you both better, I'll congratulate you more adequately," said Viola. " But now I must run—I've stayed too long gossiping."

With their friendly words following her, she tripped down the steps and rejoined Sallin.

" Isn't her hair won-der-ful!" Bessie watched her affianced as she asked that. But there was a little pout on her lips. She didn't want him to think it was too remarkable.

The pout was not lost on Denton.

" Is it?" he responded guilefully. " What color is it?"

" Don't you try to fool me, Frank Denton," proclaimed Bessie darkly. " I saw you staring your eyes out. Didn't you, mother?"

Mrs. Wentworth backed away. " You can't get me into trouble. You fight it out with Frank."

Denton steered Bessie toward the swing and the shadows.

" Of course I saw it," he confessed; " but —pooh, it's red. Now if it were golden—"

And with a golden head on his shoulder he permitted its owner to recount the calamity from which Floyd Sallin was recovering.

" How'd you make out?" came Sallin's muffled accents as Viola bent her head on his.

" Great! They're nice folks, Floyd. We're over the first jump. I met Denton, too. Come on inside and I'll unmask you and tell you about them."

V.

QUEER doings began immediately within the Sallin house.

On that first evening a survey of the

upper regions was made by Sallin. With daylight Odell and Taylor went to work with fine saws that made hardly a sound, cutting out the flooring and joists in the attic. Every scrap of lumber that could be taken with safety was removed.

" We'll need it all," said Sallin. " Leave enough to hold the roof for a couple of weeks. We've got two thousand dollars paid on this ranch. They can use that to fix it up when we quit."

At intervals throughout the day the work went on. Taylor and Odell sweated and swore, but they stayed at it. They would be well paid for their labor.

The timbers were cut into lengths of three and four feet and stacked in the cellar. As he sized up the growing pile Sallin remarked that they would have to cut into the second floor too.

" Hell, chief," said Odell, " can't we fetch in a load of lumber and save all this work? These boobs never would tumble to what it was for. Make out you're going to build a new porch or something."

" A good idea, Mint—good," derided Sallin. " It's likely that we'd have a gang of workmen hammering round here while I'm so badly injured. I'm here for quiet. We can't have any noisy work going on."

" Get on the job, Mint," grinned Taylor. " Being cookie and chambermaid has made you soft. This 'll put you in trim for what's to come."

" Yah!" said Mint with disgust; but he went ahead because he knew that this preparation was essential to the main task.

Another incident that day was visible to the outside. It was staged for the benefit of the neighbors. That was the coming of " Dr. Perthwaite " in the person of Sam Heusler.

Sam arrived in the forenoon in a luxurious town car. He looked the part well enough.

On the porch with Sallin, Viola rose to meet the " doctor." All three promptly went into the house.

As he was relieved of his camouflage and sat down with a cigarette in his mouth to kill the time that it should take to dress his injuries, Sallin warned Heusler.

" You'll have to be careful, Sam, that none of our Bolshevik agents see you in this town. They might follow to find out where you call."

" I'll watch out." Heusler stared at Viola. " My God, what hair!" he exclaimed in admiration. " A woman sure has the edge when it comes to make-up. Look at me—" He ran a hand over his round face, and his brows gathered. " What chance have I got of changing my map? That complexion and hair make you somebody else."

Viola laughed reassuringly. " You'll get away fast enough, Sam," she said soothingly. " Floyd's going to let you have a day or two start on us. That 'll give you time to get under cover."

" You'll be all right," affirmed Sallin. " What did you hear from Fiorella and his crew?"

" I got their daily report." Heusler produced it. " They seem to be getting next to the natives."

" Let's see." Sallin read the poorly written letter. He smiled and nodded. " That's good. They're not having much trouble, Vi, worming a way in. These foreigners that this town's been so good to aren't so pleased as they were a year ago. They're peeved about the shortening of hours—the cutting out of overtime, that is—that's been coming about as the plants get back to normal. They've been spoiled by the fat pay envelopes they came to know through the war."

" They're grateful cattle!" said Viola scornfully. " Because they can't keep their faces in the trough until they're gorged, they listen to any burglar that comes along talking soviet and the rule of the proletariat."

" That's what," agreed Sallin. " But we haven't any reason to kick about that. It helps our game. Say, Sam, you ought to see the Duke and Mint on the job as housewreckers! They have the place half torn apart already. Either of them would trade jobs with you."

" Yeh; I suppose so." Heusler looked at his watch. " How long do I have to hang around here? I'd just as soon not be."

" You can go soon." Sallin was not

pleased by Heusler's attitude. Sam wasn't showing any too much nerve—nothing nearly commensurate with his bulk. "You'll have to look after everything on the outside," he said sharply. "If there's any trip-up, it 'll be on your end. How about that load of stuff? When's it get here?"

"To-morrow," replied Sam uneasily. Sallin shouldn't put the burden on him like that. Heusler's pudgy hands rolled on a cigar. "There won't be anything go wrong—outside of here," he added."

"Then"—Sallin darted a glance at him—"nothing will go wrong anywhere. We are under way—waiting for these boxes. See they get here to-morrow. And now," he smiled, "you'd better jack up Fiorella and De Real and Kolinsky to open fire on the moneyed interests. Tell them not to lay it on too thick at the start. Just ooze it out that if it wasn't for the interests that lend money the employers, the slave drivers, couldn't exist. Have them remind the bohunks that it's their own money that is used in this way against them."

"You don't want to give them too much to work on yet?" asked Heusler.

"No. Enough to get 'em tuned up. We won't be ready for the smash until about two weeks from now. That allows lots of time to get the yaps into line. If they listen to our dope they ought to be well primed."

"Humph!" Heusler grunted weightily. He got up. "I'll get back to town. Nothing else you want looked after?"

"That's all just now." Sallin frowned slightly. "You're in an awful hurry, Sam." It was at once a question and a rebuke.

"Yeh." Sam grinned wryly. "I don't want to be seen any more'n necessary."

There was a tinge of malice in Viola's comment: "Wouldn't hurt Sam to lend a hand with a pick and shovel. You're too fat, Sam."

Heusler didn't appreciate the humor.

"I'm too big for that," he said quickly. "Besides, I'd make a funny looking doctor with my hands all grubby."

"You could wear gloves," shrugged Viola. Her pale eyes roved over him, then went to Sallin. Viola was registering a doubt about Sam—doubt about the wisdom of having given him a more or less conspicuous part. "Don't take to wearing goggles and a cap that 'll make you look like a stick-up," she advised. "Nobody's going to notice you much coming in and out of here."

"Maybe no," said Sam. He tried to appear more at ease. "That grafting operation I did on you is a big success, chief," he joked. "Nobody 'd ever know your face had been burned off!"

"You can set up as a specialist when we're done here," remarked Sallin dryly. "You can chase along now. Get that load here early to-morrow. We'll be ready for it."

Viola accompanied Heusler to the front steps. As he continued down the walk to his car she waved to Bessie Wentworth, who was trimming a rosebush at the side of her home.

Bessie snipped off a dozen of the blooms and held them up. Viola smiled acceptance, and they went to meet each other.

"The doctor gave you good news to-day?" queried Bessie anxiously. She was intensely sorry for the sweet red headed woman who bore her tragedy so bravely.

"Splendid!" returned Viola. "He is more optimistic than ever, and his promise of complete success for the operation has cheered Mr. Sallin greatly. So much so, in fact," she laughed delightedly, "that Mr. Sallin wants me to invite some folks to visit us. You'd understand how wonderful that is if you knew how despairing and consequently nervous he has been."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" enthused Bessie. "It must be— Oh!"

She broke off with the exclamation as Viola twined one of the roses into her hair. The effect was almost startling, so vivid did the white blossom become on that billowing background of red.

Viola grimaced in deprecation. "It *is* awful," she remarked.

"Awful!" Bessie was aghast. "It's adorable. I wish I didn't have this old blond hair," she sighed. "*Anybody* can be a blond!"

"And I"—Viola was amused—"often think of bleaching out this mop." She pushed it back on her forehead, and Bessie

satisfied another point of her curiosity—as Viola hoped she would. Bessie's glance went keenly to the roots of the flaming crown. She had had just a suspicion—just a doubt that this was not all nature's own glory.

But that suspicion was dispelled. Viola's hair was red clear down to the scalp. There was no telltale hint of another shade close to the roots, on the newest growth, to betray that it had been dyed. Viola took pains to insure that there was none, by daily applications of henna; for she knew that without constant attention that revealing margin would appear within a very few days.

For several minutes they bandied their mutual envy, the red head favoring the golden, the golden favoring the red. Then Viola apparently was struck by a thought:

"Perhaps you'd take pity on us, since Mr. Sallin is feeling so much better, and run over this evening," she proposed. "You can bring Mr. Denton. It won't be very exciting, of course, but—although he won't be able to join in our chatter I'm sure that just having company will do Mr. Sallin a world of good."

"Why, yes; certainly." It pleased Bessie to be of even such small service. "Frank will be here. We'll come over after dinner."

"It's sweet of you," said Viola gratefully. "Thanks ever so much for the roses—" She pressed them to her face to hide the twinkle in her eyes. Bessie was such a dear, simple little thing it seemed a shame to make use of her! "We'll look for you—"

"After dinner," said Bessie; and she returned to her rose trimming while Viola went in to report to Sallin on the furtherance of her campaign to bring the cashier of the Bank of Norford within reaching distance.

The visit of Bessie Wentworth and Frank Denton to the Sallin house that evening was without special significance except that it paved the way for Viola later on to obtain an invitation to look over the interior of a modern bank vault. She led up to that by displaying an amazing ignorance of banking and awe regarding those who engaged in it.

"Doesn't it scare you to have the money of so many people in your safekeeping?" she asked Denton. "I wouldn't sleep nights for fear burglars were carrying away the millions!"

Bessie joined in Denton's laughter. As the affianced of a bank employee she had a contact knowledge of the internal workings.

"If you examined the box we keep it in," said Denton lightly, "you wouldn't be afraid."

"But millions!" repeated Viola. Perched as usual on the arm of Sallin's chair she snuggled her head closer to his. "Men go to extremes for trifling sums. What wouldn't they dare to get at millions! I shouldn't imagine that any box would be strong enough to keep it safely."

"Anyway," supplied Bessie with a superior smile, "there aren't *millions* in the bank. Are there, Frank?"

"Not generally," he chuckled. "You see, Mrs. Sallin, we have to use the deposits to earn money—lend it out—so that we can pay interest and dividends."

"Oh!" Viola brightened as though she had been let in on an extraordinary fact. "I never thought of that. Of course it would be absurd to suppose that you kept it all there. Still, the vaults must be tremendously strong."

It was Bessie who issued the invitation. "We'll go over some day and Frank will show you through. It is truly remarkable, the big vault, with its door so thick"—she measured in exaggeration with her hands—"and its walls—um! You'll let Mrs. Sallin peek, won't you, Frank?"

"Surely," Denton indorsed the invitation. "Drop in any day and I'll show you over. But you'll be disappointed. It's just a great big safe—nothing more."

The red head nodded vivaciously. "That's how it seems to you," said Viola, "but to me—well! And don't you forget that you promised! I'll be in in a day or two—soon, because I want to open an account."

With a trace of excitement she spoke close to Sallin's ear, relating that she was

to be permitted to inspect the insides of the bank. He, poor chap, couldn't engage in the conversation on account of his covered ears; but it did not detract from the pathos of the picture that he had to sit practically out of touch with the company except for Viola's constant caress!

In her fondness for her new friend, Bessie imparted an item of information which in conjunction with his acquaintanceship with Sallin was to have a result upon Denton.

"Another bank wants Frank to leave the Norford," she told proudly. "He's only cashier over here. He'd be vice president if he'd go to the Phœnix."

"Congratulations!" exclaimed Viola. She patted Bessie's shoulder. "You'll be the wife of a bank president before he's through."

"I don't care what he is," confessed Bessie with a flirt of her head, "so long as he—" She laughed, and in the darkness extended a hand to Denton which he held.

"And are you going to change, Mr. Denton?" asked Viola. "It would be quite a step up, would it not?"

"Yes—but—" Denton hesitated. "It would," he added finally with gathering brows, "but I don't know. The Phœnix, you see, might expect certain things—that certain accounts would go along with me from the Norford. They haven't said so, not outright, but that is what they'd look for."

Again Bessie evidenced her pride in him. "Frank has done a lot to keep the Norford in front," she declared. "It's the oldest bank, and since the others came it's had to fight for business. It is a savings bank, you know, Mrs. Sallin, but the others also handle savings. Frank's ideas have kept it ahead. But for him it wouldn't have all the mill workers' accounts, for one thing."

"Bessie thinks the institution would collapse if I wasn't there," laughed Denton. "It 'd go along just the same, Bessie."

Plainly Bessie was skeptical.

"I don't understand," said Viola. She maintained her rôle of ignorance. "What's the difference between a savings bank and any other?"

"A savings bank pays interest on all deposits," explained Denton. "Others pay only on sums ranging upward from a thousand dollars, and their rate is not so high. That is on account of checking and other privileges they give which do not go with a savings account."

"That's it," said Viola vaguely. She came back to Bessie's remark: "And you don't think you'll leave to go to this other bank?"

"I don't know," said Denton again. "It is tempting because it will be a long time before further promotion offers in the Norford. Not until some one dies as happened at the Phœnix. I'll have to talk with them some more before I decide."

"I think you ought to take it," said Bessie suddenly, inconsistently, in accord with her woman's license.

"And let the Norford go to smash!" he grinned.

"You said it wouldn't."

"You said it would!"

"I didn't."

"Didn't she, Mrs. Sallin?" Denton appealed for support.

"Can't get me into any quarrel," laughed Viola.

Bessie also appealed to her. "He should take it!"

"Why?" demanded Denton.

"Oh, because," retorted Bessie without logic. "Don't you want to be more than a mere cashier? I'd rather be a Mrs. Vice President!"

"It seems to me," gurgled Viola, "that you're doomed to be vice president of this other bank, Mr. Denton."

VI.

THE load of stuff which Sallin had adjured Heusler to hurry conformed to the general scheme—with the exception of Viola's hair—in that it was nothing to attract unusual attention. On the face of it, it was furniture—all furniture. But in it were seven boxes which did not contain anything resembling furniture.

A few boxes, however, when some one is moving mean nothing. They might hold books or the accumulation of odds and ends that belong to every household.

The men on the truck who carried the

boxes into the house commented on their weight, but had no suspicion of what they contained. In line with his determination to keep down to the limit the number of participants in this, his greatest effort, Sallin let the trucking be done by a regular concern. Aside from the fact that it cut down the possibility of capture—the fewer who had knowledge of what was toward, the less the risk—the name of the company emblazoned on the truck was in itself a disarming sign of legitimacy.

The heavy boxes, moreover, were of different sizes. Uniformity might have drawn an inquisitive eye.

The various pieces of furniture in the load were distributed in their proper places through the house. The boxes were left in the lower hall.

Immediately the truckmen had departed, Taylor and Odell proceeded to open the boxes. Sallin, who during the unloading had remained on the veranda, removed his bandages and superintended. This was equipment that he had had ready for long, in readiness for the chance when it should come into play, and he wanted to see that it was correct.

"The hose is in these five," he pointed them out. "That one has the fans and drills. This has the tanks. Once we get the hose hooked up the labor will be done."

"But until then," grumbled Taylor, "all we have to do is work! How about getting a couple of wops to do that and bumping them on the skull when it's done?"

"You have an idea sometimes," favored Odell. "I'm for that."

"And ideas often are disastrously expensive," voiced Sallin. "Get it into your heads now that this job has to be kept tight among ourselves. Pry these boxes apart and I'll help you get the stuff downstairs."

Viola came in as Taylor slid a chisel beneath the metal binding strap on the first of the boxes.

"How long will it take to make the connection, Floyd?" she asked. "How far to dig?"

Sallin produced a map of the street copied from that on file in the Department of Public Works.

"We have twenty-four feet to go," he said. "We can make it in four days. We won't rush."

Viola studied the map.

"What if there's a cave-in?"

"Then the whole works goes blooey," answered Sallin grimly, "and we travel fast." His eyes glinted on her. "You're not turning pessimist, Vi?" he added half irritably. "Let Heusler do the moaning. There won't be any cave-in. We'll take our time to avoid that."

"That's what I meant," said Viola. "That it would be better to lose a day than to take a chance of the ground giving way."

Taylor and Odell ripped away the boards. In the box were six lengths of stout hose such as a fire engine uses for emergency pumping. Each was four feet long and was fitted with union clamps so that all could be quickly joined together.

Four more of the boxes produced similar freight. A powerful valve was installed in one piece of hose

The sixth box uncovered two electric drills with an abundance of points, a couple of picks and shovels and crowbars, and a nozzle for the hose. The latter also was equipped with a controlling valve.

From the other case came four cylindrical tanks.

"There's more of the gas to come," explained Sallin.

Odell's eyes livened. He ran his hands caressingly over the tanks.

"They're the boys," he gloated. "If only we didn't have to go mining before we can use them."

"Aw, here's the babies," contented Taylor, fingering the drills. "We got to have these in action before your blamed torch is any use."

"And without the torch your diamond points wouldn't be worth a dime," jeered Odell. He was of the oxy-acetylene school while Taylor pinned his faith to the ability of a tempered steel bit to go through any plate that ever was built. "Your drills 'd flatten like cheese on what we're going up against, Duke."

"Might take longer with them," admitted Taylor grudgingly, "but if I have to I

can go through the whole job. You can only go halfway—and the second half at that."

"I'll show you," snorted Odell. He touched the weighty cylinders again with loving hands—the two larger that held the hydrogen and the pair half the size that contained the oxygen. "Wait till we get going—"

"Meantime we'll get going into the cellar," interrupted Sallin. "We're working—not debating. There's a matter of digging leads the program."

They fell to work and soon the mysterious and burglarious assortment was downstairs beside the pile of lumber that had been flooring and walls in the upper part of the house.

Guided by the map, Sallin marked off a place on the cellar wall at the front of the dwelling. The bank was forty feet from the rear wall. They were heading in the opposite direction from that.

"Drive straight in," said Sallin, "and," emphatically, "don't forget to shore up every inch as you go. If there isn't enough lumber here now we'll take the rest of the house apart.

"Remember, we have to go under the sidewalk. Safety first! If we don't make it solid all the way, we're done."

Odell picked daintily at the mortar in the wall with a crowbar.

"I'd let you go at it with that toothpick," hooted Taylor, "if I wasn't in a hurry myself to get to hell out of here. Come give us a help with this wire and see how the drills eat that up."

They made the connection, and fifteen minutes later Taylor was squatting over a drill thrust against the wall and biting through it.

After the removal of one stone the task moved more briskly. The hole permitted leverage with the crowbar to be exerted on the other masonry. Soon the aperture approximated a yard square.

While his men started to run a shaft toward the street Sallin resumed his bandages on face and hands and, with Viola, sat out again on the veranda. It was Viola's duty to look out for possible callers and to listen with sharp ears for any sound of the work going on underground. It was not likely that they would, but the burrowers might prove too ambitious and so sacrifice silence to progress.

VII.

ONE cog in the Sallin machine slipped and for the moment threatened to strip all the gears. It was that which Sallin had come to look upon as weak—the cog in which Sam Heusler was the king-pin.

The slip-up was Sam's fault. In his increasing nervousness at being in what he considered too much of the limelight, he imparted information to Fiorella, De Real and Kolinsky which he should have saved. He was premature in relaying instructions to them.

The upshot was that on the fifth day of Sallin's sojourn in the town of Norford the presence of the three alleged radical organizers became noticeable. Worst of all, their endeavors won the interest of the bank most involved. That was because Heusler gave his agents too great latitude in their agitation against the moneyed institutions.

From what could be gathered in a hasty investigation, the banks appeared to be the principal target. And on account of the ground on which the seed of discontent was being sown, the Bank of Norford found itself especially concerned. This was because of the large number of foreign-born mill workers on its books.

Withdrawals of their balances by several score of that class of depositors first caused Frank Denton to wonder. He had a particular interest in these depositors, for he had been instrumental in obtaining their patronage. On his suggestion the bank had sent representatives among them when they were piling up high war wages, and had convinced them of the benefits of opening accounts and the greater security. At the mills on pay days it had conducted a branch and won over many who distrusted banks but were becoming fearful about the ever fattening stocking in the bottom of a trunk at home or the growing bulge in the mattress.

Thus the Bank of Norford had stolen a march on its competitors and had brought

into its keeping many thousands of dollars which were being hoarded against the time when their owners should return to their native lands. Once having made friends among these people, its patronage from them had grown until at the period of Sallin's advent it carried on its books nearly fifteen hundred of this class with deposits aggregating two million and a quarter.

The abrupt closing out of a number of these accounts puzzled Denton. He had a nodding acquaintance with the workers because he had cultivated them, and he had the banker's memory for names and faces. When a dozen arrived in a group to withdraw their funds, therefore, he talked with them.

His assumption was that they were about to leave for the country which they still regarded as home, and he inquired when they were to sail. They shrugged, said "No goin'," or something like that, and evaded further questioning.

When others followed rapidly on their heels to close out their accounts he sat up and took wide eyed notice. They gave him just as little information as the earlier comers—they were not leaving Norford; but they wanted their money.

Denton put the situation up to the president. Having explained that almost threescore accounts had been closed within two days, he proposed that steps be taken to learn the reason.

"We ought to send a couple of scouts among them," he suggested. "There's something underhand going on. I—" He paused on the thought and his face clouded.

His resignation was on the desk of the president, effective in thirty days. He had accepted the vice presidency of the Phœnix Bank. And he paused on the thought because of a sudden suspicion that the Phœnix might have a hand in the affair.

Denton was aware that much of the confidence these foreigners had in the Bank of Norford was due to confidence in himself who had won them over in the beginning. Was it not possible that the Phœnix was spreading the word that he was going over to it and capitalizing his popularity to wean depositors from the Norford?

H. H. Trainor, the president, looked at him quizzically. He read Denton's thought.

"You're going away from us, Frank," he said quietly.

Denton flushed angrily.

"But that can have nothing to do with it," he declared. "I don't believe—I can't believe—that the Phœnix would play a trick like this. I don't believe they could get away with it if they did. We—the Norford always have treated these people right. We have helped them in every way possible—transferred money to their native countries at the most advantageous rates of exchange; protected their relatives and friends coming to this country by putting them into the hands of reputable agents during the journey. No; it can't be the Phœnix. And yet—"

He stopped again doubtfully. What other explanation could there be?

Trainor refused to be perturbed.

"You're fidgety, Frank," he smiled. "You've been imagining things since the Phœnix started to take you away from us. Now you think you've discovered something to hang your fidgets on. A few withdrawals can't make any impression. That they occurred in a group is only coincidence."

"That may be so," argued Denton; "but let's see if we can locate a reason. Call in Jenkins to hunt out the source. I know these people, Mr. Trainor, and they know me. But I could get nothing definite from them—only that they wanted their cash."

"Well, call Jenkins if you want to," granted Trainor good naturedly. "He has our retainer and we might as well use him once in a while. Have him come over, Frank, to look for your mare's nest," he laughed.

So, Jenkins, head of an agency that operated for banks in the metropolitan district, was summoned to Norford. He came next day; and by then the president of the Bank of Norford was beginning to sit up too. Another dozen of the mill workers had withdrawn their accounts.

Sitting in Trainor's office, the detective heard Denton out. The cashier now did not hesitate to voice his suspicion that the Phœnix Bank was at the bottom of it.

"Still," he added to be fair, "I can't find that the cash being taken from us is going to the Phœnix. It seems to be going to the ancient and easily pilfered stocking bank."

"Any sign of con artists in town?" asked Jenkins, a mild mannered little man of cheerful mien. "With a good line of gold mine or oil stock?"

"Not that we have heard," replied Trainor. "Though that would offer a fairly reasonable explanation."

"It isn't it," negatived Denton. "These people don't buy stock. Now and then one falls for a con game, but they don't fall in bunches. No. There's some sort of propaganda going on, and we're feeling the brunt of it because we have more of the foreigners' money than the other banks."

Jenkins's expression was bland, but his mild eyes focused on Trainor. He put an indirect question.

"I can't figure where any one would gain by knocking your bank," he remarked. "You're sound enough—yes? It could not affect your stability, even though there were wholesale withdrawals."

"Good Lord, no—certainly not!" puffed Trainor. "Not if every nickel was taken out. If we liquidated to-morrow we'd show a tidy surplus for distribution. Nobody could be crazy enough to attempt to injure our credit by pulling out a few thousands."

"Have the examiners been in lately?"

Trainor laughed at that because he knew Jenkins. Had the query come from any one else on top of what he had just said, he might have resented it. He understood that Jenkins did not dispute his statement, but was simply completing a thought. Jenkins always completed his thoughts.

"They were here a month ago—less than that," said Trainor. "If you find there's a conspiracy against us," he went on thoughtfully, "we'll have them in again to demonstrate that we're O. K."

"If there's a conspiracy," said Jenkins shrewdly, "you would only hurt yourself by having the examiners back so soon. Those on the outside would read it as confirmation that something was wrong."

"Umph. That's so." Trainor showed a trace of worry. He began to see that there might be something serious going on. "Go ahead, then, Jenkins. You'll have to go after it in your own way, for I'm blessed if I can offer any suggestion of what to look for. It seems like an idiotic proposition to be wasting time on."

"If we can turn up anything, it will be time well spent," said Denton. "If there is nothing to turn up—well, we played on the safe side."

Sallin's judgment in scraping acquaintance with Frank Denton was justified that night.

Bessie Wentworth was over chatting with Viola, as she had fallen into the habit of doing, when Denton arrived. He joined them.

Bessie again proved an unconscious ally. She remarked on Denton's preoccupation.

"You look worried, Frank," she said. "You don't want to leave the bank," she challenged.

"It isn't that." Denton tried to shake off his perplexity.

"Then, what is it?" she insisted. Denton couldn't be allowed to have any secrets.

He saw no objection to mentioning the puzzling circumstance before the Sallins.

"It isn't anything serious," he said; "only—we can't make out why so many of the mill workers are closing out their accounts. Nearly a hundred have done so in the last two days."

"Is that all!" Bessie could not see the matter as of much moment. "That can't ruin the bank!"

Viola bit her lip and her arm tightened warningly on Sallin's shoulder. She hoped that he could hear. The bandages had been reduced to a bare covering over his ears. She pinched him to pay heed.

"No—but—" Denton pursed his lips and gestured. "No," he repeated, "but it strikes us as so queer that we've put detectives to work to discover the reason."

Viola felt Sallin start.

"It would make a big cut in the bank's business," explained Denton to Viola, "if all these foreigners drew out. They have over two millions on deposit."

Viola smothered a quickening of her

breath. She knew that this was not on the schedule.

"Oh," she said rather inanely, vaguely, to intimate that she in a distant manner appreciated the situation. "But what if the detectives learn anything? What can you do? Can you make these people leave their money in the bank?"

"Not if they don't want to," laughed Denton. "If we could show a conspiracy, however, and that is what it seems like, we could prosecute, and restore the confidence in us that evidently is being undermined."

"I see," said Viola slowly.

Sallin stirred, lifting a shrouded hand. She bent her ear to his lips, and he muttered through the bandaging.

She smiled apologetically on Bessie and Denton.

"I'm going to send you folks home," she said with a laugh. "Mr. Sallin is tired and wants to go indoors. You don't mind? And please"—she was sweetly pleading—"do not let my sending you away keep you from coming again. You won't? Promise!"

They promised and retired to the greater intimacy of the swing at Bessie's house. Denton was not displeased over that. Neither was Bessie, really, although she did not begrudge the time she spent in Viola's company. Viola had been through such a trial and had borne it so courageously.

In the privacy of the house, with his mock dressings removed, Sallin swore whole-heartedly. His fists clenched and his face was hard.

"Damn that fool Heusler," he wound up. "He's let these rats get away from him. But, by Heaven, he's got to hold them—repair the damage they've done. Or"—his lips pulled coldly thin—"or Sam Heusler 'll wonder what's happened to him—if he's able to wonder in the hereafter!"

Viola let him alone as he raged. She felt as he did. But wisely she maintained silence. All that could be done to rectify this premature development was, as Sallin had said, to make Heusler put a check-rein on De Real, Fiorella and Kolinsky.

Heusler would come in the morning. She pictured the lashing Sallin would give him. She could not conceive that that lashing of Heusler was to cause the cog that already had slipped to go farther out of mesh.

VIII.

HEUSLER sulked when Sallin lit into him. At the end of the tirade he attempted to defend himself, to criticize and shift the fault to Sallin himself.

"You can't blame me for what these guys do," he asserted with fair vehemence, for he was sore. "It's a crazy stunt, having them there, anyhow. How d'you expect them to do anything but mess things up? What—"

"I expect you to make them unmess things," interjected Sallin icily. "You'll get in touch with them—quick—now. I don't care what chances you run. Get to them and hold them down. It's up to you, Sam."

Under his gaze Heusler squirmed. He moistened his fat lips and opened them to speak.

Sallin's voice, incisive, threatening in its quiet, checked him.

"There are no two ways about it, Sam. You handle your end of the job right, or you quit. And"—he smiled sourly—"if you quit, it will cost you a hundred thousand dollars. I let you in on this because it was one of your prospects. I'll let you out—fast, without a nickel divvy."

"What can I do?" mumbled Heusler. He didn't take to the notion of being ditched, now that the big job was well under way. "You told me not to be seen in town here by De Real or the others. How can I get to them now? I'll have to wait till they can come to me in New York and—"

"You'll chase them up as soon as you leave here," ordered Sallin. "Tell them to soft pedal these hunkies that are withdrawing their cash. If that isn't done at once, everything 'll be shot to pieces." His narrowing eyes increased Heusler's discomfort. "That, Sam," he purred, in addition, "would be unfortunate for you."

Heusler squeezed his cigar flat between his fingers and glowered at the remnant.

" And you'd better hustle," advised Sallin. " Get to your men and set them right before the detectives working for the bank get a line on them. If they beat you to it, the cops will make you, Sam, and "—his face froze again—" that, also, would mean that we'd be through."

" All right," said Heusler. There was nothing else to say. There was nothing to be gained by arguing with Sallin. Sallin had the whip hand, inasmuch as he could discard Heusler and have some one else carry on the outside work. He switched the subject to safer channels.

" How are you making out down below?" He jerked a thumb toward the cellar.

" We're making out all right," Sallin spoke crisply, " if you don't ball us up again. I want the truck to come through here to-morrow at one o'clock. Jake will drive it himself. He knows what he has to do. And have him bring his owner's license so that he can put the truck up as bail if he gets pinched. Understand?"

" Yes."

" Make sure that Jake does."

Heusler acknowledged with a grunt. " I'll go now and bawl out De Real and the other birds," he said without enthusiasm. " They got to lay off, huh?"

" Don't go at them too strong," revised Sallin. " They're hard guys, Sam. And," he gave them credit, " we have to admit that they're good workers. Trouble is that they've got the hunkies going too soon. You needn't tell them that the fly cops are on the job. Might scare them. But tell them to show their control is right by holding the mob in check for a few days."

For the second time, however, Sam Heusler neglected to carry out instructions to the letter. As he had overstepped in giving too much material to the three man sent among the mill workers as agitators, he erred again by being too liberal—with abuse.

He did not meet the disturbers in Norford, but he did get into communication with them before leaving for New York. That was as far as he was willing to go; despite Sallin's threat, he refused to be seen with them. He got De Real on the phone finally and had him come on to the city.

" And before you start," he snapped, " tell Fiorella and Kolinsky to lay off until they see you again. I want them to crawl into a hole and stay there."

His talk face to face with De Real was all to the point. The Spaniard's eyes glinted several times as he listened and his sallow face wrinkled; but he held his tongue. He wanted to understand this deal more before he quarreled with the man who appeared to be running it—with Heusler. He did not believe Heusler was the head; he wanted to know exactly who was.

" So?" He took his call-down suavely, although it had been rough enough in spots to make his fingers itch toward a knife sheathed lengthwise along his belt. " They are taking their money from the bank too soon." He spoke with quiet precision of language. " We are to make them stop? I comprehend."

" Then see that Fiorella and Kolinsky comprehend," said Heusler meanly. It was a new experience browbeating a man of this type, a dangerous man, and Sam enjoyed it. He remembered some of the things Sallin had said to him and adapted them.

De Real's teeth showed in a smile. " I shall remember," he said smoothly, and he meant it—two ways!

On the way back to Norford he smiled often over the situation. Some day he might have the pleasure of inserting his knife capably between Sam Heusler's ribs for the words that had been spoken. Meanwhile he could shrug—and wait. Also, he could assuage his injured feelings to some extent by pouring upon Fiorella and Kolinsky the flood of Heusler's vituperation with embellishments.

Fiorella exploded when he heard it.

" Let's stick him up for the rest of our dough an' quit the big bum," he advocated. " We can—"

De Real quietly negatived that.

" It's funny business," he said meaningfully. His slim fingers strayed along his belt. " Heusler does not serve himself. He works for—you know—the big chief. When it is done "—his eyes shone craftily—" we might make Heusler—pay more. Yes?"

" We can cut in now," began Fiorella, but De Real shook his head.

"It is not well to cut in on him unless he invites." By "him" he referred to Sallin; and, knowing of Sallin, Fiorella took back his proposal.

Kolinsky backed De Real's course. His wide mouth gaped twistedly.

"Heusler 'll be easy," he contributed. "What they doing, Real?"

De Real answered with his leisurely, expressive shrug.

"After a while we shall know. But, this I learned from Heusler: He comes to this town. We shall discover where he goes."

IX.

SALLIN crept from the tunnel back into the cellar of the house. That much was done—and well done. He looked upon it with complete satisfaction. Taylor and Odell had been careful; their job would stand.

Roughly, the shaft was three feet square. Above it was a good four feet of solid ground. There would be no severe strain upon that, not even at the outermost end where the shaft projected for a yard or so beyond the curbing. Even there no appreciable load would pass; nothing heavier than an automobile which was not sufficient to break into the underground excavation. Foot by foot it had been shored up with the lumber taken from the upper floors. And already most of the earth had been disposed of through the drain in the cellar, the grating of which had been removed.

Although an eighteen-inch electric fan drove a current into the tunnel, Sallin came out sweating.

"Good work," he said approvingly. "A couple of hours and you'll be through boiling in there."

"Wish it was headed the other way," regretted Odell with a glance in the direction of the bank. "Look at those hands"—he held them out, raw and callousing from the plying of pick and shovel—"damned good thing there's no fine work to do."

"It 'll be well paid labor," returned Sallin. "We'll run the hose in now."

They fell to and linked up the hose, a task made simple by the adjusted and close fitting junctions. The section containing the valve was taken into the tunnel separately. The hooked-up length was pushed in so that it extended from the cellar to the small chamber with which the tunnel terminated.

Through the chamber ran the water main. But for its presence on this side of the street Sallin never could have attempted to execute in Norford what was to be his greatest triumph. Here was one of the details for which he had been compelled to look before he could build. It represented another of the essentials to success, exact knowledge of which always had characterized his operations. He never took a step without knowing just what was in front.

The rust scales on the water main were broken by a circle that cut into the pipe itself. But not too deep for safety. This was a delicate part. Should the pipe give way before they were ready, their plan would be frustrated. They never could manage to plug the break. Not only would they be washed out, but the break must soon be discovered when the flow of water loosened at houses farther along the main.

This was a stage at which they had to go slowly until conditions were created to their advantage. Then they would have to work with greatest speed; for they could not know how long a time would be given them.

Sallin crowded into the tunnel. Taylor and Odell were in the chamber, cramped but with room enough to work. There was not space enough for Sallin.

"You have everything handy?" he asked tensely.

Taylor and Odell swung the portable electric lamps with which they lighted the place. Odell looked to the connections of the torch with the oxy-acetylene tanks. That was his chief concern and would come into service first. Taylor saw to it that a pipe threader, cans of packing and red lead, and strips of thick canvas to be used as binding on the joint, were within reach.

"All set, chief," they reported.

Sallin looked at his watch. "It's twelve thirty," he said. "If we run on schedule you'll begin to tie that hose up to the main a few minutes after one o'clock. You don't

have to stay in here until then. Get out where there's some air. I'll come down and pass the word when to stand by—when Jake appears. Viola will let us know when he pulls his stunt. It 'll be *Go!* after that."

Upstairs, Sallin sat beside Viola, who watched from a window commanding the street. She bent her head against his.

"What happens, Floyd, if there's a flood we can't control?"

There was recklessness in Sallin's laugh, but also confidence.

"We get up and run, Vi," he answered fliply. "The farther away we are when they locate it, the better for our health."

"You'll have time to cover up your face?" Concern clouded Viola's countenance.

"I won't take time," said Sallin. "I'll want to see where I'm going." His tone harshened. "Heusler should be here with the car to get you away. Sam has a yellow streak. He's waiting till the show is over before he comes along. He's looking after his own fat hide."

Viola's head rubbed back and forth on his.

"I wouldn't go anyhow without you. We'll simply walk out quietly if things break bad. You go first—I'll catch up on you round the corner. The Duke and Mint will take their chances?"

"Yes. They're game, otherwise they wouldn't be in that hole down below. Good girl, Vi." He squeezed her. "We won't have to go, though. We've waited too long for this. Look out now"—he shoved her gently to the window—"so we won't miss Jake. He'll give us a bray of his siren, but—"

The shrill cry of a motor horn sounded.

Viola's teeth bit into her lips. She pressed close to the window, but was careful to remain out of sight behind the curtain.

Sallin jumped up.

"The truck?"

"Yes!" whispered Viola. "Coming!"

Sallin bolted downstairs.

"In!" he called.

Taylor and Odell scrambled into the tunnel. At the cellar end of it Sallin squatted, watching the stairs for Viola to bring the word that Jake had done his work.

Breathlessly Viola saw the truck pass the house. It was moving about ten miles an hour. Not fast enough to demand more than a passing glance, but still fast enough to accomplish its object. After that one blast, the siren had remained silent. Having signaled his arrival, Jake knew that more and unnecessary noise on that quiet street probably would attract onlookers to what he was about to do. Although it would appear to be an accident, he did not desire witnesses.

Approaching the corner past the Sallin house, Jake glanced sharply about him. Back of him along the street two women were walking in the same direction as he was going. Ahead of him were a few other pedestrians, but they were not facing him.

Making to round the corner, he stepped on the gas. The truck picked up as he threw over the steering wheel. He took the corner short, lumbered over the sidewalk, and struck a fire hydrant.

Under the impact of the T-beam guard on the front of the truck the cast iron hydrant shattered. As the truck lurched back into the street, a geyser shot into the air.

Stopping the truck, Jake jumped down and stared with dismay at the damage he had done. Then like a good citizen he decided to call for help. He made his siren blare.

People tumbled from their homes to stare helplessly at the torrent of water spouting from the wrecked hydrant.

"Hell!" said Jake at large, letting up on the siren. "What you know about that?"

Women and children gathered, and men home to lunch, but no one did anything until a policeman appeared in response to the shrilling horn. He took one look and ran on into the nearest house to phone for the water bureau's emergency wagon.

Jake was quick to grasp his opportunity. While all were absorbed in the shooting water, while the policeman was absent, Jake went under his truck, which was lying at right angles across the street. With a wrench taken from his pocket he loosened a bolt in the steering gear. He was out from under the car before the policeman reappeared.

Jake was looking ruefully at the machine and scrubbing his chin when the policeman came over and demanded what was the trouble.

"She just ran crazy," replied Jake. "Steering gear out of business, I guess."

He reached up and jiggled the wheel. It moved with wide play that did not affect the wheels.

The policeman nodded understandingly "How fast were you going?"

"'Bout six-eight miles. You see how quick I stopped." He had had his brakes specially lined to insure stopping in a short distance.

The policeman did not question the explanation, but told Jake to stick around because he'd have to go to the station house to make a statement.

"I'll get the truck moved out into the street," said Jake and had another driver who had come up tow the truck to the curb.

Meanwhile the emergency wagon arrived. Its crew paused only to glimpse the flood then ran through it up past Sallin's house.

From the sidewalk Viola observed them pull up two blocks away. That was where the pipe serving this street and others branched from the principal water main. As the repair crew raised the manhole cover, she turned to watch the spouting hydrant. The instant the flow dwindled there, indicating that the water had been shut off, she hurried into the house.

From the cellar steps she called to Sallin. He relayed the information into the tunnel.

In Odell's hands the oxy-acetylene torch flared. The searing flame ate through the water pipe, following the circle already marked out.

A minute and the bit of iron was cut away. Water poured through the hole, but it was only the dregs and did not interfere with the threading of the tap and the insertion of the hose.

The packing and lead were slammed into place, the strips of canvas bound fast about the joint. A strong clamp was set about the brass end of the hose and screwed to the main.

An hour before the hydrant could be replaced Sallin had the water pressure with which he purposed driving silently and with a minimum of labor into the bank from which he was to take a million—a million that he first had to cause to be placed there.

X.

To Viola fell the duty of prying from Bessie Wentworth and Frank Denton information about the progress of Jenkins's investigation into the withdrawals from the Bank of Norford. She did that cleverly, without arousing suspicion.

Bessie was ready clay; it was from her that Viola learned the name of the detective, a point gained in an inconsequential way the day after Denton mentioned Jenkins's presence. Viola knew when not to appear to be seeking information.

Denton was but slightly less communicative when the situation began to show improvement. He had no reason in the world for supposing that Viola had an ulterior motive. She never manifested any great interest; but she fashioned her questions adroitly when the subject came up. Having told her along with Bessie when the affair developed, Denton saw no harm in letting her know what was being unearthed.

The day after Jenkins took up the thread a few more accounts were closed. On the succeeding day, however, the movement virtually ceased.

Trainor, the president, then smiled an "I told you so," and, his own misgiving allayed, rallied Denton as being scary. Jenkins so far had been unable to pin the sudden shyness of the depositors on any fixed cause. The return to normal was ascribable only to the promptings of De Real, Fiorella, and Kolinsky, who persuaded their dupes that the time to smash this group of capitalists had not arrived.

On the fourth day of Jenkins's inquiry, Viola joined Bessie and Denton soon after the latter's appearance at the Wentworth house. She had to keep in close contact to find out whether the activities of the three agitators continued to escape detection.

It was apparent to her at once that Denton was divided between pleasure and doubt. Bessie also noticed his mingled feelings and it was she who broached the subject.

"You look as though some one had stroked you the right way, Frank," she commented, "and then some one had stroked you the wrong way. Your depositors aren't running away from you again"

"No." Denton half frowned, half smiled. "We have the same number that we had this morning—two more, in fact."

"You've started, then, to make up the loss that alarmed you a few days ago," interposed Viola conversationally.

"Well, yes, but—" Denton hesitated.

"But what?" commanded Bessie.

"My alarm was justified to-day. It was my turn to 'told you so.'"

"Why" Bessie advanced the query while Viola held her breath.

"Jenkins turned up something," said Denton.

"Jenkins" Viola cocked her red head and looked interrogatively, seemingly unable to place the name.

"The detective," explained Bessie. "What was it, Frank? Was the Phœnix Bank the instigator?"

"I'm glad to say it was not. And sorry, too," he laughed, "because if it were we would have something tangible on which to base a prosecution. As it is," he gestured, "we'll have to let things run along—unless we can get something on these men and put them in jail or drive them out of town."

Viola turned her face into the shadows. She quivered, waiting for Bessie to seek further enlightenment.

Bessie did. "What men? You're talking in riddles, Frank. If you've found the men who were scaring off the depositors, why can't you prosecute them?"

"Because there is no evidence of conspiracy. They are simply radical agitators who are trying to stir up the mill workers with soviet talk and down-with-capital stuff. We felt the effects of their spell-binding because we have practically all the savings accounts from among the foreign element."

Viola spoke tentatively, as one groping for understanding.

"If they have been trying to destroy your business, why can't you have them arrested?"

"That's the difficulty," replied Denton. "They have not been trying directly to destroy *our* business. All they have done is to indulge the right of free speech. There is no law forbidding verbal attack on what they call capitalism. If, as a result of their talk, some persons are influenced to think they can injure capital by such measures as withdrawing their cash from a bank, the agitator cannot be held responsible in law. You see what I mean?"

"Partly—I think so," smiled Viola. Denton was an obliging and helpful chap! Since he had expounded for her benefit, there was no danger in asking him to go on. "Then you can only watch them until they somehow break the law?"

"There's where we're rather helpless," admitted Denton. "They're careful usually to stay within the law. That breed knows its game."

"You can watch them, though," persisted Viola, "and, knowing what they are about, forestall them. Do they know that you have discovered them?"

"Not if Jenkins could help it, they don't," grinned Denton. "There are only two of them so far as he has learned. He has them shadowed day and night. An Italian and a Spaniard, he says they are. He's looking up their records."

Viola caught at the fact that Kolinsky had been overlooked, the most dangerous of the trio because of his Slavic origin which was similar to that of the bulk of the people he was working among; and because of his recent visit to Russia and claimed comradeship with the Bolshevik chieftain there.

"It isn't fair that you can't do anything to stop them," protested Bessie. "They'll persuade more of the workers—"

"I don't think so," said Denton. "The little flurry of withdrawals that brought the affair to our notice probably weeded out both the more timorous and the more radical. As a general rule, these people are satisfied," he declared in his ignorance. "They've been well treated in this town—in this country—and so far as the bank is concerned their relations with it have increased their confidence in it. That is demonstrated by the many who have become depositors since we got the first of them."

"The mystery is all cleared up in that case," said Bessie. "Now, as Mrs. Sallin just said, all you have to do is keep an eye on the—the Bolsheviks and checkmate them."

"Uh-huh." Denton was, on the whole, pleased with the way matters had turned out. He had been cleared of the imputation that he was an alarmist. His perspicacity had given the bank a weapon with which to combat further possible inroads, by revealing the agitators and the point at which counterpropaganda should be aimed. But—he spoke the thought aloud.

"No," he repeated, "we don't expect any more to quit because of this agitation."

"That does seem unlikely," remarked Viola sympathetically, "considering that they know your bank so well." She maneuvered the conversation into other channels and was departing when Denton recalled that he had not asked how Sallin was progressing.

"Oh, so splendidly!" said Viola jubilantly, and she laughed inwardly over her real meaning. "He does better and better every day! Why, just think of it, he'll soon have the bandages off his eyes!"

"That's great," enthused Denton. "I hope your best expectations are realized."

Bessie echoed his expression. And so did Viola as, the good nights said, she laughed softly and skipped over the lawn.

Sallin *was* doing better every day—with the help of Taylor and Odell and the city's water pressure! The news she brought him to-night would be far from depressing! Hadn't the damage momentarily done by Heusler been repaired? And this Jenkins person wasn't so much as a detective.

XI.

THROUGHOUT the summer afternoons and evenings Sallin maintained his mummylike pose on the veranda. Constantly beside him was Viola, the personification of loving devotion, sitting close to him, her head frequently cuddling his. The picture came to be an accepted one among the neighbors who could not but applaud the way in which Viola clung to the man who, after all, might be horribly disfigured!

Such was the face the household presented on the outside to mask what was going on within.

From the other side of the cellar, toward the bank, another tunnel was being run. Though more than twice as long as that which had been cut to the water main, this bigger work was being done with a minimum of labor and with greater speed. It went on more quickly because there was no need of being cautious about pick ax blows lest their thudding might be heard above ground. For this drift that was to reach the bank was being made by hydraulic power with a stream at sixty pounds pressure from the tapped main.

The sandy soil was ideal. Under the one-inch stream from the six-inch hose, it crumbled fast and was swept back into the cellar to swirl down the drain in the flood.

It was soggy working, but easy. Always they were close up to the head of the drift, lengthening the hose as they advanced and getting the full force of the water. And the only sound from their operations was the steady *swish-swish* as the powerful stream carried them ever nearer to the million dollars that was to repay their effort.

Occasionally they had to stop to do some shoveling, but on the whole they were called upon for little exertion other than steadying the bucking nozzle and shoring up the shaft. For the latter need they kept on ripping out lumber from the interior of the house. The upper floor and the attic were completely wrecked. More than the two thousand dollars that had been paid on the house would be required to repair it!

On the fourth day they reached the foundation wall at the rear of the bank. They had gone forty-five feet.

Their line was straight, their calculations correct. They were within five feet of the goal! But before they attained that there was the greatest difficulty to be overcome—a solid mass of concrete to be gone through, and hardened steel.

Here again Viola's friendship with Bessie and Denton proved invaluable. Availing herself of the invitation to visit the bank and be shown how well the money was protected, she had learned something of the construction of this particular vault.

The bank stood by itself, a square stone building, high ceilinged, two stories high. The vault was to the rear, projecting onto the floor, with three sides and the top exposed, its back to the wall. Steel incased in concrete, it seemed impregnable. And Viola, with many exclamatory "Ohs!" as Denton showed her the massive walls and the huge door with its complicated mechanism, remarked on the tremendous strength of the place. Also, as she stood inside it, her heel rapped the armor plate floor and she spoke of the impressive solidity of that, too.

"It *is* pretty solid," Denton had smiled. "There is plate and concrete and more plate—and then two feet more of concrete underneath."

Viola had nodded brightly at that. "That's so no one can break in from the cellar," she had remarked knowingly.

And Bessie again had shown how much she knew about the bank by smiling and shaking her head.

"No fear of any one breaking in from the cellar," she said, "because there is no cellar. Not back here. Only in front.

Whereat Viola voiced another vague "Oh!" She had been aware that the cellar did not extend beneath the vault. What she had sought to learn, and had found out, was the thickness of the base of the vault. Denton had told her. Had she asked him at any other time about the construction of the vault, she might have awakened suspicion. By coming to the bank to be awed by the weightiness of the strong room she had obtained this detail in a natural way during his exposition.

Odell and Taylor reached the foundation wall in the afternoon. They rested there and called Sallin.

Sallin's face was eager as he made his way through the muddy tunnel. The consummation of his dream was near. The patience with which he had waited for this moment was close to being rewarded.

"We'll wait till night before we go on," he said softly, his fingers lingering over the bared masonry as though he would brush it away. "There are clerks up there—in the niches on each side of the vault. They are close to the wall. They might hear the drill or notice the vibration. A wall is a good conductor."

"We can scrape away the mortar with a chisel," objected Odell. "We're getting close to it now. No use losing time."

"That's the way I feel about it," put in Taylor. "This damned burrowing like a rabbit is getting on my nerves—and usually I haven't any. Let's stick to it. We'll hit that concrete to-night."

"All right." Sallin was not averse to haste provided it did not jeopardise the undertaking. "How long will it take you, Duke, to bite through the concrete? It's two feet thick."

Taylor considered. "I doubt whether it can be done in a night," he announced. "It's a tough job. We'll have to cut a hole about eighteen inches in diameter—and we'll have to do it piecemeal, drilling at an angle and breaking it out in scraps."

Sallin was figuring on a definite date.

"Can we count upon getting in Friday? This is Tuesday. That allows until Thursday, three nights, to get through the concrete. After that, Mint, you won't want much time to put the finishing touches?"

"I'll say I won't!" promised Odell. "Once we hit into the plate we'll step into that vault any time you like."

"Right," said Sallin. "We'll wind up Friday if all goes well. Saturday, anyhow. There's no use waiting for Saturday—we wouldn't have the advantage of Sunday for the get-away; not with the way the cards lie." He turned to crawl from the tunnel. "I'll start things moving outside to make it Friday."

XII.

WHILE the underground members of the gang were clearing a working space under the bank vault, Sallin speeded up his plan to put into it the million dollars which he was to take out. Rather he gave release to the plan already well in motion. That was on Wednesday.

"Kolinsky will have to do most of the talking," he told Heusler, who was making his call as "Dr. Perthwaite." "De Real and Fiorella, remember, are known and likely are being tailed. They can circulate some, but warn them to be careful."

Viola had managed to keep advised on the success of the detective employed by the bank. They had not yet made an excuse on which to jail De Real or Fiorella, or to run them out of town. Neither had they identified Kolinsky as one of the agitators.

Sam Heusler heaved his big bulk restlessly.

"When do I quit coming here?" he queried. "I'm getting well known—I mean, the folks round here 'll be able to give a good line on me. I'll have a hell of a job getting away."

Sallin eyed him coldly and his tone was chill. "You'll quit coming Saturday night when you carry us away."

"You said I'd get a couple of days' start—"

With a motion Sallin halted the protest.

"We'll all start even," he said grimly. "If you can't take the chances with the rest of us—" He turned away, the sentence uncompleted.

Heusler gathered his nerve to express something that had been growing in his mind.

"There ought to be a better cut," he began.

Sallin wheeled on him, his lips drawing over his teeth.

"It's late in the day to talk about that," he rasped. "You're down for ten per cent and"—he stopped close and his finger on Heusler's chest emphasized the words—"and you get ten per cent. See!"

Heusler backed up. "Well—" He stopped, his glance wavering, his hands twitching. "Well—"

The word was snatched from his mouth by Sallin.

"It *is* well," he said with a flickering, menacing smile. "It's advisable, too, for you to see it that way. Now, listen." He ended the argument by taking up his instructions. "These birds will have to get in their big work on Thursday night. Friday morning they can go to the mills and set off the fireworks some more. I want the rush to start Friday morning."

Heusler did not feel very companionable toward Sallin. Sallin acted too high-handedly—let others take too much of the risk.

"And for the love of Heaven," went on Sallin fervently, "don't let them go off half cocked this time."

"I'll tell them." Heusler defended himself in advance. "If they ball it up, it won't be my fault."

"See they don't ball it up, then it can be nobody's fault. And the night we get through—Friday, as things now stand—you'll come here in the evening about nine o'clock. Some time during the night Vi and I will leave with you."

"I could leave you the car and go earlier—" Heusler had no ambition to be in a party on the flight. There would be more danger in numbers. Viola's red hair would be a flaming marker.

"As you like." Sallin smiled and squinted at him. "How about your divvy? How do we get that to you?"

Heusler crumpled a cigar. "Yeh—that's so. I guess—I'll have to stick. Where you going to make for?"

Sallin held up his hands in negation. "We'll drop you anywhere you say or take you into New York. But when we finish here, Sam, I don't aim ever to see you again. I'm going—" He waved the round of the compass.

"You have it all straight?" Sallin became brisk. "Friday morning the big show is to begin. That 'll make it right for us if everything pans out. Have you told De Real and Fiorella that the cops are onto them?"

"No. You said—"

"They don't know it? Haven't wised up themselves?"

"They'd have spoken of it."

"Then you can slip them a hint to watch their steps. There's another thousand apiece if they make good. That will hold them. Beat it now, Sam, and get them tuned up."

That night, after he had summoned Kolinsky through De Real and delivered the final instructions, Heusler gave himself up to disgruntled and surly thoughts.

First among these was his distaste for the public part he had been given to play. He had a hunch that somebody was going to bump into trouble. Sam was a good spy and prospect hunter, but he was not so good as a field man. He sincerely wished that

he had not been tempted into active participation. He could just as well have remained on the outside and still collected a substantial rake-off from Sallin. It wouldn't have amounted to ten per cent, but he might have got half that.

Second, he was sore because he was getting no more than ten per cent. Sallin was a hog on the big end—sixty per cent for him and Viola. Sam couldn't dope out why Taylor and Odell should get fifteen per cent apiece—more than he was getting. Hadn't they been under cover throughout, while he was in the open?

Sam would have had more than that to disturb him had he been within hearing distance of De Real, Fiorella, and Kolinsky. Fiorella had trailed him a few days previously to Sallin's house. They could not make sure that it was Sallin who occupied it, but they could guess shrewdly. None of them knew Sallin personally, but they knew of his existence as a criminal director of large caliber specializing in banks. The proximity to the bank of the house at which Heusler called therefore was significant. They were biding their time—to declare themselves in with Heusler if anything was pulled off.

"We start a riot in this town Friday," was the way Kolinsky communicated the orders received from Heusler.

"What is doing?" asked De Real.

"Don't know, but"—Kolinsky winked and his mouth widened—"it's something good, sure thing. We have to keep tab on Heusler."

"It's funny business," opined Fiorella. "What we stirrin' up these guys for?"

"I just said I don't know," responded Kolinsky, "but there's a thousand more in it for us. That's regular. We get it by mail Saturday if the riot comes off."

De Real smiled leanly. "We shall have to watch Heusler very closely when he comes here. Is that all he told you?"

Kolinsky pondered. "Uh-huh!" He thought it better not to pass on the warning that Heusler had given about detectives. His companions might be perturbed enough to drop out. He wanted help in handling Heusler; and he did not desire to introduce any new faces.

Furthermore, Heusler would have started a rapid fade-out right then had he but known that Jenkins, the detective, was on the verge of establishing the connection between the agitators and their immediate chief. He was checking up on the phone call to De Real, made by Heusler when he summoned Kolinsky. That led Jenkins to a cigar store in New York City and apparently into a blind alley. But Jenkins was persistent. He had landed in blind alleys ere this—and gone beyond them.

XIII.

FRIDAY morning the external waves of Sallin's contriving burst into full motion. The "riot" began on schedule.

Frank Denton saw the initial evidence of it through the windows of the bank before the opening hour at ten o'clock.

More than a score of the foreign born mill workers were standing there. And they were visibly excited.

Denton pointed them out to Trainor, the president. His face became troubled.

"More accounts closing," he said. "What's the latest word from Jenkins, Mr. Trainor?"

"He phoned a few minutes ago that these agitators did a lot of circulating last night and this morning," replied Trainor. "He talked with some of the people they talked to, and learned that word is being disseminated that the bank is unsound. Suppose we let those fellows in, Frank, and you talk to them?"

Several more depositors joined the cluster at the door. They were jabbering in their native tongues and gesticulating.

Denton glanced at the clock. A quarter to ten.

"There's one there that I know well," he said. "He was among the first to come to us when I directed the missionary work for the bank at the mills. I'll call him in."

A chorus went up from the little crowd as Denton approached the door. They pressed forward when they saw that he was going to open it. Some reaching through the outer grilled door, pounded on the plate glass with their fists. Their clamor grew as Denton opened the inner door.

Through the hubbub he called to the man he wanted. The cries partly ceased and he asked the man to enter. The others let their fellow come to the front. But when Denton slid back the grille to let him come in, they also tried to force a way. Another besides the favored one crushed by before Denton could again bar the entrance.

Denton gave them a friendly smile. They answered with sullen looks.

"What do you want?"

The man who had intruded replied with a torrent of words mostly in his own language. From the scattered English phrases in it, Denton gathered that the bank was "no good." The man brandished his bank book. He wanted his money.

Trainor, come forward to listen, stared in amazement. His brows drew together as he saw that the crowd outside was increasing.

Denton was questioning the man he knew.

"What craziness is this, Joe?" he asked with a carefree assumption that was in direct contrast with his feelings. He also noticed the growing numbers at the door. "What's he talking about when he says the bank is no good? You know how good it is—"

"Me no know!" vociferated Joe excitedly. "You been give our money to them capitalists to beat us till it's gone. You been—" In his agitation he wandered off into a flood of Polish.

Denton looked at Trainor. The president was very grave. His eyes traveled to the clock. Five minutes to ten.

"We'll have to make ready for that crowd, Frank. There's a hundred there now."

Denton continued to smile on the twain who apparently were speaking the belief of the throng. "Who says the bank is no good?" He used the unfortunate expression because they understood it best. Its repetition served only to impress it more strongly on their minds.

"Everybody! We know! Fellas tells us!" Such was the meat of their voluble and butchered answer.

The futility of argument was plain. They were in a panic. They saw their savings being swept away—and that into the hands of the capitalist, the slave driver!

Denton stepped aside with the president. From the street came a renewed murmuring.

"We can't stall them," he asserted the obvious. "All we can do is pay them and while we're doing so try to restore their confidence. We'll stack up all the currency we have in plain sight. It will look like millions to them and may cool them off."

The president sputtered. "My God, Frank, it's a run! That's what it is. Good Lord, a run on the Bank of Norford!" It was sacrilegious! He glared angrily but nervously at the chattering scores who blocked the sidewalk. Scrutiny of the motley crew aroused his caution.

"We can't let that mob in until we have protection," he decided. "Hey, you," he called to a clerk with a lack of dignity that under less distressing circumstances would have been impossible, "phone the police to send a squad here at once. Tell them to hurry. We can't open until they arrive. My God, Frank!" He ran a hand over his brow, and it came away wet. This was the most amazing event he had ever witnessed. A run on *his* bank!

"The police—" Denton doubted the advisability of having them. "Their presence may only stir these folks up more," he counseled. "I don't believe they'll start anything—get out of hand—if we let them see that there is plenty of cash."

"We'll have the police," said Trainor stubbornly. "Look at them!"

The crowd was milling more compactly about the door. They knew that ten o'clock had struck, the opening hour—and the bank had not opened.

For ten long minutes they watched the shuffling throng whose mutterings swelled louder and more sustained. Once Denton attempted to reason with them through the grilled door, but they howled them down and clawed through the bars at him.

An automobile with six policemen was pulling up when Jenkins telephoned.

Trainor spoke with him.

"I've just had three of the agitators thrown out of the mills," reported the detective. "They were going round advising the workers to get their money before it's

too late. They say your bank is busted and that you are preferring the moneyed people in making settlements."

Trainor swore between gasps. He heard Jenkins continue:

"You can prepare for a rush. Bunches of them are quitting work to go get their money from you. Anything doing down your way yet?"

"Anything doing!" Trainor's voice creaked excitedly. "They're besieging the place! That's all! Why the devil don't you do something to protect us, Jenkins? That's what we pay you for. Get busy! Do something! Lock these men up. Make a charge against them. Get them—"

"It's past time for doing that, Mr. Trainor," interrupted the detective. "You should have let me do it days ago. But you wouldn't stand for framing them."

Trainor bobbed up and down with rage.

"What in the name of God are we to do?" he shouted. "We've got a mob here—and you say calmly that there's more coming. There's somebody back of this, Jenkins. Find who it is."

"I'm trying to do that," said Jenkins patiently. "And meantime all you can do is—pay."

"I know that—and we can do it," snapped Trainor. "But we can't handle them all. We haven't that much money in the place. We need time. We have to get currency from New York."

"Make time," retorted Jenkins. "Count out their cash in one dollar bills—in quarters and halves. Don't pay at more than one window. You can make time if you need it. I'm going back on the job. I'll phone you later. How about protection? Have you got the police?"

"They're here," said Trainor. "We're waiting till they get the mob lined up before we open."

"I'm bringing half a dozen of my men over from New York right away. They're huskies and will help keep order. I'll be in later. I'll hold the three birds who made the trouble."

Herded by the policemen, the depositors were in a long cue on the sidewalk. As Denton had predicted, the coming of the police did not improve their temper. They were quieter in the presence of the officers, but their looks were blacker. In the calling of the police they read confirmation of the fear that their money was lost.

At ten thirty the bank opened, but the grilled gate was drawn only wide enough to admit one person at a time. At each side of it was a policeman. Inside were two others. Patrolling the cue were four more.

Frank Denton was in the only teller's cage that was to serve the stampeders. Other depositors were to be handled at another wicket.

Beside Denton were great stacks of currency. Behind his cage clerks were piling up more. It was a desperate but impressive display of strength made in the hope that those who departed with their demands met would tell their fellows that there was lots of money and so stay the panic.

At ten thirty-one Denton smiled on the first of the line to be admitted. He scanned the withdrawal slip which called for fourteen hundred and sixty dollars. He sent the pass book back to have the balance verified.

Two minutes later he started to count out fourteen hundred and sixty dollars in one dollar bills!

The bank had to have time. If it should pay out with customary speed, the cash in the vaults, totaling less than two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, must be exhausted before noon. Time was necessary to rush in funds from the reserve bank to meet the emergency.

XIV.

As the day wore on, the run increased in volume. It was felt elsewhere in the town, and so became a sensation. The Bank of Norford called loans. Its borrowers could make good with money obtained from other banks. The stacks of currency back of Frank Denton had to be replenished. But no matter how slowly he paid out, they diminished alarmingly.

By early afternoon the panic among the foreign element communicated to some of the more stable citizens. The calling of loans had much to do with that. They did not understand that this measure was taken

as a means of stalling along pending the arrival of currency from the reserve bank in New York City. Securities and time paper was being realized on there while the Bank of Norford's physical reserve was being brought in.

Crowds packed the street outside the bank. The line of those who wanted to close their accounts constantly lengthened. By two o'clock the last of the fifteen hundred mill workers joined it.

Up to that hour Denton handled about a hundred depositors. He went about his task with a semblance of confident cheerfulness. He was unflurried and methodical as ever, and he made his painstaking slowness seem like speed. Approximately he had paid out two hundred thousand dollars.

Under normal conditions he could have disposed of four times as many people. These were not normal conditions. He was still paying in small bills, obtained from the other banks in town, because the cash had not yet come from New York.

At the meeting of the board of directors which sat throughout the day the proposal was made to exert the bank's prerogative of thirty days' notice on withdrawals. That was voted down when the ill effect of refusal to pay was accented.

" We can dally as we have been doing," said Denton, " but we mustn't stop paying. The minute we do that there will be a riot. If we keep on passing out currency, that crowd won't get rough. They may growl, but they won't begin to smash things. Stop paying and they'll go wild."

" Denton is right," said Trainor, whose head had steadied after the first shock. He was all business now, protecting his bank. " We have to keep on making motions. The bigger depositors know well that we're solvent, and they are standing off. Some of them have come forward with cash to help us out. We'll weather it without a battle out there in the street as long as we continue to pay."

The directors listened to that argument and were convinced.

" You can speed up a little now, Frank," said Trainor. " A million and a half is on the way from New York. It may get here before closing time; if not, soon after."

The other banks when appealed to came to the assistance of the Norford with upward of a hundred thousand in Liberty bonds and other fast collateral. Denton's fingers riffled faster over the bills, but he did not make real haste. The stacks of currency surrounding him dwindled too fast for safety. Already they were stuffed—cash was being piled on top of ledgers and deposit boxes to make it look like something substantial. He was playing more than ever against time, for it appeared that the million and a half could not reach Norford from New York before the closing hour. Until then appearances must be maintained. In the morning all comers would get their money as quickly as it could be counted. Meantime—

At three o'clock the bank closed. It had twelve thousand and some odd dollars left! Two score of policemen were on the scene for the closing. There was the moment fraught with danger.

The precaution was well taken. When they found that no more was to be paid that day, the throng that had stood in line for hours broke into a wailing that soon rose into a vicious, angry shouting. They scattered from the cue which the police had kept intact and jammed the street in front of the bank.

The policemen bore the demonstration with tolerance. They contented themselves with keeping the walk clear. The crowd weaved back and forth, but abstained from violence. It lacked a leader, lacked the provocation of a violent act.

About three thirty the police opened a way for the heavily guarded machine which finally arrived with the currency. It was that, however, which fired the mob.

The machine, which by its very stanchness reflected money, pulled up on the sidewalk to the bank door. A silence fell; then, as the door was opened and the auto's freight was unloaded, as strong boxes were passed into the bank, those nearest began to shout. There was money in these boxes. They wanted money—their money. The bank was no good! If that money got into a no-good bank, it would be gone!

So they yelled; and the thousand others behind them, who were as vitally interested,

took up the cry. And the several thousands back of them, women and children mostly, reëchoed it.

They pushed forward. The police, aided by Jenkins's huskies, pushed them back. They pressed on. They surged and fought. A policeman, hard put to it, used his stick on a head. A rock was thrown.

Another policeman, being borne back by weight of numbers, felt a knife rip his shoulder. He struck down a man. One of the plate glass windows of the bank was smashed by a stone. The clamor became the deep toned baying of a mob become furious and out of hand.

"Hustle that stuff," the police captain in charge called to the men unloading the money. "We can hold them about one more minute. Then—"

"All out," said Denton from the doorway. He slammed the iron grille.

The crowd roared. The money had passed into the bank that was no good.

"Get your machine moving," the captain ordered the chauffeur. "I'm going to use it to break up these hoots."

His men still held a clear space on the walk, but they had to fight for it. Gun in hand, he swung aboard the automobile.

From the midst of the mob a revolver shot rang out. Others followed.

The captain called upon the crowd to disperse. They howled in their several tongues more furiously. He spoke to his men.

"No shooting unless you have to. But —use your sticks if they buck you. Go to 'em!"

The police went. The auto helped, backing into the mob again and again.

One policeman was shot. A dozen of the besiegers were laid out with broken skulls. The police were being overcome when another force attacked the rear of the mob and the half hour battle was ended.

For an hour thereafter the chief of police and substantial citizens, including the mill managers and superintendents, harangued the several crowds which collected. They told of the money that had been brought from New York. Hadn't the mob with their own eyes seen it unloaded? In the morning it would be distributed. More was coming. They talked earnestly, these men, singling out among the crowds those they could best thump some sense of the situation into. At length they drove home the futility of further trouble. Many were persuaded to leave. Many remained to see that the precious boxes were not removed. But quiet had been restored.

The police threw lines about the building. The affair simmered down for the night. Inside the bank the million and a half of currency was checked and stowed in the vault. The weary clerks went home under police escort.

Trainor and Denton remained in the bank, as did the treasurer. There was always the chance that the mob might regather and attempt to storm the building. But for that possibility the vault might not have been locked that night.

Sallin had bet that it would be locked—that just such a condition would prevail. He won.

Viola sat late with Bessie Wentworth that evening. She had to learn how matters stood in the bank.

Bessie was worried about Denton. She feared he might be attacked on the way home.

Viola spoke reassuringly. Across the lots they could see that the bank remained lighted.

They may stay there all night," said Viola. "What did he say when you talked to him a while back?"

"That they might stay," said Bessie. "Wh-what if that crowd breaks in!"

"I'm sure there is no danger, dear," Viola soothed her. "Phone him again, and have him, if he can, run over to see you. He'll tell you that he is perfectly safe; that the trouble is past."

She patted Bessie's hand encouragingly.

"Ye-es," conceded Bessie tremulously, "I suppose it is." She took Viola's suggestion. "I—I'll phone him."

"It is said that they got millions in this afternoon," added Viola. This was what she wanted to know. "In the morning they will be able to pay every one. The crowd knows that. Ask Frank if it isn't so, dear," she was craftily insinuating. "These people saw the money go in. They realize

that they can't get it before morning. Ask Frank. He'll tell you that's so."

In her anxiety Bessie failed to observe the trace of eagerness which Viola could not altogether suppress. She asked Denton about the shipment of currency.

"We're all set, Bessie," he said cheerfully over the phone. "It's a case of waiting for morning. . . . No, there won't be any more trouble."

"Why are you staying in the bank, then, Frank?"

"I'm staying"—he gave a woman's reason, which she, being a woman, could not understand—"oh, because."

Thought came to her of the procedure the bank had had to pursue that day. The panic-stricken depositors would not stand for that again.

"You're sure you won't have to pay so slowly to-morrow?" she demanded suspiciously. "If you do— How much money have you?"

"We won't," replied Denton happily. "We'll pay at all four windows as fast as we can shovel it out. We're all fixed now, although, I'll tell you, sweetheart, we were down to twelve thousand when we closed. We couldn't have lasted ten more minutes."

"How much have you now?" she insisted.

"A million and a half," he answered truthfully; and Viola started as the girl repeated the amount. "That is locked in the vault now," continued Denton, "and as much more will be here in the morning."

They talked longer of more intimate things; and more material when she pressed for assurance that he had had something to eat.

"The police brought food in to us," he told her. "We're O. K., except that we haven't anything more comfortable than chairs to sleep on."

Whereupon Bessie lamented over his discomfort, and promised to obey his injunction to forget it and go to sleep herself.

From Bessie, thus, Viola learned the amount of cash available; and that the vault was locked, although three of the bank officials remained on the premises.

Gleefully she went home to Sallin.

His lithe figure tensed and the pulses throbbed at his temples.

"Into the hole, boys," he said to Taylor and Odell. "I'll be right after you. The big clean-up is on."

He turned to Sam Heusler.

"Get out, Sam, and shoot the five hundred bonus to De Real, Fiorella and Kolinsky. No—make it a thousand each; they've earned it." He gave Heusler six five hundred dollar bills. Heusler was addressing three envelopes in which to mail the money when the doorbell rang. Viola answered it. Her face was troubled when she returned.

"It's a man for you, Sam. De Real!"

An oath sizzled from Sallin. "How did he get here?" he snarled at Heusler.

"How the hell do I know?" Heusler snarled back. His nerves were crackling. "I didn't tell him."

Sallin stifled his fury. This was not the moment for a clash. De Real could know nothing.

"Go see him." Sallin smiled poisonously on Heusler. He was glad Sam had agreed to be on hand at the finish. He would want to see Sam—very much—if the robbery fell down at its consummation.

In trepidation Heusler went downstairs to meet his visitor. De Real also smiled upon him—anticipatorily.

"We are arrested—my friends and myself," he related. "One thousand dollars bail is required for each. We made up enough to get me out. Two thousand dollars is required to release my friends."

Heusler breathed more freely.

"What is the charge?"

"Conspiracy, they say." De Real shrugged. "We shall not come back to hear the rest of it. You will give us the money you promised—and the three thousand dollars for our bonds. Yes?"

"How did you know to come here?" scowled Heusler.

De Real's shoulders moved again. "I just—came."

Heusler did not parley. His cue was to get rid of De Real.

"Wait a minute." He went upstairs to Sallin, who with few words gave him the additional money.

"Get him out," he said. "And advise him to leave town."

While Heusler was seeing De Real on his way, Sallin drew Viola to him.

"Do you want to leave now, Vi? Before we make the break? They may open the vault while we're in it. You can take Heusler's car—"

"I'll stay," she said quietly. "We'll go together, Floyd."

His eyes kindled on her. "A million, Vi! That's what we went after. And we take a million and a half! For the rest of our lives, Vi—"

Silently they contemplated the alluring future. The red-head rubbed back and forth. It was the last caress Sallin would have from that red-head. As he went to direct his cracksmen, Viola went to soak her gorgeously flaring crown in a bath of indigo.

XV.

WHILE the three bank officials slumbered restlessly, and the watchman kept his usual vigil beside the eighteen-inch steel and concrete walls of the vault, the oxy-acetylene torch burned a way through the floor of it for Sallin, Odell, and Taylor.

Once during their labor, Trainor, the president, sat bolt upright from his sleep. That was while the drill in Taylor's hand was nibbling out the layer of concrete immediately beneath the floor of the vault.

"Do you hear anything?" Trainor spoke sharply to the watchman.

"No, sir. What?" The watchman looked out the front windows at the policemen patrolling. They were the only persons in sight.

Trainor was peeved over his sleep having been broken; it had been none too good at best, curled up as he was in a chair.

He listened. And he heard nothing because his senses were tricking him. He had not *heard* the drilling. He had *felt* it. Unconsciously he had registered the vibration which in his full consciousness he could not define.

"Nothing," he said. "I was dreaming, I guess." It was reasonable to believe that he had been dreaming, after his stressful day.

The watchman noted the time. He punched his clock.

Trainor squirmed into his chair.

"What time is it?"

"One o'clock, sir."

"Ugh!" said Trainor. He glowered at Denton who was smiling in his sleep; and at the treasurer who slouched wide-mouthed and snoring.

As the flame of the torch licked a hole through the floor of the vault and began to turn out a circle big enough to admit a man, the president of the Bank of Norford composed himself again to sleep.

At two thirty Sallin, Odell, and Taylor made their last trip through the tunnel they had bored to strike into the bank from below. They were muddy and perspiring, their muscles were cramped from stooping, but they had in their possession three-quarters of a million dollars in hundred-dollar-bills, a quarter of a million in fifties, another quarter million in tens, and a third quarter in fives and ones. Fifty feet away policemen circled the bank from which it had been taken. They saw the lights in the house through the block, did these same policemen, but lights in a private dwelling meant nothing though the hour was late. Sallin was avoiding any evidence of stealth on the get-away.

In the living room of the house that had served so well as a base of operations, they divided the cash—two hundred and twenty-five thousand each for Odell and Taylor; one hundred and fifty thousand for Heusler; nine hundred thousand for Floyd Sallin and Viola.

His face alight, Sallin looked over his accomplices. He had cashed in at last on his dream!

"We're through, boys," he said softly. "From now on it's every man for himself."

Taylor looked up from stuffing his stack of hundreds and fifties into a hand bag.

"Mint and I are going to hang together," he announced. "Eh, Mint?" They had been working partners for many years. They could take their chances together to the end.

"That's what," said Odell. "Chuck

that into your bag, Duke." He tossed over his fortune like so much dross.

Sam Heusler alone in the company showed fear. His face was pallid. He turned over with shaking hands the paper package into which he had wrapped his share.

"You—you're going to take me with you, chief?" he begged. "You aren't going to quit me here?"

Sallin regarded him contemptuously. He raised his eyebrows as he glanced at Viola. She stood, keyed up but nerveful, arrayed for the street in a plain tailored suit. She seemed now to be of slighter build, her clear complexion had become olive, the "birthmark" was gone from the left cheek, and her hair that had been so entrancingly ruddy was a glistening black.

"You ride into New York with us," said Sallin to Heusler. "Then you shift for yourself. You boys"—he smiled on the two cracksmen—"can climb aboard the machine down street if you please. Or you can jump the blind on a train that goes through at three twenty. We don't want to leave here in a bunch with the cops looking on. We can make it look like a party breaking up. What say?"

Taylor and Odell glanced at each other and nodded.

"The rattler," they agreed. They knew the ways of the jungles, and in this instance they preferred these to the highroad.

Sallin picked up the two suit cases that held his and Viola's loot. He had changed to clean clothes from those he had worn on the wealth-laden trips through the tunnel. So had Taylor and Odell. All was ready for the get-away.

"You two, Duke and Mint, go first," said Sallin. He was cold as ice, except for the glow of victory in his eyes, the smile that radiated in little waves from the corners of his mouth. "You turn to the left along the street. It's a dark night. Step along as though you belonged. Away from here you'll be all right. A lot of those bohunks are loafing around, I guess, waiting for first crack in the morning at the cash they won't get."

He led the way to the door. In the vestibule he laid down the grips and gave a hand to Taylor and Odell.

The door was opened. They stood in the faint light from the hall.

"Good night," said Sallin in an ordinary tone.

"Good night."

"Good night!"

It was naturally done. There *might* be some one within hearing.

"Good luck, boys," whispered Odell as they turned away.

"'Luck, chief."

They were gone, turning down the street to the left.

"They're game, Vi. They 'll make out."

It was a hint to Heusler to take a brace.

"We'll all make out," said Viola in sharp undertone, "if we play half as well as they do."

Sam Heusler's teeth clattered.

"Let's go," he whispered huskily. "Let's get—"

"After you, Sam," said Sallin. "We'll pick you up two blocks west." That was in the opposite direction from Main Street. "You go to the right from here, then two blocks west."

Heusler clutched at him.

"You're quitting me," he whimpered.

Sallin's fingers bit into his arms.

"We're not quitting you. Two blocks over is where we'll meet you."

Heusler was afraid—but he knew that Sallin's word was good. Sallin never had thrown a pal.

"You're wasting time, Sam," said Sallin. "Get going. We want no jam getting out of here. Ready, Vi? Going, Sam?"

"Ready," answered Viola. She took up one of the grips. Sallin took the other.

"So help your God, you won't quit me?" wheezed Sam.

"So help me!" Sallin opened the door. "You're yellow, Sam," he added dispassionately.

Precipitately Sam went into the darkness. He did not hear Sallin's "Good luck!" If he did, he gave no response.

They allowed him three minutes.

With magnificent effrontery Sallin and Viola wished "Good night!" to nobody. They shut the door, leaving the lights in the house burning, and walked without haste to the car.

Starting it, there was still no attempt at concealment. Sallin raced the engine, throttled it down, and moved away at not over eight miles an hour. He threw on the headlights, making the turn into the street on which they were to meet Sam. A block down he dimmed them and slowed.

At the designated corner they stopped.

"Hell's damnation!"

Sallin's curse was the first speech since leaving the house.

Heusler was not there.

Viola gripped Sallin's arm. "The fool," she breathed. "He came this way—the yellow pup! We can't wait, Floyd. He's had time—"

"We'll give him his chance," said Sallin. "Wait." He got out of the machine and stooped as though examining a shoe.

Sixty dragging seconds they waited. Sallin returned to his seat. The car was moving when Viola gripped his arm.

"There!" She pointed. "Is that—No. There are two men there—three men."

The machine gathered speed.

XVI.

Discovery of the body of Sam Heusler opened the second day of sensations in the town of Norford. A milkman crossing a vacant lot stumbled upon it just round the corner from where Sallin had lived. There was the mark of a weighty blow on the face—and a knife wound between the ribs. The knife had penetrated the heart.

The body was found soon after six o'clock. Instantly it vied in interest with the crowd already assembling to withdraw their funds from the Bank of Norford.

On account of the latter situation the town generally was early astir. In this neighborhood were few who had been drawn into the run on the bank. Many there were depositors, however, and they were up betimes to watch developments from the side lines with a more peculiar concern than the ordinary spectator.

Among these early risers was Bessie Wentworth. Her waking action was to telephone Frank Denton. He reported a wearisome night with "all well."

"There's a crowd out front already," he informed Bessie, "but they seem to have lost their pep. If they had as rotten a night as I had, I don't wonder."

"Poor dear boy," murmured Bessie. "I'm going to send you something nice for breakfast. What do you want, Frank?"

"Well, now—" Denton considered. "I know!" he asserted suddenly. "You get 'em for me, Bess, and I'll love you twice as much."

"Then you admit that you don't love me all you might?" she challenged.

"Of course I do. But this—"

"Never mind your excuses," she pouted. "You can't explain. Tell me what you want."

"I'll explain this afternoon when I get you—" He interrupted himself as Trainor awoke and turned heavy eyes on him. He reverted to his breakfast hankering. "I want creamed shrimp on toast and a pair of coddled eggs, Bessie, sweetheart. Do I get them?"

"The easiest thing!" It would be fun making breakfast for Frank. Like the days that were to come. "I'll go right out and get the shrimp in the first store that opens. It 'll be canned, of course, Frank, but—"

Denton laughed deprecatingly. "Of course you will not go out. I didn't think of that. Make it four coddled and forget the—"

"I won't forget it," stated Bessie indignantly. "You'll get what you want. And a melon and cream and coffee and hot rolls and cruellers and—and—and a shark steak if you say so."

"That 'll be great," he accepted buoyantly. "Bring what you said and forget the shr—"

"I won't forget it," she repeated, "and you won't see or hear from me until I bring it over. So there!"

And Bessie hung up to dress hurriedly for the street. Her Frank could not be denied what he most desired for breakfast after having had to sleep in that horrid bank all night.

Consequently Bessie was outdoors before seven o'clock.

In her quest for shrimp she went along the street in the direction Sam Heusler had

taken from the Sallin house. At the first intersection she noticed a crowd a few lots distant. Policemen were there. With excusable curiosity she stepped aside.

As she came up another policeman made his way through the knot of people. She caught a glimpse of the man lying dead on the grass.

Bessie screamed. Through horrified sobs she identified Heusler as "Dr. Perthwaite," who attended Mr. Sallin.

"That helps," said Detective Blakeley, of the police department. "Where does this guy Sallin live?"

Bessie led them to the house. There there was an immediate evidence of something out of gear. Though it was daylight, the house was still illuminatd.

When no one answered the repeated rings, the police broke in. The absence of occupants, coupled with the ruin made by the tearing out of the floors, inspired more complete investigation. The twin tunnels were found, and the ruck of hose and other paraphernalia in the cellar.

In this way, through the murder of Sam Heusler, the robbery of the Bank of Norford was discovered backward.

When a policeman entered the bank and notified Trainor, the president, another policeman was standing in the vault when Trainor opened it.

That was at seven forty-five o'clock.

The vault was clear of cash excepting the twelve hundred odd dollars that had been on hand at the previous close of business. Nothing else had been tampered with; no effort made to break open the strong boxes which contained securities. The money had been easy to take because it had literally just been dumped inside to be handy when the bank reopened to meet the run.

Jenkins arrived while Trainor, Denton, the treasurer, and the police were gawping at the looted vault. The hole in the floor and the tunnel told the whole story, but they were having difficulty grasping it, so enormous was the job.

The little detective whistled. Like a flash he saw through the scheme. Largely that was because he had been wearily perplexed by the campaign against the bank.

"A genius—a genius in robbery," he spoke his thoughts aloud. "Pulling off a run to get a bunch of cash here."

His tone was not without admiration. It riled Trainor.

"If we had a genius in the shape of a detective," he exploded, "we might get a start on capturing the genius robber."

Jenkins received that with customary mildness. "Mebbe you don't need a genius. Where does the hole lead to?"

"To where there is nobody now, of course! Where did you think?" Trainor lost his dignity again. This was the finish. Two hours hence the mob would be back clamoring for the money that was gone. Already it was gathering. And there was twelve hundred dollars to face it with!

Trainor suddenly aged ten years. He slumped into a chair.

"To where there's nobody," he iterated less venomously, "and, I suppose, no trace of who was there except a dead man."

"A dead man!" Jenkins jumped at that. He had been doing something himself, despite Trainor's unkind remarks. The three agitators he had locked up had given him a little to work on. "How was he killed—where?"

"In a lot round the corner," said a policeman. "Must have been a quarrel on the get-away. He has been known as a doctor tending a man in the house the tunnel comes from."

The twinkling eyes of Jenkins twinkled more brightly as he assembled the known facts. He put Trainor aside and gave his ear to Denton when the latter told what he knew of the Sallin household.

Blakely, the local sleuth, also pricked up at that. He went after Denton, cross-examining.

"You're quitting the bank, ain't you, to go to another?" he fired belligerently at last. "You knew the whole gang. You visited them—they visited you. What d'you know?" His gaze transfixed the flabbergasted Denton. "We'll want you, young feller! You and your girl! Where's she? Say— don't you stir out of here. We'll want you!"

With a burst of energy he plumped into the tunnel and went blundering through it to tear apart what Sallin and his crew had

left of the house. Blakely was looking for a clew.

The accusation left Denton gasping. Jenkins drew him aside.

"Don't you bother about him," he said. "He doesn't know there are four angles to this case. And on one of them I bet I know who killed this doctor guy. Who, I'll bet again was named Sam Heusler and traveled in funny company."

"Eh! What?" Trainor thrust himself forward. "What's this you're saying, Jenkins? For God's sake"—he lapsed into pathos—"if you can see anything like daylight, go after it, man, go after it. We"—his voice broke—"this old bank is out of business."

Jenkins refused to be hurried.

"We'll get nowhere by flying off Mr. Trainor," he said gently. "Will you let me be? And if that sleuth who thinks he wants to pinch Denton asks where Denton has gone, say he's over at his girl's house. We're going there. Tell him," Jenkins chortled, "he can get them both at one time over there. Come on Denton. I want your girl to tell me more about the red head!"

XVII.

By nine o'clock, while almost the entire police force was forming a cordon for a block around the bank and excluding all who were not on official business, Jenkins had an alarm sent out for De Real, Fiorella, and Kolinsky. His men had failed to find them at their lodgings, or any trace of them in town. He swore heartily because the police had not photographed and bertilloned them; because they had been granted bail. But he had a fair description of them to put on the wires. Also he offered a thousand dollars' reward for the capture of any of them dead or alive. He charged them with murder.

The local police followed his lead. They threw their net for the three agitators, plus one red-headed woman. These four with Heusler, they concluded, made up the robber band.

Jenkins let them think so. He encouraged them to think so by informing them that he had established direct relationship between the agitators and Heusler by following up the phone call from the cigar store in New York to De Real a few days previously. In addition he told them that De Real had visited the Sallin house the night before just prior to bailing his companions. The bitterness in Jenkins's cup was that his operative who had shadowed De Real had lost the trio immediately afterward.

But it was on the red head that Jenkins concentrated. The wash basin in the Sallin house he found was stained a rich, deep blue. That apparently was fresh. Among the fund of information catalogued in his head, he recalled that the women of northern Africa, Arabia, Persia and the East Indies use indigo in conjunction with henna on their hair. The indigo applied on top of henna, makes a glossy black.

Jenkins advised the police to look for a black-haired woman.

Conversation with Bessie had raised doubt in his mind about the genuineness of the red head. Yet Bessie would not say that it had been manufactured.

"I looked to see whether there was any darkening at the roots of her hair," Bessie confessed, "but I never saw any. It was such wonderful hair. If it hadn't been natural, I don't believe it could have remained so consistently brilliant."

"She could have treated it every night," said Jenkins. "Now about Sallin. Did you ever hear her say where the explosion took place that mussed him? There was no explosion, of course—there is no record of any Dr. Perthwaite, and he, anyhow has been identified as Heusler—but we might as well prove there was none."

"It occurred in New York City" said Bessie.

"We'll find out." Jenkins dispatched a telegram.

"Tell me everything you can remember about them," he went on. "Was there any little characteristic that she showed—or Sallin? Your description of her isn't worth much. It might fit a hundred women out of a thousand. With her hair a different color and dressed differently, her complexion changed and all that, it probably wouldn't begin to fit her. Did she have any noticeable gesture or trick of expression?"

Viola loomed as a rather indistinct figure. Her hair was what had impressed every one who had seen her, to the eclipse of her other features.

"I can't think of anything," said Bessie slowly, "only that she was terribly devoted to him—or appeared to be."

"Devoted? How so?" Wifely devotion wasn't a great deal to go on, but Jenkins was overlooking nothing.

"Oh — just." Bessie's mind wandered. She was thinking of Denton, back there in the bank, to reach which the angry depositors already were fighting the police.

"Just what?" Jenkins sharpened his tone to bring her back to the question.

"Oh, she was always — always loving him," replied Bessie none too definitely. "Petting him and—and leaning her cheek against his bandaged face. That—that's all I meant."

"Umph!" Jenkins couldn't see any progress here. "You never heard Sallin's voice?" he asked again.

Bessie had not; nothing more than a murmur of it through the bandaging. Neither had any one else.

"See if you can think of anything that would help identify the woman," he urged as he left Bessie. "I'm going to follow up the machine they got away in, if I can, but if you remember anything tell it to the operative I'm leaving here. I'll be in touch with him."

Passing out of town in a fast automobile, Jenkins looked grimly on the crowds storming the police lines surrounding the bank. From their point of view the robbery was a fake, and they refused to believe that more currency was on the way from New York.

"He is one bird, the guy who worked this," quoth Jenkins. "And since nobody round here ever saw his face, it looks like he'll get away with it. Heusler got jabbed when he was lighting out with his divvy—that's a safe bet. The three Bolsheviks weren't in on the big deal, but they horned. The red-head is the bunk—doesn't mean anything. A red-head and a bandaged-faced man. There's a hell of a combination! The only other definite item we have about her is that she's a loving wife! Yah!"

Abruptly he leaned forward in his seat in the speeding car. He stared with widening eyes.

"By—by—by—" He searched for an adequate expression. He leaned back.

"Let her pop till she busts, Bill," he said softly to the chauffeur, referring to the car.

"Well," said Jenkins. "Well, we-ell!"

XVIII.

THE most direct way from Norford brought Jenkins into New York over Broadway. From Yonkers he telephoned his office to inquire whether any one, policeman or motorist, had been found who remembered seeing the Sallin machine come in. The car's number was not available, but a good description of it had been given.

"They're fishing it out of the Harlem River," his office recounted. "At least, it seems to be the same car. We've got a man up there."

"In the river!" Jenkins tingled. He would have liked to run the case out, but if it was to wind up this way it was well enough. "What 'd they do? Run through an open draw?"

"No. It isn't at the bridge. It's in a slip where there's a dead-end street up at Two Hundred and Seventh."

Jenkins's hopes fell.

"Any bodies?"

"Haven't heard yet. We just got the tip fifteen minutes ago. Somebody saw the car as the tide went down."

"I'm going there."

When he reached the place a derrick-scow was running tackle about the partly submerged machine. The car was upside down.

A police launch was casting grappling irons. It was believed there were bodies, because a watchman at a power station on the river edge recollected having heard a splash. He had looked out, but, hearing nothing further, no cries for help, decided that it had signified nothing.

But though they dragged the slip, they brought up no bodies.

Talking over the phone with Norford, Jenkins received more encouraging news

than he had to present. The run on the bank had been checked by the arrival of more currency about noon. The morning had been filled with clashes between the panicky depositors and the police, but the results were no worse than a few minor injuries. Quiet again prevailed, with the bank paying off as fast as its tellers could count.

About three o'clock in the afternoon it developed that a motor boat was missing from a boathouse on the slip into which the automobile had hurdled. The boat had been moored outside the house, and seemingly had slipped its painter. About the same hour the harbor police reported the boat picked up adrift in the upper bay, below Bedloe's Island.

Because of the fact that if the idea he had was to be made good, Sallin must be captured quickly, Jenkins took up the incident of the motor boat. He noted where it had been found—and that the tide was coming in. Had it gone down the Harlem River on the ebbing tide, which makes an appreciable current into the East River, it would not have got into the bay. It could not have drifted that fast. Failure to discover any victims of the motor car in the river was a suggestive factor. There was no doubt about the car being that which Heusler had used as " Dr. Perthwaite," and in which Sallin and Viola had escaped.

The machine in the river at the point from which a boat had disappeared the same night offered at least a coincidence worth investigating. The watchman who had heard the car plunge into the water had not noticed the departure of any motor boat. It could have been poled out into the river stream and so got away noiselessly.

Jenkins sent a wireless broadcast over the sea asking all ships that sailed that day whether they had picked up any one from a boat. He set inquiries going along the water front, among the tugs and barges and pilot boats and ships that had come into port.

And with several operatives he went over to Staten Island. The point at which the boat had been found drifting, judging by the set of the tide, indicated that it might have been cast loose from the island.

" We'll comb Staten Island with fine teeth," he instructed his men. " I doubt whether the woman is there. She probably crossed back to Manhattan on the ferry. But the man—there's a chance."

During the night Jenkins and his men rested. It was useless to search in the dark for a man whose face they would not recognize; about whom they knew positively nothing other than that he was of slight build and assumably clean shaven.

With daylight some of them went abroad on the island. Jenkins and an assistant set out in a fast launch down the inner shore from Port Richmond. Another launch took the outer shore.

" Stop everywhere," was Jenkins's final order. " Look at everybody—every man who in any way slightly resembles in build the guy we're after. There is ten thousand in it for the man who gets him. I don't believe he's camping in Manhattan or Brooklyn. The heart of the big city is a good place to hide, but not always. This bird probably has an alibi cooked up regardless of his expectation that he can stay clear. He can prove an alibi better out here on Staten Island where he can be in an isolated spot, than he could in the city, when as in this case it has to cover weeks. Get me? Let's go."

Late Sunday afternoon Jenkins's launch chugged alongside a houseboat moored close inshore at a dreary spot three miles below Port Richmond.

There were five men on the houseboat, lounging about in the nondescript garb of men having a good time. Two were in bathing suits, sitting with their feet dangling in the water.

Jenkins stopped alongside these two. From the upper deck the three others looked down disinterestedly.

No word was spoken as Jenkins stood up, fending off his launch. His eyes jumped from the three, who in form bore no resemblance to the fugitive. He gazed with benevolent smile but keenly at the two bathers.

Both were lithely built and about the height and weight he understood Sallin to be. One was young, in his twenties, and had fair hair. The other, about thirty-five had hair shot with gray.

The silence became strange. The younger man drew up his feet.

"Hello!" he said.

"Hello!" replied Jenkins, but he was looking at the other man.

"Sight-seeing?" said one of those aloft frivolously.

Jenkins did not look up. He glanced at his assistant, who was sitting negligently jiggling a finger between the spokes of the steering wheel.

"That's the guy!" said Jenkins suddenly, and he covered the graying haired man with a gun.

His aid pointed a gun at those on the upper deck.

The man whom Jenkins menaced laughed.

"If this is a hold-up," he said, "you'll get damned little. A couple of bottles of rum—the end of our perfect vacation—are the most valuable things aboard."

"Piracy!" The word came satirically from above. "Where's your black flag, old man?"

All five laughed.

Jenkins gazed on his man benignly. He was unruffled by the hilarious reception accorded his gunplay.

"I'm an officer," he explained. "I want you."

"Sure." The wanted one was more amused. "What have I been doing?" He flipped his toes in the water.

"Not much," said Jenkins. "Will you all come over to New York? Or do you have to be taken?"

"Aw, go to hell," grinned another of the party good-naturedly. "You don't want our hooch. You've had enough?"

Jenkins ignored that. "Coming?"

The man with the grayed hair bent toward him. He frowned.

"Do you mean this foolishness?" he asked earnestly.

"I do," nodded Jenkins.

"But—"

"We'll listen to the 'buts' later on." Jenkins's voice crisped. For a small man he looked uncommonly businesslike. "Heusler is dead," he added.

The information failed to get a rise. The man he shot it at stared blankly.

"Do you mean that you accuse me of murdering this—what did you say his name is?"

"No." Jenkins shook his head.

"Then what—"

"If you can't figure it out," said Jenkins drolly, "the charge is bank robbery!"

There was renewed laughter.

"Where? When? they chorused.

Jenkins sighed. "Town of Norford—yesterday," he explained patiently.

"I've been here a month," protested the accused while his companions roared. "I've been on this boat—here—a month. You're crazy."

"We'll let you prove that," retorted Jenkins. "The sooner we get going, the quicker you can prove it."

They went with him finally, laughing and kidding him. Their attitude was that of humoring a nut. They told him so frankly. And the least troubled of the party was Floyd Sallin. He had four witnesses to make good his alibi.

XIX.

JENKINS returned to Norford with his prisoner at midnight Sunday. At New York police headquarters he had had Sallin finger printed and measured. The records were being searched there for a previous arrest.

Sallin's four witnesses went with him. They had identified themselves satisfactorily to the New York police. Jenkins had to admit that there was nothing on them. They were reputable enough witnesses, whose word would go in court unless it could be indubitably discredited. They insisted that Sallin had been with them during the three weeks on the houseboat.

Sallin gave an address which was verified. He had lived there for two years, the landlord affirmed; and Sallin had maintained the small apartment that time. He had closed it to go on vacation a month back. Neighbors confirmed that. His occupation—he had none; he had some money and helped out his income by gambling a little.

Upon reaching Norford, Jenkins learned of others in the case. Taylor and Odell were prisoners. They had been arrested by

railroad detectives while riding the blind. The bag containing their share of the loot they had cast away, but the action had been observed by the officers and it had been recovered.

Blakely, the Norford sleuth who was being restrained from arresting Frank Denton and Bessie Wentworth only on the pleading of Trainor and others of the bank officials, was highly elated. He claimed the credit for the capture of Taylor and Odell—hadn't he got out a fast alarm—and he scoffed at Jenkins when Sallin's alibi appeared to be so well founded.

"Where's the black-haired woman?" he jeered. "You'll get her on a submarine, eh?"

He couldn't see where Jenkins had anything to back up his contention that Sallin was among the robbers. Jenkins smiled at him and said nothing. He was awaiting the coming of two men he had requested to follow him from New York. They had not accompanied him because they were not at home when he passed through the city.

Sallin listened stolidly to the recital of Heusler's death. He was taken to the morgue and looked on the body without a sign of recognition. He looked stonily at Taylor and Odell when they were brought before him without warning.

Bessie Wentworth and Frank Denton identified Taylor and Odell as having been in the Sallin household. They looked blankly at Sallin and he looked as blankly at them.

On Jenkins's suggestion the muddy suits of clothes found in the house were tried on Sallin, Taylor, and Odell. They fitted. But that was inconsequential. The tailors' labels had been removed. A man could not be convicted because a suit fitted him.

All this Sallin submitted to without objection. Toward daybreak he yawned.

"Isn't that enough for one night?" He smiled wanly. He looked from Jenkins to the chief of police and the district attorney. "All my cards are on the table, gentlemen. I was never in this town before. I did not rob the bank. I have been with four friends on the houseboat off Staten Island for the last month. You say the man you want was here during the last three weeks. I can't be that man. I can say no more than that — offer no more proof than I have given. I've been decent with you because you are trying to solve a big crime, but now" — he tapped the chief's desk — "I want you to reciprocate. I want a lawyer, and I want to be taken into court and discharged."

The chief and the district attorney conferred with Jenkins. He telephoned New York.

"The men I'm waiting for are on the way," he told the chief and the prosecutor. "They are chemists."

The chief was worried. Sallin might make trouble. They were holding him without evidence.

"What d'you want chemists for?" he questioned tartly.

"Haven't you any idea?"

"None." The chief disliked being kept in the dark. "What is it?"

"Talk to Bessie Wentworth," said Jenkins dryly. "Ask her about the woman."

The chief snorted. He had a professional dislike for private detectives which was not fully overcome by Jenkins's unassuming traits.

"And oh," Jenkins imparted a piece of information he had just received from his office. "We've got De Real. He has a wad of fifty thousand dollars—and a knife with fresh blood on it. We got him pulling out on a train for Philadelphia. And—" Jenkins swapped grins with the now beaming chief—"did you happen to notice that big clumsy ring on Heusler's finger? Yes? We-ell—there's a ragged cut over De Real's eye that might have been made by that ring. They're bringing him out here. Sallin may know *him.*"

Jenkins was wrong there, for Sallin did not know De Real. But that turned out to be immaterial. The chemists arrived before De Real. Jenkins conferred with them in private. They were smiling broadly as they came into the chief's office and turned their eyes on Sallin.

He confronted these newcomers boldly, with the calmness that had marked him all along. Yet he was obviously puzzled by the introduction of the aged, white-haired man, and the other, stoop-shouldered and

wearing horned glasses. To Sallin they appeared as a new breed in police business.

They stood behind him. They looked at each other and chuckled. Jenkins had put an original proposition up to them. It worked out!

Together they nodded to Jenkins.

From his pocket, while his cheery eyes sparkled, he took a pair of hair-clippers!

"If you'll have somebody hold him, chief," he invited, "we'll cut his hair on the left side and mark it as an exhibit!"

"His hair!" The chief rose out of his chair in surprise. He thought Jenkins had gone mad.

So did the others. All except Sallin, whose face wore a dawning wonder. His hands gripped together slowly as though he would prevent their slightest expression of his feelings but had not the power.

"His hair—on the left side," repeated Jenkins. "And these gentlemen"—he waved at the chemists—"will find in it traces of henna! Can't you see that it's reddish—when the woman we've yet to get constantly leaned her head when he was playing injured? I told you chief," said Jenkins with a note almost of apology, "to ask Bessie Wentworth about the woman!"

While they crowded round with many amazed ejaculations to gape at his hair, Sallin relaxed. His eyes narrowed, and he smiled with tight lips. He nodded to Jenkins.

"You're a wonder, little man," he said without too much bravado, but with rare nerve; "but—you make me laugh."

"Mebbe so," said Jenkins. "Mebbe—"

The phone rang. The chief took it up. New York police headquarters was calling. His head wagged as to a rhythm while he listened, and his brief replies were alive with joy. He set down the phone with a semi-flourish.

"They've made you, Sallin, in the gallery in New York. Your picture and your fingers from the time you were in on suspicion for the bank job in Michigan. 'Member? And—"

Sallin's face became drawn and he straightened for the blow.

"And they have Viola's picture from the same time. We've got you by the hair," he laughed at his own joke; "and when we get her we'll identify her with witnesses and you with her. Where's the cash, Sallin?"

"Checked at the ferryhouse at St. George," said Jenkins softly. "I was saving that until his red hair was tagged. That was a mistake, Sallin," added the little detective with something like regret. "A job like you pulled spoiled by a red-head! There wasn't a thing to take you on if that dope didn't work. And if we hadn't got you to headquarters we wouldn't know who the ex-red-head is, would we? She's black as a raven, now, isn't she, Sallin? That indigo in the wash-basin—"

Floyd Sallin laughed.

"Little man," he said, "you have too many brains for your size."

He had achieved his dream—a million dollars in one haul—had excelled it by half a million. And he had lost in the winning through the red-head that he had made.

THE END

Another Woman's Life

WHAT HAS OCCURRED IN PART I

JENNY DEVON, manikin in Mme. Lacour's dressmaking establishment in London, is besought by Baroness Luini, lady in waiting to the Archduchess Stephanie of Rosemark, to impersonate the duchess, whom she greatly resembles, for a few days. The archduchess, headstrong and reckless, has eloped with Count Saxt, although she is about to be betrothed to Prince Nicholas of Galmatia. He must not know of her disappearance, as it is hoped to overtake the archduchess and persuade her to return.

Jenny agrees reluctantly and goes to Argar Castle with the baroness. There she is presented to the exiled Empress Melita, grandmother of Stephanie, who is one of those in the secret, and meets Prince Nicholas. The prince finds her charming and makes love to her. Jenny loses her heart to him. Her visit to Argar Castle is cut short by the return of the real archduchess.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT THE MEET.

NICHOLAS ALMER FREDERICK CHARLES HONORÉ, Hereditary Prince of Galmatia, Prince of Gandolo, Overlord of the Transmontine Marshes, and Duke of the Lerinnean Islands—to give him only a few of his names—awoke on that Saturday morning in the state bedchamber at Argar Castle very much pleased with himself and the world in general.

As he stood and shaved his handsome chin and upper lip before an imperial looking glass, brought from the capital of Rosemark by special permission of the republic long established in that country, he looked forward to an engrossing day.

He was, as we have seen, most pleasurably surprised by the personality of the bride he had found in this ancient Kentish Castle.

The young man was something of an enigma. Whether he was really as frivolous and casual as he seemed to be even his mother would have found it hard to tell. His serious moments were too rare to chronicle. Suffice it to say that he had a charm of manner that won all hearts, that he had been personally indulged from childhood, but at the same time trained to perform his public duties to the very best of his ability.

This marriage had been a case in point.

This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for November 24.

He must marry, he had been told. In vain he pointed out that other princes belonging to far more important countries had delayed their marriages until they were many years older than he. Things were different, he was told. He was the only son. There were elements in the country and its administration that made his early marriage imperative. The next heir was highly unpopular with the people. And so on. His cousin, Hortense of Mangora, luckily for him, had died. He was little more than a boy when that alliance had been proposed. Then came the choice of the Princess Caroline of Hisperia—she of the cod fish eyes. He had put his foot down. In vain his mother had argued with him in her jolly, sporting way. It simply wasn't to be done.

Then, after an interval of three years, during which his country was at war, and he and his father were at the front and every moment meant danger to the succession, the Archduchess Stephanie of Rosemark was brought to his notice. Negotiations had been undertaken. The ex-empress was agreeable. England gave her unqualified approval. The archduchess was not of a reigning family, but the bluest blood in the world ran in her veins, including that of the Plantagenets, of the Bourbons, and of Mary Stuart.

Nicholas had learned things during the war. He was more amenable. The archduchess's photograph was shown to him. He sighed, shrugged his shoulders, and gave in.

And, really, there was no hardship about it. That was the delightful surprise. Short of choosing one's own wife, nothing could be better. There was the little sting. She had been chosen for him. His mind played queer tricks as he deliberately set himself to picture what would have happened if he had not been himself and she had not been herself, and they had met—just like any other ordinary pair.

To-day was going to crown the pleasant week. He was an ardent horseman himself, and the thought of that sweet and surprisingly lovely girl in the saddle was a rarely stimulating one.

The archduchess did not appear at breakfast.

He found that a dozen or more of the household were in hunting kit. He did not wear the English pink himself, but the bottle green and buff facings of his own home hunt.

Stephanie was already mounted when he first saw her; surrounded by members of the household and by certain neighbors invited to start from the castle to the Pickering Cross, where the meet was to be held.

She sat her sixteen hand bay mare with the white blaze like a feather, riding side saddle, wearing a plain dark habit and a hard felt hat. A glance at her hands satisfied him. A more workmanlike figure he had never seen.

But—by St. Melchior, why was she more made up than ever? And for the hunting field! And was it the hard hat that made her lovely face look harder?

He rode to her side, saluting her.

"Good morning, Stephanie."

"Good morning," Stephanie replied. "We're in for a grand day."

Just then a move was made, Stephanie leading, and he falling in beside her. What was it about a horse that made a woman look "horsey"? He could have sworn that she was a little changed. Her voice even had sounded harsher. And she didn't seem to want to be alone with him. She kept in the middle of a bunch of people all the way to the place of the meet.

There was a crowd of country people at the first covert side. There was some delay, and then the covert was drawn; the hounds went away, everything was forgotten in the business of the day.

Nicholas and Stephanie were in the first flight of a gloriously long run. His admiration grew. No fence was too big for her; she wanted no one to give her a lead; she fled the much swollen Pickering Brook as if a puff of wind wafted her over it. She was unheated, unruffled, when, after a grand kill, they halted to eat sandwiches and give their horses a breathing space before going on to the next covert.

Dismounted, she made a perfect picture, and Nicholas felt his heart give a great bound, as he walked up to her.

"Stephanie, you're truly a marvel! Who'd think you could ride like that?"

"Why not?" she asked.

"Of course, I've always heard about you," he said quickly. "But what I've seen of you hardly made me expect it."

"Why?" There was an unmistakably mocking note in her voice.

He gave her a swift look. What was the change in her? She was just the same to look at, except that her beautiful hair was hidden by the hard hat. Only a few burnt-golden tendrils escaped in the nape of her neck. The rouge and lip salve, added to the sharp wind, made her face less tenderly soft. Her brown eyes seemed to have lost some of their fascinating questions.

"I don't know," he said. "You seemed different before—" He looked around him. The field was discreetly dispersed; their suites were at a respectful distance. He and Stephanie were practically alone.

Out of some inner unexplained perplexity came his next words.

"Stephanie, this morning you don't seem a bit the girl who kissed me last night."

"Don't I?" She laughed, softly enough, but again with a hint of mockery. "My dear Nicholas, are we ever the same in the morning as we were—last night?"

He had spoken with rare sincerity. Her tone stung him. He offered her a sandwich, and said, with an infinitely cool smile:

"I've heard people say that the hunting field spoils the most charming woman. I think they must be right."

CHAPTER IX.

THE OTHER STEPHANIE.

AS the day wore on, Prince Nicholas was destined to receive several disagreeable little shocks in connection with his future bride.

They had another kill after a short run, and then a long point of more than seven miles over the springy turf of the high downs, and through the gorse, where hounds were checked, and scent gave out. Another neighboring covert was drawn without result. And then there was the long trot home after an essentially satisfactory day. As to the weather, it was a day to raise the spirits sky high and make the heart sing.

After the second kill Nicholas had another short conversation with Stephanie, who this time remained mounted. The way she sat her horse entranced him. It was the very essence of grace, of youth, of fearlessness. She was indeed a dazzling horsewoman. But there was still that change in her demeanor, that something less simple, less tender, less girlish, more provocative. He was moved to answer her little mocking sallies. On the occasion when he said that he believed the hunting field spoiled many women he was all but rude. He was angry with himself for that, but could not help it.

What a double-faced girl she must be! Last night all surrender, all sweetness; this morning offhand and cool, with a hint of gay mockery in those velvet brown eyes. Also it might almost be said that she spurned his company and deliberately kept in the midst of her suite.

But toward the end of the day, as they jogged down the lane that led into the main road and the entrance gates of Argar Castle, Nicholas managed to attach himself to her side, and the other riders fell discreetly away.

"We must make an opportunity for a little chat again this evening," he said. "It's my last evening, Stephanie. I have to leave before dinner to-morrow."

"Isn't there a dance or something on?" she asked carelessly. "I saw an army of workmen unloading millions of roses and carnations this morning."

"Oh, yes, of course! Well, we shall get a chance of being alone. Do you love dancing, Stephanie? But, of course, you do!"

"Of course I do. But it's frightfully stiff and formal here, you know, Nicholas. If you and I want to dance a waltz, it will have to be the old-fashioned Viennese kind. Mostly, it's all quadrilles and things of that kind. They bore me to death."

He could not stop wondering about the change in her. Where was the girl he had held in his arms, the girl whose eyes had been wet with the deep wild emotions that had stirred him, too? Where was the girl who had tremblingly asked him if it was only a piece of luck to him they had been

brought together by reasons of state? Had he offended her? No, he knew he had not done that. At least he had given her no reasonable cause of offense.

"Stephanie," he asked again, "why are you so different to-day? Have I done anything to hurt you? I can't understand how you can change so. You're hardly nice to me—hardly polite. And last night you cried in my arms."

She gave a little impatient laugh.

"Good gracious, Nicholas, we all make fools of ourselves sometimes! Don't rub last night in so heavily. We shall get on all right."

So she was just a cold-hearted, capricious flirt! There was no other explanation. His hostility was roused. No young man likes being made a fool of, but Nicholas of Galmatia less than most.

He laughed, too.

"Oh, I've no doubt we shall get on all right! I hope you'll be good enough to give me one of those decorous Viennese waltzes, Stephanie. As I've told you before, we're not nearly so stiff or meticulously formal in my country. You'll have a much livelier time."

"Thank goodness for that!" she exclaimed, and touched her horse with her crop and bounded through the wide open castle gates and up the great avenue. Nicholas, piqued and ruffled, did not follow.

If this was to be her attitude—well, two could play at any game.

Her pale eyes screwed up with anxiety and her thin lips quivering with suspense, the Baroness Dora Luini awaited her young mistress in the orange and gold sitting room of the archduchess's apartments.

"Your imperial highness — does the prince guess?" she asked, hardly able to frame the words for anxiousness.

"I don't believe he does," Stephanie replied with a rather wicked little smile. "But, my dear old Luini, he must! It can only be a matter of time. Unless he's half witted. This was no test. It's when we're alone. Your little substitute seems to have made the running with him. He talks of kisses and tears and doesn't understand why I don't gaze at him in adoration. That's obvious. I must say, he's wickedly good looking, too."

"But—your imperial highness! I told you how simple and quiet she was!"

"I know. I didn't let you down, Luini, dear. Really, I was quite nice to him. But I couldn't fall into his arms. I must avoid a tête-à-tête. After all, he goes to-morrow. And when we meet again, he'll have forgotten the impression she made on him. I'm not coming down to tea. Excuse me to the all highest, will you, Luini? I'm dog tired."

But before the baroness left the room, Stephanie flung a question at her.

"I say, is she really so awfully like me? It's rather quaint. I don't believe the prince has the slightest suspicion."

The baroness gave the royal lady the same intent scrutiny she had often given Jenny Devon during her brief stay at the castle.

"It would really be almost impossible to tell you apart, your imperial highness. I am amazed myself. It's only a little something in the expression and in the voice."

"I've talked like a peal of muffled bells all day," said Stephanie with a laugh. Then her voice took on a carelessly good natured tone. "I say, Luini, I am a nuisance to you, aren't I?"

"Nothing matters now that your imperial highness has come back," retorted the loyal lady with a deep sigh.

Prince Nicholas found at dinner that the archduchess was keeping up her new pose. Whereas before she had been modest and quiet and self-effacing in company with her family and relatives and the exalted guests, to-night she was simply wooden and uninterested. He noticed it particularly in the ex-empress's little sitting room, where they spent half an hour after dinner. The archduchess sat stiff and bored. There was something almost sullen about her. Her deep curtsy seemed purely formal and implied no real respect. She moved like an automaton during the stately dances at the beginning of the ball.

But she looked—she looked like a rose herself among the thousands of exquisite blooms that lined the ballroom. She wore cloudy rose color, and the splendid string of

pearls, and a strange arrangement of rose, gold-dusted feathers that made her little proud head look as though it had wings.

And she danced—she danced like a goddess. She danced like she rode—as if air were her element and not earth.

Nicholas found that out when he waltzed with her. It was a disconcerting job in that eitquette ridden ballroom. A glittering company stood around. Never, surely, were there so many gorgeous jewels displayed on so many women who wore them to the manner born. A ridiculously small space at the upper end of the room was available. And one danced with officers of the household guarding the four corners as if one were a pair of professionals at a night club, the cynosure of all eyes. But even then, with such a partner, the poise of her body, the sway of her hips, the gossamer lightness of her footing—it was the most rapturously enjoyable exercise in the world.

Later, there was general dancing. The older members of the imperial family had withdrawn. Nicholas found Stephanie in conversation with one of his gentlemen. And, having had a word with the bandmaster and finding a waltz in progress for the general company, he got hold of her, and masterfully, without a word, bore her off, and through one of the rose arched doorways, perilously, intoxicatingly dancing down a flight of steps into one of the great corridors.

It was a breathless performance; and at the end of it, with light fingers, he touched her cheek.

"Still all this powder and paint, little girl?" he said. He was a trifle carried away by her nearness, by her overwhelming beauty. "After what I said!"

"Good Lord!" Stephanie cried. "Mr. Puritan, what on earth is the matter? You should see what a sight I look without it."

This instead of the confused modesty of a night ago. Then she had murmured that everybody did it. And she had said that he had not offended her.

She roused something fierce and autocratic in him. He suddenly felt that he wanted to crush this impudent new spirit. After all, she was the same girl!

They were right at the end of the corridor. Nobody was near. The distant music was like some half remembered love song. Her beauty fired him. He took her in his arms, perhaps a little roughly.

"Stephanie, little girl, you can't keep this up! You're playing with me. You're trying to, you little idiot! But you can't! You can't!"

He covered her face with kisses. The subtle perfume of her powder—the baroness had not forgotten that touch!—stole over him. His head was high and proud. He would make her be the little girl of last night. She couldn't help herself.

She could help herself, it seemed. She pushed him away. Her little hands were hard. She was breathing fast, furiously.

A little sound of rage was in her throat. She ran from him fleet as a deer. She fled him just in the same way as she had fled the Pickering Brook on her glorious bay mare, as if a puff of wind were bearing her away.

He saw her no more that night. He stayed with the general company for a little while, dancing enthusiastically. When he left the ballroom, many a bright, slightly wistful feminine glance followed him.

The next day, being Sunday, there were two elaborate services in the chapel.

There were guests to luncheon afterward, and Prince Nicholas had no opportunity of seeing Stephanie alone. During the meal she complained of a headache. Soon afterward she disappeared. And at tea time the Baroness Dora Luini brought a message to the prince to the effect that her imperial highness was feeling so indisposed that she was obliged to retire and greatly regretted being unable to take leave of his royal highness in person.

At six o'clock Nicholas left for the coast by motor car.

When the castle had settled down again, the Baroness Dora Luini went to the archduchess's apartments and asked to be received.

Stephanie lounged on the settee in her sitting room, clad in a wonderful wrapper of flame satin and sable, reading a letter. She flashed her wicked little smile at her lady in waiting.

"This is delicious!" she exclaimed. "Your little substitute has caught the young gentleman's fancy, and no mistake, my good Luini. He doesn't like me. Read!"

She tossed the letter over. It fell on the floor, and the baroness picked it up.

"You kind and unkind girl," she read in a small, rather cramped, but very pretty handwriting—"good-by. Please wear my ring. And be your sweet self, and not your prickly one, when I come back. Devotedly, Nicholas."

"How did your imperial highness behave to him?" asked the baroness anxiously. "Are you perfectly sure he suspects nothing?"

"Not as far as I know, Luini," Stephanie replied. She frowned slightly. "It was rather difficult for me. I wasn't prepared. I shall know the next time. That girl didn't lose any time, did she?" She laughed with lightly contemptuous amusement.

"Your imperial highness knows—the betrothal is to be announced at once," said the lady in waiting as she returned the prince's note.

"Is it? Well, here's the ring." She held out an ivory case, lined with crushed white velvet.

"Oh!" gasped the baroness, her breath taken away by the magnificent gem—a pigeon's blood ruby of oval shape and unusual size, set in a rim of seven other rubies of equal splendor and fire. "Isn't it wonderful? What a ring! Your imperial highness must wear it at once."

"I suppose I must," said Stephanie, slipping it onto her finger. "Luini, when is the prince coming back?"

"Not for another month, so I understand from her majesty."

"Thank goodness for that!"

"Then the contracts and settlements will be ready to be signed. There will be the court ball in London and a banquet in your highness's and the prince's honor. And a luncheon in the city, when the prince will receive the freedom. And other public arrangements. The prince is expected to stay a fortnight, I believe. And then he will not come back again until the wedding."

The archduchess said nothing in reply. She held up her hand with the ring on it, and examined its rose colored fire with an unreadable light in her lovely eyes.

CHAPTER X.

HEARTACHE.

WITH the instinct of a wounded animal Jenny Devon had slipped back into her old fourth floor back room in Bloomsbury. She saw no reason why she should seek new lodging.

Her landlady, like Mme. Lacour, thought she had taken a job in Rome. She had actually had time to get to the Italian capital, spend a few days there, and return.

She announced that she had not liked the work or the people. Her landlady welcomed her back, a nice, quiet lodger who gave no trouble. She gave her baked beans for supper on the first night, because she knew she liked them. And Jenny ate them with relish and wondered if the gold plate and the thousand candlelights and the wonderfully seasoned dishes and the delicate wines and the hothouse fruit of Argar Castle had been nothing but a dream.

She was a sensible girl, and she knew that she must take up her life again. She must think of those days as if they were a dream. She must not think of the prince at all. He had now met his real bride. Either he would be deceived and think her the same girl, or, if he wasn't, the thing would be explained, and he would understand and forget all about it.

Jenny realized that royalties might have two lives, very widely differing one from the other. Anyhow, as the real archduchess denied that she had gone away with another man, but simply out of caprice, it would probably not be long before she fell in love with Prince Nicholas. And he was already on the road to being in love with her.

Jenny fought with her tears that first night. She felt so insignificant, so unwanted, a lone Peri cast out of Paradise. She awoke in the middle of the night and cried softly to herself for an hour.

On the Sunday she went to see Bertie,

bearing her usual gifts. She had a few pounds—enough to live on for about a couple of weeks. She must begin to look for work at once.

Bertie grumbled because she had not come last Sunday. She told him she had been away. He said everybody else had had visitors. He had been ill. She looked at his drawn, fretful face with loving compassion.

But she could do nothing. It seemed impossible to help Bertie. To-day she had brought chocolates, and he was pining for acid drops. She had brought his favorite comic papers, and his eyes hurt him so that he could not even look at the pictures. It was a dreary day, gray, with every now and then a drizzle of rain. Jenny's spirit was steeped in gloom. The omnibus put her down in the heart of the West End. She had nothing to do. The thought of her back room was most uninviting. She could not look up anybody she knew. She had not collected herself sufficiently to be able to answer questions.

She saw a cue in front of a cinema. Mechanically she fell in with it. A famous star was appearing in a film of circus life. It would distract her mind. She felt utterly disheartened. Her thoughts went round and round in a circle, and always they came back to this: that she would never see Prince Nicholas again.

A short film was just ending as she took her seat in the crowded auditorium. The lights went up for a moment, then down again as the screen announced that the topical news pictures would be shown. There was a rally of Boy Scouts; the arrival of an African chief at Liverpool; and then some words appeared that made Jenny's heart beat with fearful excitement.

MEET OF THE ARGAR VALE ROYAL FOLLOWERS

And then, to the tune of "John Peel," the meet that had been her last rendezvous with Prince Nicholas was shown, and a young man and a young woman on horseback amid a crowd of others.

"His Royal Highness Prince Nicholas of Galmatia" was flashed on the screen, "and Her Imperial Highness the Archduchess Stephanie of Rosemark, whose engagement, it is understood, will shortly be announced." There was another picture of the two, isolated at a covert side. The orchestra played a sentimental air. The prince, a handsome and gallant figure, was seen to dismount and approach the archduchess, looking up at her, all smiles, and offering her a sandwich.

A woman next to Jenny exclaimed: "No doubt about their being in love, do you think?"

And her companion, another woman, answered fervently: "I should think not. And no wonder! Aren't they a handsome pair?"

And then yet another picture, as they hacked backed to the castle, quite alone, their horses very close together. And from the audience a burst of sympathetic applause.

Jenny gulped down something in her throat that threatened to choke her. He was already falling in love with Stephanie. She could hardly bear it. How that girl sat her horse! To Jenny she looked a scornful, insolent figure.

The prince's words to her, spoken only two nights ago, rang in her ears: "Stephanie, just think, it won't be long before I shall take you to my own country—as my wife!"

And now he was saying this same thing to another girl.

She crouched in her seat. Of the circus film she saw nothing at all. She could not keep back her tears; and the kindly darkness hid them.

Monday morning she received a small registered parcel. On opening it, two jewel cases were displayed. One held a beautiful string of pearls, not large or magnificent, but such as a girl might wear and have them supposed to be imitation by the world. They had been chosen with thought. The other gift was more difficult to place. It was a flexible bracelet of the very finest workmanship, made of diamonds interspersed with brilliant brownish yellow topazes. The stones were large, the diamonds obviously of the very first water. It was a dazzling ornament and quite unsuited to

a girl in Jenny's position. She knew it must be exceedingly valuable.

There was a plain card in the package, and on it some one had written: "With much gratitude."

She would not take money, so they had sent her jewels. They were proud, and would not accept her services for nothing. They must pay her for those hours that, now she looked back on them, filled her with a sense of incalculable loss. Not the gold plate, the roses, and the white and silver bed, but that presence with the laughing eyes and the tender voice, that brilliant personality that had just stretched out a careless hand and robbed her of her heart. They thought they could pay her for those days!

Her first impulse was to return the jewels; but, thinking it over, she decided to keep them. She would wear the pearls, and lock the diamond bracelet away. They had been given in kindness, she was sure. Every one at Argar Castle had been most kind to her. She bore them no grudge. It was only that they could not understand.

She went out and bought a newspaper and began to look through the advertisement columns for work. She would not go back to Mme. Lacour's, for all sorts of reasons. She must try other establishments. It seemed that very few manikins were wanted. She tried Bluespray's and the very exclusive establishment known as "La Maison Rouge." She had no luck. Neither had any vacancy, although the managers of both houses looked at her with more than common interest. As soon as a vacancy occurred they would communicate with Miss Devon, if she were still at liberty. Would she leave her address? Seeing a sign up in a small shop in Bond Street, she presented herself there. The proprietress, a smart society lady, offered her three pounds a week, and it appeared that she would have to do practically the whole work of the showroom as well as perform her manikin's duties.

She was disheartened as she went out, having refused the place. She was more disheartened still after an afternoon and another morning spent in seeking work. Several big shops offered her a post at a ridiculously low wage. She did not want to give Mme. Lacour as reference. She dreaded inquiries into her supposed journey to Rome. She was strictly loyal to the people to whom she had rendered her fantastic service.

But she had to live. There were Bertie's expenses. He needed clothes, the matron had said. A wage of three pounds would mean that she would have to leave her present lodging. She had learned none of the technical branches of dressmaking. In her spare time at Mme. Lacour's she had helped the girls sometimes to make bead embroideries and such things; but she had no real skill or gift for such work. She could do nothing but what she had been doing.

Panic began to seize her. Bertie's expenses had to be paid week by week. She could sell the diamond bracelet; but she was terrified lest she should have to explain how it came into her possession.

Five days passed in her search for work. She would not be able to live much longer. She had had to send some things to the home for Bertie. She went back to the Bond Street shop to take the post at three pounds a week, but, of course, it was filled. She understood by now that none of the first class establishments were taking on fresh manikins until they began to see how the season was going to turn out. There was nothing for it but to take on a job in one of the big shops—an irreparable loss of caste.

On the day of this decision she happened upon Mr. Phare in Bond Street. He greeted her in his quiet voice, while his eager, steely blue eyes showed concern as well as admiration.

"You are not looking well, Miss Devon. I hope there is nothing wrong."

"I am quite well, thank you, Mr. Phare," Jenny replied in a stiff little voice.

"I was afraid something had happened to you—after you left Lacour's."

"How do you know I've left Lacour's?" she asked in astonishment.

"I heard it from Lady Grace. I was inquiring after you. You must know that I take a great interest in you, Miss Devon."

"You are very kind, Mr. Phare. But there is nothing the matter with me, I assure you!"

She was not so much on the defensive as usual. And when he asked her to lunch with him, she found herself accepting. She was very tired and hungry; she had very little money in her purse. And she was thoroughly depressed. There was something soothing in the man's obvious sympathy, tendered as it was with simple friendliness. She did not stop to think what had happened the time before.

At the very beginning of the meal an untoward incident happened. A waiter knocked Jenny's hand bag off the table. It was an old one, and the insecure fastening gave way, emptying its contents on the carpet.

Marcus Phare stooped to pick it up. As it happened, Jenny had brought the diamond and topaz bracelet with her, not in its case, but wrapped in tissue paper. She had been trying to make up her mind to sell it, or perhaps pawn it. This was Saturday, and on the next day she had to take Bertie's money to the home.

The paper became unwrapped, and Marcus Phare lifted the glittering thing from the floor with the other humble contents of Jenny's bag, her powder puff, some keys, and her almost empty purse. He looked at her very hard as he said carelessly:

"How very pretty!" He examined the bracelet. "And what perfect stones! Old Brazilian. I've never seen finer. And I know something about diamonds."

Jenny felt herself growing red to the roots of her hair. His tone might have meant nothing at all. But she read into it a meaning that outraged her feelings.

She took the jewels from his hand without a word and thrust it back into the bag

"It does not belong to me," she said coldly, not caring a pin about the lie. In fact, in that moment she felt that it did not belong to her—that it never could.

"I was wondering," said Phare, "who was the lucky person privileged to give you such a pretty thing. I think you know I covet the honor."

She faced him with angry eyes; and his kindled into flame as they rested on her lovely face.

"Something *has* happened to you," he murmured. And then he changed his tone and played the agreeable host.

Jenny ate so that she need not talk. Marcus Phare was most entertaining. He knew everybody, and he had that slightly detached, slightly cynical manner of the rich bachelor courted by society.

"I would like you to see my house," he said toward the end of the meal. "Won't you let me take you there now? It's only round the corner—in Charles Street. I have some nice pictures."

"Thank you very much," she answered, "but I can't. I have an appointment."

"Then, another day. Won't you come to tea—to-morrow?"

"I'm afraid I can't."

"You're rather unkind, aren't you? Why did you come to lunch with me? You can't hate me altogether. You must know my feelings. I am very much interested in you. You and I might be great friends. I should love to show you the world—the real world. I would love to show you Monte Carlo and Rome, and the desert. Why don't you let me? For a girl with your face to show off other women's dresses is monstrous. It's a crime. Wouldn't you like to have lots of things like that pretty bangle that you say doesn't belong to you? I suppose it's a client's and you're going to pawn it for her. I hear that you girls are asked to do all sorts of funny things."

"Please, Mr. Phare, I would rather you didn't talk like this," Jenny said. She put down her half smoked cigarette and quickly gulped down her coffee. "I must be going now." She began to pull on her gloves.

"Don't be absurd," he said. "There's heaps of time. I don't want to frighten you, little girl. But I can't bear to see you throwing your life away like this—your wonderful youth. Why don't you trust me? I know what life ought to be like to a girl like you. I might—even marry you."

She went white to the lips and sprang to her feet. She saw only the odious implication in his generous proposal. No doubt the man thought it a magnificent promise to hold out to a girl of her class.

"I'm going," she said under her breath. "Please don't follow me. I never want to see you again as long as I live."

CHAPTER XI.

ONCE MORE.

THE next day Jenny took all the money she had but a few shillings to the home. Bertie was weak. He had had a slight fever the last few nights. As soon as it was warmer the doctor wanted him to go for a few weeks to an affiliated institution by the sea. That would cost more money.

Jenny was in despair.

On Monday morning she ran into Mme. Lacour in Oxford Street. The dressmaker stopped dead and gazed at her furiously, and was about to move on, when she changed her mind.

"You did not stay long in Rome, Miss Devon," she said coldly.

"No, *madame;* I did not like it," the girl answered.

"Oh, it was not such an improvement as you thought it would be on my humble establishment!" the Frenchwoman cried. "Are you working now?"

"No."

Madame had a high temper. She gave Jenny the benefit of it. She was ungrateful, stupid, just like the English, and all the rest of it. Then she offered to take her back.

"It is entirely because of the archduchess. We are getting on with the trousseau. She will probably be displeased if you are not there when next she comes. I have written to ask for a visit next week. She noticed you, and you certainly do look something like her. You don't deserve it, but you can come back if you like."

Jenny played for time to think. She wanted to go back, but she daren't decide at once. It was just that—the archduchess. Could she bear to stand before her, posturing in the clothes made for the royal lady? Could she meet the baroness's eyes? Could she carry it off? She wanted to go back. It would be like going home. If only it weren't for that.

She said she would let *madame* know tomorrow. She had almost arranged to take on another post. Oh, these lies—how she hated them!

Madame went off grumbling at her ingratitude, but very much pleased all the same.

At her lodging Jenny found the Baroness Dora Luini.

Her face was a picture of anxiety.

"I have come to fetch you," she said. "You must come back with me at once. Thank Heaven, I have found you here! The archduchess has gone again."

"Gone again!" echoed Jenny.

"Yes. Oh, the wicked girl! The cruel girl! Can you imagine such behavior? Her majesty is beside herself. I have never seen her so agitated. Last time was nothing to this. And she is ninety-two! I am terrified for her. We thought it was all right. The archduchess was brought back; she swore Count Saxt had nothing to do with it. We know that she lied. She has hoodwinked us. She came back to gain time. Prince Nicholas suspected nothing. He did not see much of her.

"We were grateful to you. Our minds were quite at rest. And now she has gone again. She went on Saturday—slipped out of the castle without any one knowing. And we had a wire this morning that she and Count Saxt passed through Paris on Sunday. It's from the best informed source. That young man is as wicked as she is. It seems that he got permission to go to the bedside of a sick relative. In the confusion of the archduchess's first flight the empress was not told about it. The person died, and he did not come back immediately, and the empress, who is very strict about etiquette, sent word to him that he must not return. There was no truth in that report that he was with the archduchess in Venice. But they must have planned it all. And now there's no doubt about it—they've gone away together."

"I—oh, I am sorry!" exclaimed Jenny.

"You will come back with me?"

"I can't. I really can't!"

"You must. It won't be for long again—I assure you. This person who saw them has gone in pursuit by this time, and the

other person who brought her back before started yesterday. That person can influence her when no one else can. I told you before; you saw that she came back. She will come back again. You won't fail us, my dear. You can't be so cruel, so heartless."

"You don't understand," Jenny murmured. "It is too difficult—too impossible!"

"I know. No one knows better. But you have done it once."

Jenny looked at the nervously working face in a dazed, wounded way.

"But just now it can't matter. Give me a little time. The prince has gone back. He wasn't to be here again for some time—you told me."

"I know," said the baroness faintly. "But that is just it. He is coming back—at once. A letter came for Stephanie this morning. He has put off all sorts of engagements and is coming back to the castle. He has invited himself. He will be here to-morrow night."

CHAPTER XII.

WITH THE PRINCE.

ONCE more within the walls of Argar Castle, Jenny stood by the window of the archduchess's orange and gold sitting room and wondered why she had consented to come back. Now that Prince Nicholas's arrival was only a matter of two or three hours, she felt more anxious even than she had done the first time. She knew the pitfalls that awaited her. Ignorance had really been a safeguard. It had made her natural.

She asked herself why she had come back. Was it because the baroness had pleaded so passionately? Perhaps, partly. Was it because she had been so savagely wounded in her woman's soul and in her self-esteem by what Marcus Phare had dared to say to her? Perhaps, partly. But, really? She knew why. Because she had to come back. Because the prince was coming back—coming back to her. Because he wanted to see her so badly that he had put off all his engagements and was returning at once. It was not Stephanie of Rosemark he wanted so badly to see again. No, no—the letters proved that it was not Stephanie. It was Jenny Devon, the humble manikin.

The baroness had given her the prince's letters. Jenny knew them all by heart. The one that he had written in farewell, when he sent his ring—the glorious ruby that now glowed rosily on Jenny's own hand. He had asked her to be her sweet self when he returned, and not her prickly one. Evidently, Stephanie had not been nice to him. And the second, written from Galmatia after his return, in answer to hers thanking him for the ring.

He had called hers a prim little note. But he was glad she liked the ring. Evidently, Stephanie had written formally. He had told her that the big ruby was historical, supposed to have been taken from the crown of Charlemagne. He signed himself hers sincerely, "Nicholas, P." But the third letter she had kissed over and over again when she was left alone at night. In that the prince wrote: "I am coming back, you unkind girl. I can't forget your unkindness, you see. I'm giving you an opportunity of being nice again. Please let me find the little girl of the little room with the china cabinets, and not the cross princess of the ballroom and the hunting field."

It was to her, to Jenny Devon, that he was coming back. Those words proved it. And Jenny felt as guilty at her own return as if she were not doing the imperial family the greatest service in the world.

They had returned yesterday afternoon. The first thing had been to give a sitting to a photographer who had come to take portraits of the archduchess. In the temporary studio, with its brilliant lighting, Jenny posed for more than half an hour to the satisfaction of the artist, who, it appeared, had never had the honor of making pictures of her imperial highness before.

She had seen the empress for a few minutes. The old lady had given her her wonderful unfaded smile and thanked her for coming back. She looked tired, and dined in her own apartments. So did Jenny, with the baroness in attendance. She spent the whole morning with the baroness.

The lady in waiting discoursed on the em-

press's wonderful character. Her body was as frail as a wild rose leaf, but her spirit was indomitable. Until her husband's death she had only been known as a peerless beauty, and a somewhat frivolous one at that, according to contemporary gossip. But she had developed into a wonderful woman of business. She managed everything in her enormous household down to the smallest details. She knew every head of stock on her farms, she knew how much sugar was used every day in the castle. Her estates were model ones; her farms were hugely prosperous. She ruled as an autocrat, but she had never done any one an injustice, and she tended her servants with her own hands when they were sick.

Jenny learned other interesting and curious things; that the ex-empress possessed the most valuable jewels in the world and that they were all kept in the castle, and she wore them constantly; that she always slept with a loaded revolver by her side; that all the laundry of the castle was sent over to Boulogne to be washed and to Paris to be ironed, and that certain of her majesty's more personal articles of linen traveled as far as a village in the south of France, where lived a woman almost as old as she was who had been her personal laundress when she sat on her throne. Consequently, she possessed enough household linen to stock a town, and all the elaborate cyphers and the imperial crowns on the sheets and towels and pillow cases were embroidered in Irish convents. Also that every single day of her life she descended to the crypt under the chapel and laid fresh flowers on her husband's and son's tombs.

The empress was devoted to animals, and there were some rare specimens in the wilder parts of the grounds. She especially loved dogs, and they were to be met on every side and were allowed everywhere. But there was not a cat in the castle. Instant dismissal would be the penalty for any one who introduced a member of the feline tribe.

It was after five o'clock in the afternoon. From the window Jenny looked straight across the great grass drives of the park, stretching as far as her eyes could see, between the clumps of enormous old chestnut trees and giant elms, where the deer browsed in the warm red rays of the sun about to set.

The baroness came into the room. Jenny turned.

"Good heavens, how white you look!" the elder woman exclaimed.

"I feel sick with fright," the girl said. "I can't see how the prince can take me for the archduchess. I simply dread his first sight of me. What will happen if he knows I am a fraud?"

"You mustn't think of such a thing, my dear. It only upsets you."

"But if he *does* know?"

"We shall have to explain," said the baroness, evidently anxious to soothe her. "But it's not at all likely. He had no suspicion about the archduchess. I have told you he saw very little of her. You must put some color on your cheeks."

"The prince told me he hated it," Jenny said.

"I daresay. He told the archduchess, too; but she wouldn't take any notice of that."

"Therefore I mustn't?"

"Exactly. You must remember that—that—" She hesitated.

"That I am only a substitute." There was more bitterness in Jenny's voice than she knew.

"My dear, I am thinking of you as much as of any one else," the baroness said hastily. "Perhaps it would be as well not to make yourself too attractive. I hardly know how to put it—"

"You mean that I might fall in love with the prince," the girl exclaimed.

"He certainly might very easily fall in love with you," was the retort. "You see, the archduchess is rather offhand in her manner. He evidently noticed a difference —you can see that in his letters. He thought her capricious. I am inclined to think it would be better to take that line. For—for both your sakes," she concluded rather lamely.

Jenny understood the hint. The prince must have referred to something that had passed between them to the archduchess, who had repeated it to her lady in waiting, no doubt in mockery. Jenny was beginning

to hate the archduchess. Why was she so foolish as to do this for her? It wasn't fair to ask her to. She mustn't forget that she was the humble little manikin. Oh, no! She mustn't presume to imagine that the prince could fall in love with her, or that she might allow herself to care for him. Everything he said to her was meant for his future wife.

It was in a mood of miserable revolt that she was arrayed for dinner in a wonderful golden gown, with a wreath of small golden roses in her hair that a pope had once given to one of the archduchess's ancestresses in the days when popes went about in society and entertained sumptuously in the Vatican, not even scorning hunting parties and masquerades.

"It isn't fair!" she repeated to herself. "It isn't fair!"

She was in the empress's sitting room with the other members of the family when Prince Nicholas came in. His eyes sought hers at once, laughing, bright with excitement. She found herself flushing painfully. She could have sunk through the floor in the agonized suspense of that first moment.

He bent over her hand, murmuring his conventional greetings. She bowed and replied mechanically.

The ex-empress annexed him, talking much more familiarly than usual. Perhaps beneath that exquisite manner there was a hint of anxiety, too. It was a game of incredible boldness that they were all playing. Her majesty rallied him playfully on his prompt return, inquired after his family, and made him describe the beauties of the early spring in his southern land.

At dinner the places were differently arranged. The prince sat on the empress's right and Jenny on the Archduke Gabriel's left, with one of the prince's gentlemen on her other side. He was young and very ready to talk. The table was of a flattened horseshoe shape, so that Jenny could not see much of the prince. But once or twice he leaned forward to catch her eye and to toast her with the smile that had stolen her heart away.

She found him more irresistible than ever. It was perfectly obvious that he still had no suspicions. It was marvelous to her, almost incredible. She could hardly see at that time, so confused and distressed was she, that the mere possibility of there being two girls so much alike had not presented itself to him. And, still less, would he, or any other young man in his place, have credited the empress with the bold simplicity of such a deception. The very success of the undertaking lay in its impossibility.

But for Jenny Devon these thoughts were too subtle. She only knew that she felt like a criminal.

The archduke was a very silent person. He only addressed her twice throughout the elaborate and seemingly endless meal. Both times it was to ask her opinion of a dish he was very fond of. Jenny did not know what his vacant air meant, but she had an idea that he was not exactly "all there." She believed, for instance, that after she had been explained to him his mind slipped back and he really took her to be his niece. He only seemed to live in his mimic battles on the great maps with the toy soldiers and the little flags.

All through the subdued but lively conversation of Prince Nicholas's young equerry, Captain Florimar, one thought embedded itself in Jenny's brain.

The prince was too dear to her. Though she was not close to him, his spell was stronger than ever. She couldn't resist it unless she used all her self-control. She must play a part—for her own sake. If he still wooed her, she must keep him at arm's length. It was her only salvation. If she allowed her heart to sway her, she would lose herself forever. It was an instinctive resolve. He meant too much to her. He could mean nothing in the end. She could not bear it.

There was some wonderful orchestral music after dinner. The empress withdrew very early. The music went on after she left. Prince Nicholas bent over Jenny.

"Come to the China room—I want to talk to you," he whispered.

She had to go with him. It was clear from the empress's manner that they were to be allowed all the amenities of engaged couples. The girl thrilled all over as her hand touched his coat sleeve, but she was stern with herself. On with the mask!

In the little cedar paneled room were masses of forced white and purple lilac. The subtle, rapturous scent met them like a southern night breeze.

"Now you're going to make friends with me, Stephanie," Nicholas said.

"Aren't we friends?" Jenny asked rather awkwardly.

"We weren't when I left, little girl. Why did you hide yourself And write me that freezing little note? To make me come back, I suppose. Well, you've done it!"

He bent to take her in his arms.

She drew back.

His eyes darkened.

"So it's like that? You think you can make a fool of me by putting out your prickles? I ought to have known from the first that you were nothing but a flirt. That's what one's heard about you."

In her devastating nervousness Jenny used exactly the same words as the real Stephanie had spoken.

"We—we shall get along all right."

"You said that before," he retorted. "But why, in Heaven's name, were you so different at first? Why did you let me kiss you? Why did you cry? Why did you lie in my arms as if you liked to be there? Why did you look at me with those wonderful eyes of love"

On with the mask!

Jenny braced herself. She made her voice gay. It sounded awful in her own ears.

"I—I thought I'd try to fall in love with you."

"And you didn't succeed." He laughed angrily. "Many thanks. It's a pity. It was a pretty mood of yours. You must be a wonderful actress. I quite thought we might—have been happy together."

"I did, too." She laughed—on the verge of hysteria.

"It's just as well to know where we are," he said savagely and looked like a beautiful young thunderstorm. "You needn't think that I shall worry you in any way. I was an idiot to come back."

"Why did you?" she asked. The farce had to be kept up.

"Because you were so nasty to me," he answered bluntly. "The dear little girl of the first days I should have thought of and dreamed about, and gone on with my life as usual. But after the day's hunting and your horrid ways at the ball—" He broke off furiously. "Why, you kissed me willingly enough before! But I might have been poison that night. And not a sight of you afterward except in chapel, looking like a wooden image! That's why I came back, and I'm sorry I ever did."

"So am I," echoed Jenny from her heart, indeed, although her voice made the statement sound unkind and shrill.

"Well, it doesn't matter," Nicholas said. "I suppose we can at least be friends. It's about the utmost we could expect anyway—people like us. It's a darned shame. We're positive slaves. Well, I won't keep you here any longer, Stephanie. I've made an idiotic mistake. Shake hands! We may as well be friends as we've got to marry."

"Yes," said Jenny, with feverish lightness in her voice, "we may as well be friends, as we've got to marry."

They shook hands, and Jenny fled to her rooms, while from below the maddening, stupefying strains of the "Love Death," of "Tristan and Isolde," followed her.

CHAPTER XIII.

UNCOVERED?

"MME. LACOUR writes that she is held up," the baroness said to Jenny, with anxiously knitted brows. "She has the material for the wedding gown. She has more than a dozen dresses ready. She urges an immediate visit."

"How can I go there?" the girl asked. "They all know me so well. They would be sure to recognize me."

"It is most risky, I admit. The place is comparatively small."

"Can't you put *madame* off?" asked Jenny. "The archduchess must be back one day this week. You said they had traced her to Naples."

"I know. But what excuse can we make? The clothes are so important. We're not giving her time. It's only just a month to the wedding, and there are the court gowns not yet fitted."

In the end the baroness found a solution. Mme. Lacour was commanded to Argar Castle with her young ladies. One of the big paneled rooms was rigged up with a stage at one end.

Jenny and the baroness sat in the darkened room, while the manikins paraded on the brilliantly lit platform, showing off the exquisite creations. *Madame,* who curtsied to the ground before her ex-manikin, explained the gowns and begged for a fitting for some of them. She had previously explained to the baroness that the manikin of whom the archduchess had generously approved had left her establishment in the most sudden manner and with shameful ingratitude. She had met her in the street not many days ago and actually offered to take her back; but she had only received a telegram from her saying that she had accepted another post.

Jenny saw little Linette Gurney, with her hunched shoulders and her plain, pathetic little face. She badly wanted to talk to her. It was hard work not to when, afterward, she stood up and the gorgeous silver cloth of the *manteau de cour* was draped on her, and the shoulder knots of real pearls were brought from the jewel case and fastened in their places, and *madame* stood back in delight, pointing out the *ciel bleu* velvet roses nestling in the glittering embroidery that lined the side of the train.

"Your imperial highness, it is ravishing!" she cried. "It's a dream—a poem!"

And little Linette, her mouth full of pins, looked up with adoration at the slender girlish figure with the radiant hair, the perfect princess of her dreams, standing there, proud, and unsmiling, as if the sight of all these beautiful clothes could arouse no emotion in her royal breast. That was how a princess should be in the little cockney's eyes; unmoved, completely wrapped up in her own greatness and her own beauty.

Jenny gave her a quick smile before she left the room, and Linette Gurney walked on air for a week.

It was a very severe test. A triumphant one. Nobody recognized her. But, then, of course, they never dreamed of such a thing.

"There is a deputation for you to receive this morning," the baroness informed Jenny two days later, when she came into her room to announce and discuss the plans for the day.

"Some gentlemen who are the trustees of the hospital and convalescent home for children of the east end of London that you laid the foundation stone of the other day are bringing the plans and an illuminated address and a wedding present."

"What do I do?" asked Jenny in alarm.

"You look at the plans and accept the address and the present and say a few words of thanks. It won't take long. You will receive them in the blue drawing room. Prince Nicholas will be with you. You needn't be in the least nervous. They are city men and not one of them has ever seen you before."

"Is there no news?" asked Jenny anxiously.

"Not yet; nothing definite. Unfortunately they had left Naples. But they are positively located. It can only be a matter of days. The empress has sent telegrams to the King of Italy and to the Pope. The utmost pressure is being brought to bear."

"I don't think I can keep it up much longer," said Jenny, half crying with the strain. "It's having to play a part—*all* the time."

"You are doing wonderfully well, my dear," comforted the baroness. "It's amazing. You're much more like the archduchess now. So gay, and a little more careless than you were."

"More desperate, you mean," put in the girl with a touch of passion.

"And the prince? Is it going all right? Are you remembering?"

"I am remembering," Jenny answered, "that as far as I can make out, the archduchess will treat him like dirt. Oh, yes, it is quite all right! We have agreed to be friends."

She had learned her lesson. She was behaving to the prince as she imagined the archduchess had done. She was apparently doing it very well. He was jolly and in the highest spirits on the surface, but she

believed he was profoundly disappointed in her.

What could that matter? She had taken this game on. Her feelings didn't count. If she broke her heart, that was nothing as long as the match between Nicholas of Galmatia and Stephanie of Rosemark became an accomplished fact. Royalties didn't expect domestic happiness. Nicholas constantly said so. He said things in a careless way that cut her to the very quick. He assumed that she was just a girl who would bury her feelings deep out of sight for the sake of those horrid 'reasons of State,' who was quite willing to make a political marriage, and eventually become a queen. And so heartless was she that she had even pretended to fall in love with him until his too ready response offended her.

He despised her. Jenny felt that. And she was more desperately and hopelessly in love with him than ever.

The hour came to receive the deputation.

They assembled in the blue drawing-room, a vast chamber with the usual furnishings of state apartments in royal palaces, much gilding, enormous glittering crystal chandeliers, chairs and couches upholstered in sky blue velvet, curtains embroidered in gold, a hideous carpet, like a pale blue sea, with the imperial coat of arms in the center, and a border of golden eagles.

Prince Nicholas was attended by three gentlemen, the archduchess by the baroness, another lady, and General Mortis. They stood by a huge marble-topped table with gilded feet.

The deputation came in, and was presented by one of the household.

Jenny had learned to look at people without seeing them, particularly a group of people. She smiled and held out her hand, and each gentleman in turn bent low over it.

Then suddenly her heart seemed to stand still.

"Mr. Marcus Phare," announced the resonant voice. "Mr. Phare is one of the two trustees, your imperial highness, and has most generously increased the endowment of the hospital by fifty thousand pounds."

Jenny stood like a statue. She could not bring herself to look at the man, but she knew from something magnetic in the atmosphere that it was he.

The little ceremony went on. She examined the plans, praised them. She received the address, and a beautiful golden casket. She thanked the deputation in the few words she had learned by heart, in a very low voice, shaking with nervousness.

Then Prince Nicholas moved about among the gentlemen, and she supposed she ought to do the same.

She nerved herself, looked up, and immediately met the concentrated gaze of Marcus Phare's steely blue eyes. They flashed an unmistakable message to her. In that moment she knew that he knew who she was.

She did not know what to do. She felt like a rat in a trap. She knew that he would not speak to her unless she spoke to him first. She longed frantically to test her fears. Yet she was trembling so that she could hardly move.

She caught the baroness's eyes with fear in them. The lady in waiting thought she was going to break down. She mustn't do that. She forced herself to move. She spoke to one member of the deputation, then to another. She came up to Marcus Phare. It seemed as if it took her a year. Her head was swimming.

"It's—a lovely day," she managed to say.

He bowed with the easy grace of a man accustomed to mix with all classes of people in all countries.

"As your imperial highness says," he replied, "it is a lovely day."

She heard the subtle accent on the title, and she knew as well as possible that he was giving it to her knowing it to be a lie.

The moment had come. The game had failed. She was found out.

The deputation withdrew. The last thing Jenny was aware of was the uncompromising gaze of those blue eyes, that revealed nothing, that promised nothing, that threatened everything.

She did not dare tell the baroness. The rest of the day passed like a dream. She tried to persuade herself that she was

wrong. She would wait for a sign from him.

Several days passed, and none came.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE END OF THE GAME.

IT came to the day on which Prince Nicholas was leaving England again, not to return before the wedding.

To Jenny this whole period had been a whirl so confusing that she could hardly tell one day from the other. Deputations bringing presents; addresses of congratulation; court ceremonies; three nights in London; a glittering pageant of public gatherings; balls, banquets, a gala night at the opera; drives through thronged streets; a sea of faces around her that she had never seen before and would never see again.

People raved about the bride, and said that she looked very tired, but more lovely than words could describe. Her behavior was perfect. She seemed to touch everybody's heart. The gay mouth and the sad, questioning eyes, and the weariness from the incessant strain made a combination that seemed to lift her into another sphere.

Every day she asked the baroness for news. Each day there was none. The runaway pair had escaped to Greece. The pursuers were hot on their trail. It could only be a matter of days, perhaps hours.

"But," said Jenny again and again in despair, "it can't go on!"

The baroness admitted that it couldn't go on. But there was no doubt. The archduchess must be brought back within a day or two after the prince's departure. Jenny must hold out. She had done so much. Never, never could they repay her.

They were back at Argar Castle. There was a lull. There had been a walk in the park in the morning to inspect the deer. Prince Nicholas was making his preparations for departure. He was to leave about six.

At five o'clock a message from him was brought to Jenny in her rooms—would she honor his royal highness by meeting him in the library?

She could think of no excuse. Her heart failed her, as she slipped into a gown of white cashmere with dull silver embroideries and a hem of white fur.

She went downstairs alone and found Nicholas standing by the great open fireplace, looking rather awkward and self-conscious. As she came in, he took a large flat case from a table beside him.

"These have just come, Stephanie. I wanted to give them to you. They are my presents. A messenger brought them today."

He opened the case; she fell back, dazzled by the splendor of the jewels. More rubies—a long chain, a large square pendant, big earrings, bangles, and a gorgeous stomacher.

"Oh!" she said below her breath. "They are much too grand for me!"

She spoke out of her heart, laying the case on a large table on which were silver baskets full of red roses. And she looked at him, speechless with sorrow and fear.

"Stephanie!" His voice was low and hoarse and thrilling. "Why, you speak like the little girl of the China room! And you look— Oh, Stephanie!"

Before she could move she was in his arms, and he was raining kisses on her face and hair, and she was sobbing as if her heart would break.

"Stephanie! Stephanie, you do care! My little love! My little love! You were playing and pretending all the time—trying to pretend! But you do care! I can see it in your lovely eyes. I can feel your little heart beating against mine!"

She went on crying. She could not help herself. She did not give back the kisses, but she lay passive in his strong young arms in a hazy dream of bliss, lulled by the beloved voice showering on her its passionate words of love.

"Stephanie, you have given yourself away, you little witch! Oh, my sweetheart, how I love you! How I love you! And I know you love me! I shall be away such a short time, and then I'll come back and we'll never be parted again."

The magic moments passed. She hardly knew what she said—just broken sentences, things that a lover knows but always wants

to hear. All her defences were broken down.

They stood there, lost to everything but themselves, not heeding the rubies and the roses, but only their love.

Then Nicholas had to tear himself away. And his last words were a gay command.

"Think of me every second, sweetheart, until I come back!"

A week to the wedding. Five days to the wedding. Three days to the wedding.

Jenny asked the baroness her daily question.

"Where is the archduchess?"

And the answer was one of despair.

"I don't know. They have escaped. They have disappeared."

There seemed nothing to say. The situation was monstrous. A royal wedding—and no royal bride.

The day came on which the prince was returning. He was to arrive in the evening. It was against imperial usage for him to stay at the castle, so the house of a neighboring landowner had been placed at his disposal and that of his suite.

But he was coming to dine *en famille* at the castle.

The empress had been laid up with influenza. The baroness was terrified of the effect on her frail health.

Jenny and the baroness were summoned to her majesty's sitting room about a quarter of an hour before the prince was due.

The little old lady was more richly dressed than ever, and her jewels were more splendid.

She smiled at Jenny.

"There is no news of Stephanie," she said. "She has entirely disappeared. You have done all you can. The prince will be here directly. I will tell him the truth. There is nothing else to be done. As soon as he comes I will tell him."

Some one came to say that his royal highness's motor car had entered the castle gates.

The empress smiled at Jenny again.

"Go to your rooms, my child. It is not fair for you to be here. It has been my doing. The prince shall know that you are perfectly blameless. Luini, you can stay until the prince comes. Then you can withdraw, too. I would rather speak to his royal highness alone."

Jenny, trembling in every limb, made her deep curtsy and left the room.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

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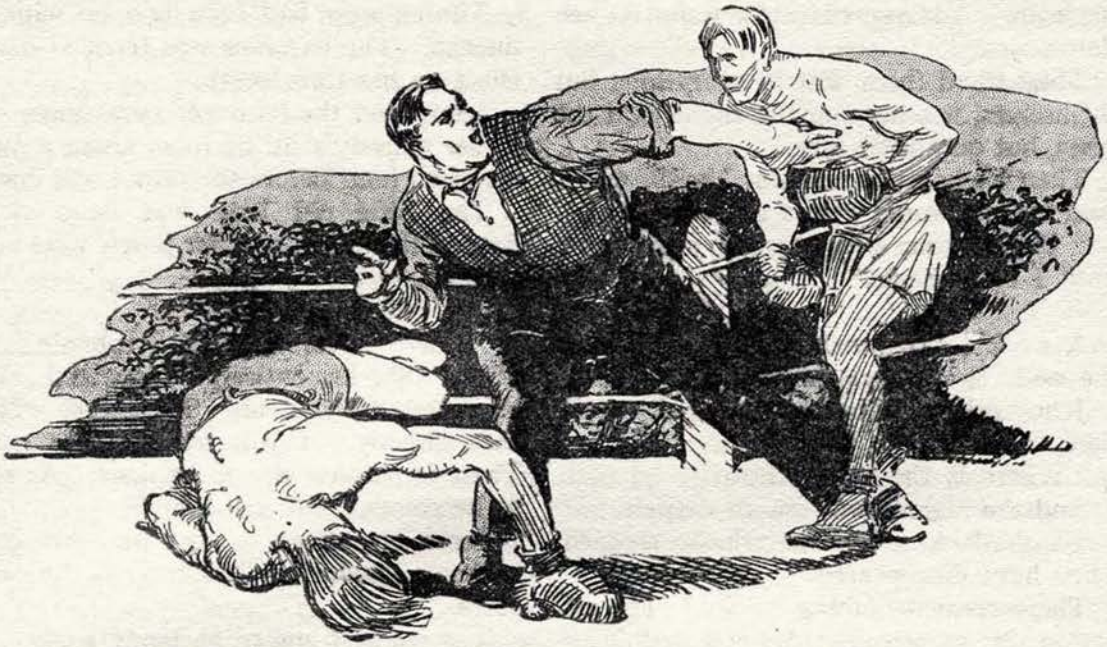
THE OUT TRAIL

A LITTLE moon's the new moon, low in green skies;
Yet who can see the new moon but something in him sighs
To start for secret places beyond the edge of things,
A new hope in his bosom and a heart that sings!

Wondrously the rounded moon wheels overhead
And floods the world with loveliness till desire is dead,
And beauty drowns the breathless world, but better had desire
Not perished in this loveliness of still white fire.

A wistful moon's the old moon, fading with day,
And weary the returning feet of one long astray
Who sought the secret places—but something in his eyes
Reveals the strange happiness of a heart that sighs.

T. Morris Longstreth.



The Glass Jaw

By JIM TULLY

THEY called him the Gatlin' Gun. He could hit from any angle with the speed of machine gun fire.

He continually wore the expression of a lost sheep in the ring. And always, when hit hard, he would look at his antagonist as if to say, "Now that wasn't fair." In the flash of an eye he would then turn tiger and send terrific five-ounce mallets of pain in all directions. Some were jabs of six inches in length, and some were swings that swished swiftly through the air, humming like bullets. And some were straight arm jabs that carried a long sleep in their wake.

Indeed, a mighty man was the Gatlin' Gun, and mighty men he had whipped. And to the credit of the ring, there was always a new man to trade blows with him. For fear is a plant of weak growth in the prize ring. The Gatlin' Gun's rivals asked no odds, they gave none, and when whipped they tried to rise with oblivion creeping over their brains.

The Gatlin' Gun feinted with his black eyes. So great a master was he that he could look at one point in his antagonist's defense, and aim his blows there, then suddenly shift his aim to the unprotected portion of the other fighter's body. They would land with the impact of iron weights hitting a wall.

The Gatlin' Gun was a handsome fellow. His brown hair waved back from a high white forehead. His features were strong, well proportioned and well chiseled. He weighed one hundred and seventy pounds.

He seldom talked long at a time.

Neither had he ever been known to have a sense of fear or pity. He was as merciless as a Gatling gun prepared for action.

He leaned his elbows on the table in the dining car, and looked out of the window with a bored expression while his manager chatted. "We're guaranteed ten thousand, Gatlin', and even if we do say we'll give two thousand to Iron Jaw Bolan for lasting

ten rounds—well, he just won't last them. This guy's got a glass jaw, an' you'll stick your mitt through it before the fight goes very long."

"Yes, I'll crack him early," said the Gatlin' Gun. "I want to get the ten thirty train back to Cleveland."

"That's the ticket," was Teddy's comment. "I hate to lay over all night in these tank towns."

The Gatlin' Gun rubbed his knuckles and said, "All right, but I'm tired of fighting boobs. First thing you know we'll do a jolt for murder. This guy's been in the war and had a bullet rip through his jaw. This is the first time out since then, and before that every fighter he met used to pull the curtain down over the glass window in his jaw."

"Yep," said the manager, a swarthy little fellow with a black, needle-pointed mustache, "they call him Iron Jaw Bolan now, an' he thinks he's good. They were kiddin' him when I was down there gettin' the match, an' he says, "Well, you kin tell the Gatlin' Gun for me he'll have to shoot 'em harder'n a gatlin', 'cause I'm goin' to lick 'im."

The Gatlin' Gun smiled, and rubbed his well chiseled jaw with his left hand. He then put his silk cuff in place, and still smiling, said, "I hear Iron Jaw can hit, Teddy, is that so?"

"Yep," answered Teddy, "they tell me he throws a mean mitt. But he can't hit a clever man. He goes to pieces when they crack 'im on the jaw and he has to get a new pane o' glass in it. He's been battered on the head so much he's goofy. Poor fish."

"Yep, poor fish," repeated the Gatlin' Gun, "I'll drain the water out of the pond to-night."

The train swerved, the engine whistle shrieked, and soon the long limited slowed up and stopped at Findlay.

A committee, wearing badges, met the Gatlin' Gun and his manager, Teddy Ray, at the station. "Great night," said the chairman to Teddy; "the crowd's crazy to see the Gatlin' Gun. We got your guarantee in advance already, and still they're comin'." Teddy Ray was loquacious, while the Gatlin' Gun smoothed the well tailored lapel of his coat and upstaged the crowd. Leaders of uneventful lives, counters of money, employers of labor, lawyers and doctors, who were they anyhow? They didn't even know how to block a left jab.

A taxi drew up, and manager and fighter were whisked away to the leading hotel, the lobby of which was crowded to obtain a view of the famous Gatlin' Gun. But he, like a bored preacher at a bartenders' picnic, ignored them all.

"I wish Iron Jaw'd knock his block off!" exclaimed a man in the crowd.

"If wishes were horses we'd all have Fords," was the comeback of another. "Iron Jaw can't hit that bird with a load of buckshot."

Iron Jaw Bolan was one of those men who would have been a great fighter, *but*—he had a glass jaw. A knockout on the jaw is the most painless of all knockouts. A quick curtain drops on the brain, and the pugilist sinks, forgetful of battles and blows, and sleeps for a short while. The next day or week the jaw might ache, and sometimes nothing but soft nourishment can be taken. But that is all.

A glass jaw is one in which the nerves leading up to the brain are more easily connected with. In all other ways it may be even an iron muscled jaw. But this weakness has kept more pugilists from reaping the great reward than all others combined. At least seventy-five out of every hundred knockouts are bludgeoned on the jaw. Iron Jaw Bolan had been given his name ironically on account of the dreaded glass jaw.

He was silent and stolid. Life to him was a drab meadow, and he was an ox that roamed within. He had always been a drawing card in Findlay in spite of the weak jaw. For he battled like a fiend, and not all hitters, even the heaviest of them, connected with the jaw. When they connected squarely, the fight was generally over. He would not have a manager. He trained always with a larger and even more stolid brother.

His legs were of iron, and he could run ten miles over the pretty roads that stretched through the countryside

Then the war came, and he went away with his brother. He was going over the top one morning when a bullet popped into his mouth. It carried away part of his lower jawbone.

He was taken to a base hospital, and later removed to Paris. The surgeons there took one of his ribs and fashioned a new jawbone for him.

When the war ended it found Iron Jaw Bolan full of dumb agony over his blasted future.

Knowing the weak nature of his jaw he had given up the ring completely. Together the two brothers tilled their farm, and put stolid dreams of ring careers behind them seemingly forever.

Always a diligent reader of boxing news, Iron Jaw Bolan allowed nothing to escape him. By a peculiar twist of the mind, he had learned the leading events in ring history from the very beginning of it. Tom Figg, Jem Mace, Heenan, and Sayers, Corbett, Jeffries, and Fitzsimmons, were all familiar to him. He knew their famous blows and all their fighting eccentricities.

After reading the offer of two thousand made by the Gatlin' Gun's manager to any man who would stay ten rounds with him, Iron Jaw turned to his brother Jack and said, "I wonder if I kin keep my jaw outa the Gatlin's way for ten rounds. It 'ud mean a lot to me an' you both. We'll never git on our feet this way. Jane's been waiting a long time now, an' we owe everybody an' his brother. I jist gotta take a chance on gittin' my jaw cracked or somethin'."

Jack rubbed a stubby chin and looked across at his brother.

Iron Jaw's parents had named him Pearl. But no one but Jack and Jane ever called him that. It was too much like saying "Kitty" to a lion. "Well, Pearl, you know, till they started crackin' your jaw they weren't no better man in the world. I never see no one could fight like you. Then, course, they all played for your jaw, an' you was so busy blockin' it you couldn't give your 'tention to the fight. Then, when you did, zowie, they'd gloom you."

The conversation always ended the same when the day's work was over. Stolid men the Bolans were, but they had one thing in keeping with the men who eventually win. They had the tenacity of bulldogs fighting to the death over the bone that was their ambition.

"I'll tell you, Pearl, I'll git John Ames to match you with the Gatlin' Gun. You kin draw a crowd here if you'll fight again. Are you willin'?"

"Yes," answered Iron Jaw slowly, "I'll fight him."

"That's good," as slowly answered Jack; "you kin keep your jaw down, an' I'll practice hittin' it a little harder each day while you're trainin'."

In a few days the Gatlin' Gun's manager appeared, and the match was made.

The brothers trained alone, and faithfully.

Many a night in a large attic room, by the feeble glare of two kerosene lamps, they boxed and wrestled about. Always did Jack play carefully for the jaw of his brother, and always would he lurch forward to hold him when he was apparently beaten. After a furious exchange between the two, Iron Jaw once said, "Now, listen, Jack, talk to the referee good. Tell him not to stop the fight till he counts ten, maybe I'll jist stagger an' look bad an' not be out. Maybe that little somethin' jerks over my brain an' goes right away again."

"I'll 'member that," replied Jack; "the referee's a good guy. You know that."

"Yeah, I know, but watch he don't forget."

As the hour of the fight drew near the two brothers walked slowly in the direction of the place in which it was to be held.

Breasts pounding with drama they still remained as quiet as one of their own mules at midnight. Not able to give utterance to their feelings they looked at the indistinct shadows along the road, but said no word.

"Wonder what Jane 'll think of the fight?" remarked Iron Jaw presently.

"She told me she might come," Jack replied, and then, as if in an afterthought: "I wish it was over."

"It won't be long now," said Iron Jaw. "It 'll be over soon."

They hurried past the crowd in front of the building and entered the rear door. All

was excitement within. The elite of the Findlay sporting world had gathered there. Jack called the referee aside, and said so all could hear: "We don't ask for nothin', only don't rule Pearl out before you count ten. We got a hunch he might stagger an' act goofy, but if he's on 'is feet, let 'im stay, will yer?"

The referee and promoter, a smare billiard room owner, looked at the intense face of Jack, and then at Iron Jaw. "I'll do that, for it's comin' to you both," he answered.

Iron Jaw stepped up and said: "Thanks, John," and stood back silent.

"Think you'll win, Iron?" asked the referee.

"I know it," replied Iron Jaw, as he walked toward the dressing room with Jack.

"Lordy," said an overhearer as the brothers walked away, "if nerve was money them guys would be Peerpoint Morgan."

"Well, you gotta admire them for that," rejoined another, "and besides, we all know Iron Jaw can fight."

In a short time Gatlin' Gun appeared on the scene. The place became a-whirr with the murmur of voices. But the Napoleon of the ring looked neither to the right or to the left. His manager walked ahead as much as to say: "Make way for the king," and men fell back. A bell boy followed, carrying the Gatlin' Gun's fighting paraphernalia.

The Gatlin' Gun was soon alone in the dressing room, save for the boy who remained near him. Like a trained monkey the boy would jump at the slightest nod of the Gatlin' Gun.

Teddy Ray left and soon returned to the Gatlin' Gun's dressing room. "The first prelim's over," he said, "an' there's a six round semi between two hams. They can't stand up six rounds, so we'll sure make that train. I got all our dough but the two thousand we got to give up if Iron Jaw stays the limit. I'll grab that right away an' we'll beat it for the depot in a taxi."

"That suits me fine; these hick towns give me the shivers," answered the Gatlin' Gun.

The semiwind-up ended in the third round. The crowd yelled for the main event.

The Gatlin' Gun was the first to climb through the ropes. Proud was his bearing, as became a man, who in a hundred battles, had never been knocked down by a blow from a glove. Immediately his face took on the lamblike expression. It was part of his repertoire. He tested the ropes and then walked casually about the ring. The crowd cheered lustily, but he paid no attention. His body was as well formed and powerful as the granite dream of a sculptor. His feet no sooner touched the canvas than they seemed to spring his form forward as though on new rubber. Narrow in the hips his body widened until it was immense at the shoulders. A mountain of graceful muscle he was whom the leather rage of battle had never dented. His eyes darted quickly hither and thither, not the slightest movement escaping him. They were eyes that could see more than those of many people.

When he returned to his corner, he spoke tersely to his manager and as he did so, his thin lips curled into a half sneer. Then the tiger crept into his eyes, and puckered lines of cruelty formed around them.

He seated himself and looked up in an unconcerned manner while loud cheering shook the building.

Iron Jaw Bolan was climbing through the ropes. His brother followed him. He had no other seconds, or trainers.

He contrasted greatly with the Gatlin' Gun. The scar on his jaw could be distinctly seen under the strong lights of the ring. While the crowd still cheered he threw his bathrobe over the chair in his corner, and stood with his left hand leaning on the top rope of the ring.

The crowd gasped at the muscular build of the man. "Lord, if he didn't have a glass jaw!" commented one man.

"Can't tell, maybe some doctor in France lined it with iron," laughed another. "He's game, though, you gotta say that for him," added a third. The gloves were adjusted, and the men were called quickly to the center of the ring.

Around them grouped several men. Jack Bolan stood back of Iron Jaw, a heavy towel thrown over his arm. The customary instructions were given, and the fighters nodded their heads with half bored looks

as men will who have heard the same words many times. In another minute they touched gloved hands in what was meant as a quick handshake.

They returned to their corners, and presently the announcer shouted, pointing to the Gatlin' Gun's corner: "La-dies a-n-d gentle-men, Jack Carrol in this corner, champeen of the wo-r-ld." Then he snapped like the crack of a whip: "The Gatlin' Gun." The crowd cheered, and the great bruiser condescended to nod at them with a bored expression.

And then—in the same singsong voice: "La-dies a-n-d gen-tle-men — Iron Jaw Bolan—the pride of Findlay." More cheering. "The men will fight ten rounds to a decision, the champeen forfeits two thousand dollars if he fails to knock out Iron Jaw Bolan." He clapped his hands together.

A tense quiet spread over the crowd. The gong rang. The Gatlin' Gun and Iron Jaw went forth to battle.

They made a picture of animal motion that thrilled the crowd. Iron Jaw's right arm was bent, and the glove formed a bulwark of protection against his left jaw through which the bullet had gone. The Gatlin' Gun, his hands moving gracefully, his face mild, was feinting with his eyes. Iron Jaw fell into the trap for a second, and his right glove dropped from his left jaw. The Gatlin' Gun's great shoulders moved quicker than a flash, and his right glove zipped through the air and caught poor Iron Jaw in the very place the bullet had. He staggered backward, his eyes popping, his gloves sinking to his sides, his body falling to the floor. The Gatlin' Gun stepped back, the gleam of execution in his eyes. Jack Bolan yelled: "Come on, Pearl, you ain't licked yet." He wasn't. He was up at the count of three and rushing like a madman. The expression of a lamb left the Gatlin' Gun's face. He was a tiger driven into a corner.

One body swayed against the ropes, then another. They fought to the center of the ring amid a thudding clatter of gloves. The Gatlin' Gun had no time to measure his man, though he did throw sledgelike leather blows at the glass jaw of his antagonist. They worked in close, and the great science of the Gatlin' Gun came into play. Blows rained from every angle on Iron Jaw. He lifted one foot at a time and stamped it on the canvas floor to relieve the pain. He then stood rigid; the muscles in his legs as taut as the strings of a violin.

"I'll break your jaw, damn you!" hissed the Gatlin' Gun in a clinch. Iron Jaw kept on fighting, and grunted "Huh!" Then the gong rang.

Jack Bolan gave Iron Jaw a piece of lemon to suck. He poured cold water down his back, and said slowly: "Watch his right, it's the one to zip you."

No word was ever said to the Gatlin' Gun in his corner during a fight. He would not allow it. As well interrupt a Napoleon poring over the plan of a battle. The gong rang for the second round.

Iron Jaw rushed from his corner swinging a wild haymaker that missed. The Gatlin' Gun's gloves played a rat-a-tat-tat on his face before he gained his balance. He tied Iron Jaw into knots with his marvelous feinting. He then rattled blows in rapid succession against his opponent.

Iron Jaw bent his head low, like a man caught in a hailstorm who does not wish his face cut to pieces. He wisely decided not to look at the Gatlin' Gun's eyes. Danger lay there, curled like a rattler. Iron Jaw suddenly worked in close and ripped his right hand downward on the muscle covered kidneys of the Gatlin' Gun. The round had been a fierce encounter from the start, with always Iron Jaw keeping his head down. When the gong rang the fighters dropped soggy gloves to their sides and went to their corners.

A stamping and cheering started. It did not completely die down until the gong sounded for the third round.

With the suddenness of a bullet shot out of a gun Iron Jaw's antagonist rushed from his corner. The crowd stood up as he planted six vicious triphammer blows on Iron Jaw's scar. He went down like an ox felled with an ax. Terrific screaming followed, and a hush followed as quickly after. Iron Jaw was on his feet without taking a count. The astonished Gatlin' Gun stared at him as he rushed forward.

As Iron Jaw whipped four blows to the Gatlin' Gun's face, Teddy Ray looked serious. His face relaxed as his man drove Iron Jaw halfway across the ring with a left to the heart. He was after him like a flash. Iron Jaw Bolan stood, instinctively knowing that a storm was headed his way. It came in gales of whirling blows. He pinned his left jaw to his breast and fought back on even terms until he stepped into a short left jolt to the chin, and he folded over toward the Gatlin' Gun with his head down. The back of his neck exposed, the Gatlin' Gun whipped a murderous right downward and it crashed solidly on Iron Jaw's neck. The latter's face went livid with rage. The crowd hooted. Iron Jaw became a madman while pain jabbed needles in his brain.

"Ouh!" he screamed. His brother held the rope as though he would squeeze it in two. Iron Jaw bellowed again as another blow followed the first. Then he wrenched his body away, and balanced himself for the briefest of seconds and rushed at the Gatlin' Gun. No living man could have stopped him. Few could have stood before him. One hundred and seventy pounds of hurtling bone and muscle he was, driven with the fury and pain of a titanic passion.

He rushed against the ropes as the Gatlin' Gun sidestepped. With bleeding face, he turned quickly and rushed again at the Gatlin' Gun. Relentless, he tore after him, now crouching, now with a terrible swaying motion of his body, his arms throwing so many blows that the Gatlin' Gun was forced to block and quit fighting for a moment.

The Gatlin' Gun measured him after a time and stepped in close. He ripped a catapault left to Iron Jaw's chin. His head went backward in time to expose his left jaw completely to a horrible right that followed. His knees shook like posts struck by lightning, then he crashed to the floor and rolled over and over. The referee followed, counting the while.

Blood dripping from his macerated lips, the back of his neck raw, his sides oozing red fluid—the undaunted owner of the glass jaw rose at the count of seven. "I'll kill you, damn you!" he groaned.

The good looking master of boxing and brawn said tersely: "Shut up and fight."

"I am—damn you!" screamed Iron Jaw Bolan. Just then the Gatlin' Gun stepped in and delivered blows with masterful precision. The fourth round ended.

When the Gatlin' Gun went to his corner, Teddy Ray said: "Finish him quick; the train leaves in a little while."

"I'll sure get him this round," was the retort.

Jack Bolan mumbled into the ears of his younger brother. "He cain't lick you, Pearl. He ain't man enough. He flops you down, but you bounce up like rubber."

The noise lulled into silence when the fifth round started. Quickly the men toed the scratch. Arms flying like iron weights fastened to a revolving wheel. Iron Jaw stepped in and looked up.

"Don't look at 'im," shouted Jack; and his head dropped in time to get away from an uppercut aimed at his chin. The Gatlin' Gun's jaw was set; his lamblike expression gone. His teeth grated. He boxed with the art and speed of the master that he was. With the accuracy of perfectly aimed gunfire he shot lefts and rights to all points of Iron Jaw's face and body. As the latter went to his knees the fury of the Gatlin' Gun's rush made him hurtle over him.

Iron Jaw rose and whirled into the storm of battle, the pace of which was set by a world's champion. He went down and rose. He went down again.

"He's done," murmured a man in the first row. "The Gatlin' Gun wins."

But the Gatlin' Gun was not the winner. Not yet. Iron Jaw rose and steadied himself.

"Make him rush, Pearl!" shouted Jack Bolan.

The Gatlin' Gun sneered—and rushed. Suddenly, Iron Jaw shot a left that traveled with lightning speed the distance of six inches. The power of a mule's kick was behind it. The Gatlin' Gun staggered backward, the fierce Iron Jaw after him. A swishing right and left sizzled over the master's guard, and he sank in a corner. There was never such a screaming before. The Gatlin' Gun had been knocked down.

The referee counted. " One—two—three—four "—silence sank like lead in water—" five—six "—the champion rolled over, a tired tiger—" seven—eight "—he rose to his elbow—" nine "—he stood erect; the gong ended the round.

An engine whistle shrieked. Neither manager nor Gatlin' Gun heard it. Their minds were on other and more important things.

Jack Bolan hugged his glass jawed brother. Cheers rolled over the audience, interspersed with handclapping.

A voice in a tone of admirable derision yelled: " Pearl—Pearl—little Pearl." Iron Jaw did not hear. He stretched back on his chair, his big breast heaving mightily, while Jack rubbed caustic over his bleeding wounds. The last round had thrilled the stolid brothers.

" I wish ma and pa could see you now, Pearl," said Jack, choking back the nearest he had ever come to a sob in his life.

The Gatlin' Gun leaned back in his chair, an egglike lump on his handsome jaw. Two towels were swung in front of him in zigzag fashion, while Teddy Ray rubbed his handsome body. No word was said. Teddy Ray, like a man who had witnessed an execution, was nervous. The Gatlin' Gun's face was set, and the lines ran from the corners of his eyes like little skin ditches dug with a razor blade.

" You'll cop him this round, Gatlin', an' we'll breeze outta here on that train like the wind." Just then a whistle shrieked. " We got twenty minutes yet," resumed Teddy.

All noise had subsided. The gong boomed like the echo of a bell in a tomb. The fighters rose. With muscles taut for a second, each man surveyed the other. They then walked slowly forward, in the manner of men who carry bombs in each hand. Every fighting cell in their brains was alert. The Gatlin' Gun walked close, and feinted with his eyes, manipulating his gloves with dazzling speed the while. Iron Jaw was confused, and jerked his head upward. The Gatlin' Gun's left crashed through, but Iron Jaw's chin was down before it landed. It caught him on the bleeding forehead. The right followed after and whizzed across the top of his left ear. It stung like electric needles.

Maddened to desperation, Iron Jaw whaled in close and kept his glove pounding furiously. But he was not alone at the pounding. Flashing blow after flashing blow followed, and then the Gatlin' Gun fell into a clinch. Falling out of it, he rammed a right and left to Iron Jew's face. The latter worked in and clinched. His huge bearlike arm worked around and pounded the Gatlin' Gun's back as with a heavy bludgeon. In fierce retaliation, the Gatlin' Gun sledged the top of Iron Jaw's neck with rabbit blows, called thus for the reason that it is the way rabbits are killed.

Through battered lips Iron Jaw hissed: " I ain't a rabbit." The words were no sooner spoken than a look of madness came over the Gatlin' Gun. The rough, unshaven face of Iron Jaw leered at him. He forgot that he was the mental master of the man who held him as a bear does a victim. He tore himself loose with magnificent fury. His arms began to work like tremendous white and red flails under control of the lightning. His gloves were heavy with blood and water. The squishy impact of them could be heard a dozen rows from the ringside.

Iron Jaw Bolan stood up under the withering attack and leered. His brother Jack yelled: " He cain't lick you, Pearl." The words taunted the Gatlin' Gun. He rushed madly at Iron Jaw, who fell backward against the ropes.

They struggled fiercely, and it was now the Gatlin' Gun who leaned against the ropes, fighting madly. The long whistle of an engine could be heard above the whir of battle.

The men worked out of one clinch and rushed madly into another. Four rights followed in thudding impact on Iron Jaw's scar. Science and ringcraft were blotted out.

" Come on an' fight!" snapped the Gatlin' Gun.

" Come on yourself!" was the rejoinder.

Hands low, heads together, they slugged. Their knees sagged and became stiff again. They backed away, and Iron Jaw missed two smashes that unbalanced him. The

Gatlin' Gun stepped in. Iron Jaw slugged him away. The Gatlin' Gun shot a left that knocked Iron Jaw reeling against the back curtain. He sank quickly to the floor.

Iron Jaw rose, swinging his arms wildly.

" He wants to watch now," said a man near the ring, " or the Gatlin' 'll knock him colder'n a snowball."

A wild right swing—a miss—a counter by the Gatlin' Gun—and Iron Jaw's head hit the floor with a thud. He rose again suddenly. They fought to the center of the ring. The Gatlin' Gun shifted to long range boxing once more, and Iron Jaw danced about him as if anxious for an opening at infighting.

" I wish it was over; we'll miss the darn train sure," thought Teddy Ray; then, as a terrific blow landed: " He's got him."

But not yet. Iron Jaw ripped both gloves to the body. They lifted his antagonist from the floor. In a quick comeback he was himself staggered by a jolt to the scarred jaw. Four gloved hands crossed each other in the fury of the fighting that followed. Darkness came. A dynamo was changed at the electric plant, and the lights suddenly went out for a few seconds. They no sooner went on again than the men were at each other with renewed fury. Heads rocked with punches as one after the other held the upper hand.

Punch after punch was delivered amid wild cheering. Then a silence fell. Next a cheering. Iron Jaw was down. He rose. Then Gatlin' Gun was down. He rose, shaking his head.

They clinched until their bodies seemed chained together. Suddenly a right jolt shot upward. A body sagged downward and fell face foremost on the floor and rolled over three times. The referee counted. The Gatlin' Gun was out. Excitement ruled.

Jack Bolan hugged his brother. Their eyes glistened. The ring was full of people.

The Gatlin' Gun sat in his corner for many minutes. A doctor was called.

" You see," said the man of medicine, " the German bullet must have torn away the nerve in Bolan's jaw that connected with the brain. It's not how hard you hit a man's jaw. You must hit it in a vital spot. That was a lucky bullet for him."

" Well," said Teddy Ray, as if anxious to get the Gatlin' Gun's mind off serious things, " the train's gone."

" So's the two thousand," was the Gatlin' Gun's rejoinder, " and the championship."

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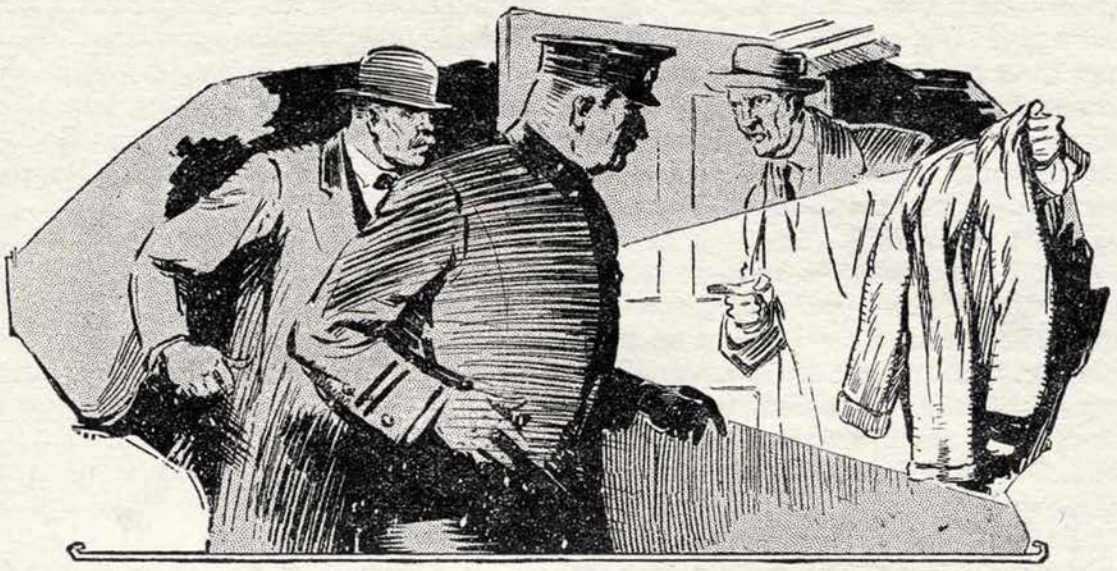
ON THE HEIGHTS

THIS is no day for tears.
The glorious mountains, sane and high,
Rest in unbroken calm upon the crest of earth,
Impregnable, serene.
The sun stoops down to kiss their fringe of pine trees,
Green and sweet perfumed with God's own nectar,
Unmoved by earthly cares and unperturbed by grief.
Why, then, should we despair?
Are we not worthy to be part
Of God's great scheme of beauty?
Or must we, grieving, ever contemplate
The everlasting failure to perfect
The pattern given us to weave,
With threads all tangled by our ignorance?

Grace Cooke Tonjoroff.



Annihilation

By ISABEL OSTRANDER

Author of "McCarty, Incog," "Dust to Dust," etc.

WHAT HAS OCCURRED IN PARTS I and II.

EX-ROUNDSMAN McCARTY discovers that a man he has seen fall dead in the street has been poisoned. He and his old friend, Denny Riordan, investigate and learn that the murdered man is Alfred Hughes, valet to Henry Orbit, one of the wealthy residents of a block with gates at either end, adjoining the park, known as New Queen's Mall. Inspector Druet, of the police, joins in the investigation.

Neither Orbit, nor his neighbors, the Sloanes and Goddards, shed any light on the poisoning. McCarty learns from little Fu Moy, nephew of Ching Lee, Orbit's Chinese butler, that Lee and Hughes were enemies and also that there had been a slight fire in Orbit's bedroom. It develops that the valet was a bully, drunkard, and trifler with women, and therefore had other enemies. Several days after the murder, Trafford, tutor of young Horace Goddard, interrupts McCarty and Denny while they are interviewing Orbit to inquire whether Horace has been seen. Later it develops that Horace has disappeared.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THIN AIR.

"GLAD you could come at once, McCarty." Eustace Goddard's round, ruddy face was sagging and pale, and the humorous quirk beneath the ends of the small, sandy mustache had given place to a tremulous droop. "Your inspector thought I had some information for you about that valet's death when I telephoned headquarters to ask for your address, and I didn't undeceive him. Don't want any notoriety about this while a shadow of doubt remains, but, God—I—I'm afraid!"

"You'll recall Special Deputy Riordan from that first talk we had at Orbit's?" McCarty indicated his colleague, who stood speechless with tense interest in the doorway. "You told me over the phone that your boy had been kidnaped. He's pretty big for that, ain't he—and in broad day?"

"What else can we think?" Goddard threw out his short, pudgy arms in a helpless gesture. "Horry vanished in thin air this afternoon. He hadn't any idea of going out; in fact, he complained of a headache

This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for November 17.

after lunch—he has never been very strong—and his mother left him curled up on the couch in the library here with his sketch book when she went shopping. She returned late to dress for Orbit's musicale, and I didn't inquire for him, supposing him to be with Trafford, his tutor. I reached home from the club about half past five, and found Trafford very much disturbed. But here he is. He'll tell you himself. Mr. Trafford, these are the men for whom I sent. Will you tell them when you first missed Horry?"

The thin, anxious looking, bespectacled young man whom they had seen in conversation with the watchman that afternoon came slowly forward.

"I went to the library at three to tell him it was time for his Latin lesson," he began, his voice dazed and shaken. "He wasn't there, and I searched the house for him, surprised that he should have gone out without mentioning it. Then it occurred to me that he might have slipped over to Mr. Orbit's house next door, where there is an exceptionally fine collection of paintings which fascinate him. His ruling ambition is to become an artist, and Mr. Orbit has encouraged him. But I digress. I went there to inquire for him, but no one had seen him, and then, really anxious, I questioned the watchman, who assured me that he had not gone out either gate."

"H-m!" remarked McCarty, as Dennis shuffled his feet uneasily. "And what did you do after that, Mr. Trafford?"

"I concluded that Horace had gone to see the artist who has been instructing him in drawing and of whom he is very fond. I could think of nothing else that would account for his disappearance, but it seemed probable some neighbor with a key to the Mall had entered just as he left, so that the watchman need not have been called upon to open the gate for him."

The young man's hands were clenching and unclenching nervously, and beads of moisture stood out upon his forehead. "I therefore didn't mention it to Mrs. Goddard before she went to the musicale, but waited, believing Horace would return at any moment. When the afternoon grew late I searched the house again, questioned the servants, even went across the street to inquire at the Sloane house for him. Young Mr. Sloane has taken an interest also in his artistic efforts, and it is the only other house on the block he is privileged to visit by himself, since the Burminsters are still away. I—I met with no success. If I had only given the alarm earlier!"

He was turning away with a groan when McCarty asked:

"Why didn't you think to phone Blaisdell and ask if the lad had been there, Trafford?"

The wretched tutor stared, and Goddard, who had been standing with his elbows on the mantel and his head in his hands, suddenly wheeled.

"How did you know Blaisdell is the artist who has been giving him lessons?" he demanded.

McCarty smiled.

"I heard him say himself that Blaisdell was going on a sketching tour next month and would take him, only you wouldn't hear of it," he explained. "The boy was wild to go along—"

"Mr. Blaisdell started yesterday," the tutor interrupted. "I learned this when I telephoned to his studio this afternoon, as I did as soon as the idea occurred to me that Horace might have gone there. I forgot to mention it, but my anxiety— I feel criminally negligent in having taken the situation so easily."

"Don't the boy ever get a chance to play with other lads?" Dennis spoke for the first time, his tone filled with pitying contempt. "Couldn't he have gone to the park and then home to supper with one or another of them?"

"My son does not play in the park," Goddard responded with dignity. "He rides there with a select class from the academy on two mornings of the week, but the season does not reopen until next month. Horace is delicate, as I told you, and has never cared for rough physical exercise, although he is far from being a mollycoddle. He has a few friends of his own age, but they are all still at their country homes; Mr. Trafford and I have telephoned to every one we can think of. Mrs. Goddard is prostrated and under the

care of her physician; when she returned from Orbit's musicale and learned of Horace's disappearance she was almost beside herself, for he is our only child. If anything has happened to him—"

He ran his hand violently through his scanty fringe of hair; and McCarty observed:

"'Tis queer the lad didn't tell you himself that Blaisdell was going away yesterday."

"He hasn't talked of him very much lately." Goddard hesitated, and then went on: "Horace is an unusual boy—very sensitive and reserved. I don't pretend to understand him; it's what his mother calls the artistic temperament, I suppose. He took it very much to heart when we declined to allow him to go on this sketching tour, but of course it was out of the question. No one but an artist would have suggested such an impractical thing for a boy of his age, and with his frail constitution. Damn that dog! He'll drive me out of my mind!"

A doleful, long drawn howl, subdued but eloquent, reached their ears from below stairs; and McCarty remembered his brief talk with the boy in that very room three days before.

"Is that Max, the police dog your son was telling me about when I called here?"

"Yes. He wandered around, whining, until I couldn't stand it any longer and had him shut up. Devilish clever animal and devoted to Horace—knows there's something wrong! By God, hear that! Midnight! What can have happened to my boy?"

He dropped into a chair, burying his face in his hands as the clock struck; and once more Dennis spoke.

"Have you any notion how much pocket money the lad had this day?"

It was Trafford who replied to him.

"Six dollars and seventy-five cents. I am teaching him to keep a budget, and he carefully puts down whatever he spends each day."

"Little and red headed, wasn't he, with a narrow chest and spindling legs—"

"Riordan means is he small for his age and kind of delicate looking?" McCarty amended hastily, glaring at the tactless interrogator. "How was he dressed when you last saw him, and what's missing from his things?"

"He wore a brown pedestrian suit and brown shoes and golf stockings," the tutor answered. "He had a plain platinum wrist watch on a leather strap, and a gold seal ring with the family coat of arms, but nothing else is missing except a brown cloth cap with the manufacturer's name, 'Knowles,' inside. Before communicating with you Mr. Goddard and I telephoned to every hospital in the city, fearing that some street accident might have occurred, but no child whose appearance tallied in the least degree with his had been brought in. The only remaining possibility is that he is being detained somewhere for a ransom."

"Have you any other reason for thinking the lad may have been kidnaped?" McCarty turned to Goddard. "Know of anybody with a grudge against you or your family? Had any threatening letters?"

"Great heavens, no!" The bereaved father raised his head. "Horry is a little chap for fourteen, looks nearer twelve, in fact, and Mr. Trafford usually accompanies him when he leaves the Mall; but he begged so hard to go to Blaisdell's studio by himself that I allowed it, though it was against his mother's wishes. I wanted him to be manly and self-reliant—and the Madison Avenue cars pass Blaisdell's door near Fiftieth. I thought it was perfectly safe, but he may have been watched and marked by some member of the criminal class as a victim for kidnaping."

"That don't explain how or why he passed out of one gate or the other with not one on the whole block seeing him." McCarty shook his head. "You say you're wishful to avoid notoriety, or I'd advise you to report the lad's disappearance to the Bureau of Missing Persons and let the investigation take its regular course, but there is a chance still that he's not been kidnaped nor yet met with an accident. 'Twas for Riordan and me to try to locate him and get him back without having the newspapers getting out extras that you sent for me to-night?"

Dennis caught his breath audibly at this irregular supposition; but Goddard nodded.

"That's it, exactly! It would kill Mrs. Goddard to have the press make a sensational case of this while there is the slightest hope that Horace may be restored to us without publicity. You'll do what you can? I'll pay anything, a fortune, to have my son again, safe!"

"We'll do our best, Mr. Goddard." McCarty rose. "If we've no news for you by morning, can we have a word with Mrs. Goddard then?"

"Of course. I'd take you to her now, but the doctor has given her something to quiet her. The servants don't know anything; I've questioned them till I'm hoarse and been in touch with every one to whom Horry might have gone. For God's sake, find my boy!"

Young Trafford showed them out, and McCarty glanced keenly into his pale, troubled face as he held the door open. He seemed on the point of speech, but glanced back over his shoulder and then resolutely closed his lips.

McCarty paused.

"Before we come in the morning, you'd do well to tell the lad's father to come clean with us," he admonished in a lowered tone. "'Tis not by keeping anything back that he'll help."

Trafford started.

"Do you think he is?" he countered quickly. "I've told you all I know, at any rate, but let me hear if there's anything more I can do. I'll sit up all night by the telephone."

"Where are we going now?" Dennis asked as his companion turned toward the east gate. "'Twas to find who killed Hughes that the inspector made deputies of us, not to be chasing runaway kids; but I'm trailing right with you."

"Runaway, is it? I thought that was your hunch when you asked what pocket money the lad had and then described him with more truth than politeness!" McCarty chuckled. "You think he's gone to join this artist fellow Blaisdell? 'Twill be easy to settle that when we find out where that tour was to commence, for Horace could not have gone far on six seventy-five."

"And we know how he got out all right," Dennis supplemented. "'Twas by that east gate ahead when Bill left it open so convenient. Look at Orbit's house! Do you suppose his afternoon party is lasting on through the night?"

The awning and carpet were still stretched from entrance door to curb, and, seemingly borne upon the subdued radiance of the glow which filtered through the curtained windows of the conservatory, there came to them faintly the strains of the organ. It was no majestic harmony this time, however, but a simple, insistently repetitive measure, and McCarty paused to listen, shaking his head.

"Orbit's by himself, and just kind of thinking through the organ, can't you tell, the way he's just wandering along, amusing himself? That's an easy little tune, too, that would stick in your head. Come on. I've a notion to see a part of this Mall we've not thought to examine yet."

"If there's a foot of it we've never been over, barring the insides of the other houses—" began Dennis in obvious disappointment. "I thought we'd be getting after whoever takes care of Blaisdell's place to find where he's gone—"

"At this time of night?" snorted McCarty. "Has it come to you that Goddard may not be so far wrong at that, especially if he's got some reason he hasn't told for thinking the lad was stolen? I'm beginning to see the practical workings of those books of mine you turn your nose up at, and I ask you: Did Horace look to have nerve enough to run away? If he went outside these gates, it was of his own free will, of course, and during the time Bill left the one of them open; but what if he'd been paid to do it? What if the lad had been decoyed outside? How do we know there's not others on the block concerned in it?"

"Others on the block?" repeated Dennis, stopping short as they passed the dark Bellamy house. "Mac, you're not thinking there could be any connection between what happened to Hughes four days ago and the Goddard kid's disappearance! You're not looking to have him found dead somewhere, poisoned! Glory be! What's come to this street all of a sudden?

"I'm asking myself that," returned the other grimly. "I'm going no further in my mind, though, just saying it looks funny—that's all. Here's a handful of rich families living behind their gates in peace and seclusion for generations, with nothing ever happening except maybe a funeral now and then, for they could not shut out death. Then a murder takes place right in their midst, even if the victim did go far before he dropped in his tracks; and while there's still no answer to it somebody in the next house disappears."

"So that's why you hinted at notoriety if Goddard took the case to headquarters instead of leaving it to us! We're still on the Hughes affair, after all!" exclaimed Dennis, adding: "What's down here?"

McCarty had turned down the black passage or court between Mrs. Bellamy's and the closed Falkingham house next door on the east, and he vouchsafed no response to the companion who followed curiously at his heels until they had reached the rear of the boarded-up residence. Then he whispered cautiously:

"Got your flash light?"

For answer Dennis produced the pocket electric torch, without which he seldom went on a nocturnal adventure with McCarty. Pressing the button, McCarty darted a minute but piercing ray of light along the rear of the houses whose front sidewalks they had just traversed.

"See that, Denny?" he whispered. "An open court as clear as the palm of your hand straight past the Bellamy's and Orbit's to Goddard's on the corner. If the kid had wanted to get out without being seen he might have left the back of his house and come along this court to any of the passageways that lead out to the sidewalk nearer the gate."

"True for you," Dennis assented. "Turn the light along the back wall till we see how high it is, and whether there are any little doors in it or not."

But the wall, not of brick, but of ancient brownstone, was as high as the city's regulations permitted, blank and bare save in the rear of Orbit's miniature palace where it was covered by a thick, impenetrable curtain of ivy, sable and glossylike black satin in the moving finger of light.

All at once heavy footsteps pounded along the sidewalk to the mouth of the passageway they had just left and a brighter beam was trained suddenly upon them. Dennis dodged instinctively, but McCarty turned and faced it, calling cautiously:

"Is it you, Dave Hollis? We've not gone yet, just taking a look around."

They had encountered the night watchman when they let themselves in at the west gate earlier in response to Eustace Goddard's summons and now he merely grunted in acknowledgment and passed on.

"There's nothing more to be seen here," Dennis remarked. "No one could cross that wall without a ladder and though they might climb that ivy it could not be done carrying a boy the size of Horace."

"To say nothing of it being broad day and the back windows of all the houses in this row looking out at the performance," McCarty interjected. "All the same, we'll stroll along to the Goddards' kitchen door and back, Denny."

The rear of Mrs. Bellamy's mansion was as dark as the front and in Orbit's also the lights had by now been extinguished. In the dead stillness their stealthy footsteps seemed to ring unnaturally loud to their own ears. Only in the Goddard house did the dull glow from roof to cellar gleam forth through shrouded windows like sleepless, anxious eyes.

"'Tis almost unhealthy, the cleanness of everything!" Dennis looked about him as the flashlight circled over the spacious, immaculate court. "Not an ash can nor so much as a garbage pail that a cat could hide behind! We're wasting our time here, Mac!"

But McCarty did not answer. He had gone halfway down the tradesmen's passage leading to the sidewalk and paused before a door in the side wall of the Goddard house. Dennis saw the light play in narrowing arcs over the paved ground before it and then settle to a mere pinpoint as McCarty stooped. After a moment he straightened and came swiftly back, cat-footed despite his bulk. He was holding out some small object in his extended hand and as he

reached his companion's side he played the light upon it; a small, plain platinum watch, crushed beyond repair, on a pathetically short leather wristband.

CHAPTER X.

THE MAN IN THE SHADOWS.

THE cold, early light of a clouded morning found McCarty and Dennis seated over pancakes and coffee in an all night restaurant on Sixth Avenue not far from Fiftieth Street. The intervening hours since they left the New Queen's Mall had been fruitlessly spent in a weary round of the ferries and railroad terminals in search of news of a small, solitary traveler. Now they had just come from an interview with the superintendent of the palatial studio apartment building in which the artist Blaisdell resided.

"I always thought those painter guys lived in garrets with never a square meal nor a second shirt." Dennis spoke in a slightly dazed tone. "I mind that day watchman, Bill, said young Horace told him Blaisdell was one of the greatest in the country, but he must have some regular business to be able to live in a place like that! There's one thing sure; no matter how much of a fancy he'd took to the kid he could afford to get into no trouble by taking him on a tour without his father and mother being willing, and if the boy showed up he'd bring him back. Where is it again that he's gone sketching?"

"Up in the She-wan-gunk Mountains." McCarty pronounced the name with painstaking care. "Ellenville is his headquarters, the superintendent said, if you remember; the Detweiler House. Granting there was a train, and the lad had more money with him than that four-eyed tutor suspected, he could have got there by early evening, but no word of any kind had come when I phoned the Goddard house an hour ago."

"I know." Dennis drained his cup and held it out to the sleepy waiter to be refilled. "'Tis too bad you did not tell Trafford about finding the watch."

"And send him into hysterics? He's as bad as a woman now!" McCarty shrugged. "The doctor 'd give orders Mrs. Goddard wasn't to be woke up till eight, but we'll chance it by seven. How do you feel, Denny?"

Dennis eyed the questioner with swift suspicion.

"There's nothing the matter with me that I know of!"

"'Tis a pity!" McCarty commented callously. "I was thinking if you called up the lieutenant at the engine house and told him how sick you were he'd maybe let you off duty the day. There's a phone over on the cigar counter."

"And what's ailing me?" Dennis's eyes sparkled, but his tone was flat, for his inventive faculties were at low ebb in the early morning.

"From what I've learned lately, Denny, about mental defectives—"

But Dennis had risen, and stalking to the counter he took up the phone. Presently McCarty heard his voice raised in a harrowing description of pain, but it was abruptly cut short and after listening for a moment with a dazed look on his face he silently replaced the receiver and returned to his chair.

"Well?" demanded McCarty expectantly.

"Mike's out of the hospital and he'll take my nine to six shift."

"But just what did the lieutenant say to you?"

"He told me," Dennis replied very slowly and distinctly, "to get the hell off the phone, for I'd be no good at a false alarm while my crook chasing side kick McCarty was on the job again. I gathered from a few more remarks before he hung up on me that your friend Jimmie Ballard of the *Bulletin* has been nosing around the engine house to get dope from me about what you're pulling off, and by that same token running the lieutenant ragged. 'Tis what I get for associating with you."

It was McCarty's turn to eye his companion suspiciously, but Dennis's stolid countenance was quite devoid of humor and he retorted:

"Is that so? Well, we'd better be associating ourselves with the Goddards again

now or there'll be no news for Jimmie or the inspector either, which is worse. Come on."

"Unless the boy is found as Hughes was," Dennis suggested optimistically. "It would let the Lindholms out, but who except a lunatic would be poisoning children and servants, promiscuouslike?"

McCarty's reply was a stare and a grunt which the other construed as derisive, and he lapsed into aggrieved silence as they made their way once more to the gates behind which so much of mystery and menace brooded.

Trafford opened the door almost before the bell had ceased to echo through the house, and his haggard face was mute evidence that the suspense had not been lifted.

"Have you—" He could not voice the rest of the question; but McCarty replied briskly:

"We've several possibilities, Trafford, and we're following every last one of them up. No news is good news just now. Is Mrs. Goddard awake yet, do you know?"

"Her maid told me when I inquired a few minutes ago that she was stirring. I'll go and see." The young tutor turned dispiritedly away. "You'll find Mr. Goddard in the smoking room at the rear on the avenue side."

In dimensions and ponderous style of furnishing the smoking room resembled a club lounge rather than a private apartment and it was a full minute before they decried Eustace Goddard's rotund figure relaxed in the depths of a huge leather armchair. He was apparently asleep, but on their approach he opened widely staring eyes upon them and sprang up with an inarticulate cry.

"We've not located your son yet, Mr. Goddard." McCarty spoke quickly before the father could frame words. "We know what every minute means to you and 'tis for that we're going to bring the inspector and some of his other men into it. I can promise you there'll be no publicity through us."

"By God, McCarty, they can blazon it in every paper in the land if it will bring our boy back to us!" Goddard cried brokenly. "The living horror of this night has made everything else fade into insignificance! You mean you—you've failed?"

"Not exactly, sir, but there are only the two of us now, and 'twill save time if others take up some of the clews we've got," McCarty explained.

"There's the telephone." Goddard waved a shaking hand toward a stand half concealed behind a lacquered screen. "Get the whole department if you need it! I'll offer any reward you suggest—fifty thousand? A hundred?"

"We'll settle that when the inspector comes." McCarty moved to the screen and took up the receiver, and Dennis cleared his throat.

"How many doors are there to this house?"

"Four!" Goddard replied in a surprised tone. "The one at the front, two at the rear—kitchen and tradesmen's entrances—and a smaller door at the side opening on the court that runs between this house and Orbit's. But why do you ask? What are the clews you've found?"

Dennis coughed discreetly, and from behind the screen came McCarty's voice.

"Is it yourself, inspector? Yes, me, McCarty. No, at Goddard's and you're needed. Wait a bit! Can you lay hands on both Martin and Yost? Can't talk now, sir. Get me? All right, bring Martin along, but send Yost over to—to Bill, 0565. That's it. Maybe and maybe not. Sure, I've been in touch with Bill and he knows the party I'm looking for. Tell Yost to phone if anything turns up. Of course not, inspector, till you take it in hand! 'By."

The last had been straight blarney, but Dennis shivered as the receiver clicked on its hook. Well he knew that telephone number and the grim little house far over toward the river where for a brief interval the bluff, kindly Bill harbored the city's unknown dead! Had the sickly little Goddard heir after all gone the way of Hughes?

"Why did you ask about the doors?" The conversation had evidently held only its obvious meaning for the man before them. "Horace must have been induced in some way to leave the house, for no one could have entered with Trafford and all the servants about!"

"He did leave, and by the side door." McCarty held out the shattered little wrist watch. "Does this belong to the lad?"

"Good God, yes! He wore it yesterday!" Goddard seized it and then sank into his chair. "It's—smashed! He must have been handled brutally, perhaps even—"

"That don't follow, sir!" McCarty interrupted. "The strap slips out of the buckle easy, for I tried it, and the lad might have dropped it without noticing. Anybody going to one of the back doors could have come along and trod on it after, for 'twas in the alley right in front of the door that I found it. And now—"

"Mrs. Goddard is awake and ready to see you now." Trafford's voice sounded from the threshold and Goddard started up once more.

"She knows there is no news?" he asked, and at the tutor's nod added: "Come, then, but don't tax her beyond her strength, and don't mind any—any wild statements which she may make. My poor wife is almost out of her mind!"

"Of course; we understand." McCarty darted a quick glance at Dennis and then turned to the tutor. "Trafford, Inspector Druet and another man are on their way up from headquarters and you'll be helping matters if you tell the both of them what's happened and all about them you phoned to for trace of the lad."

In silence they followed Goddard to the tiny jewel box of an elevator whose velvet and gold and glittering crystal mirrors made Dennis gasp. He gasped again when their guide pressed a button and they shot abruptly upward, and his weather-beaten face turned a delicate green as they stopped with a smooth but sickening swoop at the second floor.

He was the first out with the opening of the door, but there was no time for the aside which trembled on his lips, for Goddard led the way down the wide hall to the doorway in which the gaunt, gray-haired figure of an elderly maid was silhouetted against the dim light of the room within.

"Eustace!" A woman's trembling voice sounded from behind her. "It can't be that nothing is known, nothing! Did you tell them about that—"

"Everything is being done, Clara." Goddard motioned the maid aside and McCarty and Dennis followed him into the dressing room. They received only a confused impression of mahogany and old rose and tall mirrors, of a faint, aromatic perfume and the sound of deep drawn, convulsive breathing.

The next moment their eyes were caught and held by the long figure outstretched upon a chaise longue, imposing even in the disheveled abandonment of grief. Mrs. Goddard was a woman well over forty, but her distraught face still bore traces of the beauty which must normally have been hers. There was no touch of gray in the masses of luxuriant dark hair which the maid had arranged with evident haste, but that night had etched lines about the fine eyes and firm though sensitive mouth that would never be erased.

As her husband went on speaking her glance swept past him to the two who waited at his elbow.

"Everything that is humanly possible is being done, my dear!" Goddard repeated more emphatically. "These are the police officers I called in, and they want to ask you a few questions. Do you think you can collect yourself enough to stick to facts and not foolish, morbid fancies?"

"I am quite collected, Eustace!" There was a note almost of defiance in Mrs. Goddard's tones and she sat up among her pillows with an unconscious dignity in spite of the emotion which she held in check with such obvious effort. "Ask me anything you please! I—I only want my baby safe once more!"

"Of course, ma'am," McCarty responded soothingly. "You went out and left the lad on the couch in the library and when you came back to get ready for the musicale next door you thought he was with his teacher. Now, what was the first you knew of his disappearance?"

"When I returned from the musicale. It was late, after six, and my husband met me in the hall with the news. He and Mr. Trafford had been telephoning everywhere! They thought Horace might have gone to some of our friends, but he had never done such a thing as to leave the Mall without

our knowledge and I knew that something terrible had happened! I could feel it—here!"

Her slender, very white hands flew to her breast. "I cannot blame Mr. Trafford for not starting the search for Horace in the early afternoon; he supposed he had slipped away to the studio of an artist who has taken a great fancy to our little boy, but Mr. Blaisdell is not in town."

The forced composure still held her and only her fluttering hands and quick drawn breath gave evidence of her supreme agitation.

"You don't think the lad has gone to join him, do you?" McCarty asked.

"Run away, you mean?" Mrs. Goddard shook her head slowly. "Oh, no! Horace would never dream of such a thing! Mr. Blaisdell wanted to take him, but we would not hear of it and Horace had no idea of disobeying our wishes. He has never been away from us before—before yesterday!"

"Then you think he has been kidnaped?"

At the question Goddard, who had moved around to the other side of the couch, took a step forward, the sagging muscles of his round face tightening as his jaw tensed, but his wife did not take her eyes from those of McCarty.

"He isn't here!" her trembling voice broke. "He wouldn't run away! The earth didn't open and—and an avalanche descend upon him! It must have been that man!"

"What man!" McCarty and Dennis spoke in chorus and then Goddard placed his hand on his wife's shoulder.

"Now, Clara!" he admonished. "You promised—"

"To give us facts, Mr. Goddard!" interrupted McCarty sternly. "If Mrs. Goddard can tell us whatever it was you were holding back last night so much the better! You phoned to me that the lad had been kidnaped, but you couldn't give me any reason for thinking so except that he was gone, and you didn't breathe a word about any 'man'! Will you tell us, ma'am?"

"There's nothing to tell!" Goddard insisted obstinately. "My wife is nervous, imaginative, and so is Horace. He was badly frightened by a strange man here in the Mall a short time ago and his mother was quite frantic about it. It was some days before she would allow him to go out alone again, but personally I think he exaggerated—"

"Our boy would not tell a falsehood!" Mrs. Goddard interrupted. "It was just at dusk one afternoon about a fortnight ago, or perhaps less, when Horace had returned alone from Mr. Blaisdell's studio. He entered the Mall by the east gate as usual, but stopped to play with a little white Persian kitten, the pet of Mrs. Bellamy's baby. Mrs. Bellamy lives just two doors away, next to Mr. Orbit's. The watchman had passed him and gone on toward the west gate when all at once the kitten darted across the street and Horace followed, afraid that it might become lost. It ran into the open court between the Parsons' house and the closed one next door belonging to the Quentin estate and Horace was stooping to coax it to him when he was seized from behind by a strange man and searched!"

"Searched?" echoed McCarty.

"Yes. The man pressed Horace back against him with one hand over his mouth and felt in all his pockets with the other, but he took nothing and never uttered a word! My little son was too startled to struggle at first, and all at once the man released him—and disappeared!"

"Did the boy have any money with him?" inquired Dennis.

"Three or four dollars, I believe, but the man left it untouched." Mrs. Goddard's eyes shifted to those of the questioner. "It was quite dark there in that narrow space between the two houses, but Horace saw the face which bent down over his distinctly. He said the man was an utter stranger who he had never seen in the Mall before; rough, unshaven and desperate looking!"

"Which way did he go?" McCarty took up the interrogation once more. "Was it down the alley to the street or up in the open court behind the houses?"

"How could the child tell?" Goddard interjected before his wife could speak. "It was almost dark and he was terror-stricken!"

"Horace told us that the man ran toward the rear and disappeared in the shadows of a doorway at—at the left." Mrs. Goddard replied as though her husband had not spoken.

"At the left, facing the rear of the houses on the north side of the way?" McCarty was thinking rapidly aloud. "That 'll be Parsons's house, then! Why didn't you want us to know this, Mr. Goddard?"

"Because it can have no possible bearing on the disappearance of our son yesterday!" Goddard retorted hotly. "He ran home immediately and told us, and I instituted a thorough search without delay, but the watchman could find no trace of the fellow, and insisted he had admitted no one that day through either gate who resembled Horace's description. The Parsons's servants had seen nothing of him, and he has not reappeared since, although a strict watch was kept. It is madness to suppose that Horace left this house of his own accord to meet the fellow when he stood in mortal terror of him—"

"Not unless he met him accidental like, and got waylaid a second time!" Dennis broke in irrepressibly. "There's no telling what he was after if 'twas not money, but if he was crazy, and the boy put up a bit of a struggle—"

"A-a-ah!" Mrs. Goddard's taut nerves gave way, and she broke into a low, wailing cry. "That is my fear! No sane person would harm him, but all night long in horrible dreams I have seen him— My baby! He is hidden somewhere, helpless, suffering, and I cannot reach him! I shall go mad! Mad!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE CLOSED HOUSE.

"A FINE mess you made of that!" McCarty remarked disgustedly when the door of Mrs. Goddard's dressing room had closed behind them, shutting in her husband and the maid. "Just when we were on the point of getting at the truth, too!"

"Truth, is it?" Dennis retorted. "I suppose you mean you'd have been finding out what the crazy guy expected to find in the boy's pockets!"

"No, I know that already!" McCarty emitted a grim chuckle. "'Twill keep, though, for we've got quick work ahead of us now, and the inspector must have been waiting this long while."

"You can shoot yourself down in that gilt birdcage if you've a mind to, but my own legs will carry me!" Dennis eyed the elevator door, cunningly concealed in the high oak paneling of the hall, with a hostile glare. Then he added sarcastically: "I've no doubt but that by the new book learning you've got lately you know who the guy was, too, and where he came from, and how he got out, through solid walls and barred gates! Education is a grand thing, but where is Horace? Answer me that!"

"If we're not able to answer that soon, Denny, I'm thinking it would be best left unanswered forever, for the sake of that woman back there." McCarty spoke with deep earnestness. "There's a feeling in me that we've something working against us more than human—something worse than lightning, or the plague, even! If we could only see our way clear to the black heart of it!"

They went down the stairs together, to find the inspector and Martin awaiting them with Trafford, who appeared crushed from the gruelling half hour through which he had passed.

McCarty addressed him first, with a mere nod to his superior.

"Trafford, why didn't you tell me about the man who grabbed the lad in the alley not two weeks ago?"

"Mr. Goddard forbade me," the wretched young man stammered, then drew himself up with a vain assumption of dignity. "Since it has nothing to do with the case—"

"We're the best judge of that!" McCarty waved him away peremptorily. "Tell Goddard we'll see him later. Now, inspector, before we talk, if you'll follow a suggestion of mine just once more, there's a train Martin will be after catching, and he'll have to hustle to do it."

The inspector eyed him keenly for a moment and then nodded.

"Go to it," he said briefly. "Get the instructions, Martin."

McCarty drew the young operative aside, and after a brief interchange of words, the latter took his departure. Then the inspector motioned the other two into the library and closed the door.

"Now I want an explanation of this!" he announced in a tone which took McCarty swiftly back to the old days. "Why didn't you report to me at once when you learned what had happened? What have you two been doing since? I made you deputies, but by the Lord I didn't appoint you chiefs!"

McCarty told him in detail of their activities during the previous night, and added frankly:

"I didn't report, inspector, because I wanted a few hours the start of you, and that's the truth. So far I've only done what I think you would have, yourself, but I'm working from an angle of my own that you'd not have taken. I've sent Martin just now to Ellenville to find out if this Blaisdell has heard anything of the lad, but that's only routine; the real job is here in the Mall, even if Horace turns up dead or alive somewhere else."

"What's this angle of yours on the case?" the inspector demanded curtly. "What did Goddard forbid that tutor mentioning, and why?"

McCarty described the interview with Mrs. Goddard and the inspector listened attentively, asking when he had finished:

"What do you propose to do? Put the screws on Goddard to find out why he kept that back? He can't be a party to the kidnaping of his own son!"

"No, but he thinks he knows who the fellow was, and that he'll hear from him or them back of him, soon, with a view to ransom; he's ready to offer fifty or a hundred thousand reward whenever you give the word. Until he does hear from him, though, he can't be sure what happened to the lad, and that's why he's anxious. His wife don't know anything about this private opinion of his, of course, and naturally she's half crazed."

McCarty summed up as though his process of deduction was equally clear to his two companions. "We'll leave him worry awhile, for 'tis my opinion he's mistaken entirely. I want a look now inside that empty house next to the Parsonses across the street, and there's no time to wait for red tape to get permission."

"The Quentin house, that's been closed all these years?" The inspector looked fixedly at him, and Dennis gaped. "You think the fellow might have hidden there after letting the little boy go? Come on, we'll take a chance."

A huge dark blue limousine of impressive aspect was just drawing up before No. 7 as they emerged from the Goddard house and crossed the street, and at sight of the distinguished, gray-bearded man who alighted and went up the steps the inspector halted with an exclamation.

"Do you know who that is, Mac? The ambassador that the mayor gave the keys of the city to only yesterday down at City Hall! If he comes himself to call on the Parsons, they're of more importance even than I thought!"

"And 'tis small wonder they don't bother to associate with the rest on the block, millionaires or no," McCarty commented, eying the equipage with vast respect as they passed. "You said the old gentleman was—"

He paused suddenly, and Dennis's eyes followed his to the great entrance doors which were closing slowly behind the aristocratic back of the ambassador. There was just a glimpse of a thin, sallow-faced manservant in black who appeared to sweep the trio with a curiously penetrating gaze, and then the scene was shut out.

McCarty seemed to have lost interest in the question he was about to ask, and they went on in silence to the narrow, paved court between the Parsons residence and the vast, rambling pile of brownstone next door.

"Let's go up here and see if the rear is open for the length of the block, the way it is on the other side of the street," McCarty suggested. "There's Parsons's side door, the one Horace said the man disappeared into; it's pretty deep, you see, deep enough for him to have stepped into the embrasure and been hid in the shadows of

late afternoon without actually going through the door itself, though I don't say he didn't, at that!"

"'Tis likely a nut that 'd go around grabbing children and searching their pockets would be let into the Parsonses!" Dennis exclaimed in fine scorn. "Unless the boy made the whole thing up for a sensation, the way some kids do, how'd the man get in and out of the block? The house on this side looks to be boarded up as tight as a drum."

They reached the rear and found the open court extending along behind the houses to be even wider than that on the south side of the street, the back wall higher and devoid of a single vine. The silent Quentin house presented as blank an aspect as from the front, its sealed windows and barred doors staring like blind eyes in the sunlight, and the inspector shook his head.

"No one has entered here in months; years maybe," he remarked. "The padlocks are so rusted on those board doors that they would have to be broken, and the boards themselves are weatherbeaten and rotting. I'm surprised they'd let the place get into such a condition, even though it is in litigation. What are you doing, Riordan?"

The house being the corner one, was built around in an ell on the Madison Avenue side, and in the right angle formed by its two walls a leader descended from the roof. Dennis was examining and testing it speculatively, and at the inspector's question he turned.

"Do you mind, sir, 'twas a wide shiny mark burnished on a pipe running across the top of an air shaft that showed Mac and me how a murderer had swung himself down on a rope and in at a window, in the first case ever he butted in on after he left the force?" he asked. "This rain pipe looks to be too frail to bear the weight of a cat, but 'tis not a cat rubbed the rust off here, and here, so it shines like a new tin! I put on a clean shirt yesterday, more's the pity, but hold my coat and hat, Mac."

"Mind or you'll break your neck!" McCarty warned, forgetful of his friend's calling as he complied. Dennis scorned to reply, but swarmed up the straining, creaking leader to the second floor, swinging out to land as lightly and sure-footedly as the cat he had metaphorically mentioned on the broad sill of a window two feet away. The leader, released suddenly from his weight, tore loose from its fastening and canted crazily against the angle of the wall, shaking and clattering, and McCarty exclaimed:

"You'll not be coming down the way you went up!"

"True for you!" Dennis sang out with a note of rising excitement. "I'll be coming down the way the last guy did who lit here, and that's by the inside! Wait you there for me."

He had been examining the sill upon which he stood, and the boards which covered the window, pressing experimentally upon the latter, and all at once one of them gave way, forced inward with an accompanying crash of glass.

"Now you've done it!" McCarty observed superfluously. "Look out there is not more than us waiting for you inside!"

"I've my flash light, thanks be, and my two fists," Dennis responded. "That board wasn't tight; the nails had just been stuck back in the holes. Here goes another!"

With the rending of wood the second followed the first, and with a third which he wrenched loose, Dennis smashed in the fragments of glass which still clung to the sash, and then wriggled lithely through the aperture and disappeared. McCarty drew a long breath and turned to his former superior.

"I'd like to be following him," he said wistfully. "If so be some guy is hiding in there—the same one that grabbed the lad—he'll be desperate enough to kill, and Denny's too slow-thinking and slow-moving to take care of himself! I'm heftier than him, and 'tis long since I did any shinnying, but maybe that pipe would hold me after all!"

"A man with four medals from the fire department for meritorious conduct and conspicuous bravery doesn't need a nursemaid, Mac!" the inspector responded with a laugh. "Personally, I don't believe any

one's been in there for months before him, but—what's that?"

"That" was a sudden subdued commotion within, a long-sustained clatter followed by a reverberating thud, and then a silence ominous in its intensity.

"I knew it!" McCarty dropped the hat and coat and made for the wooden barrier that sealed the main back door. "I'm going in if I break the whole damn place down! Denny! Denny! I'm coming!"

His reassuring roar was lost in the mighty smash of his fist on the rotting boards, but after the first blow the inspector reached him and dragged him back.

"Have you taken leave of your senses?" the latter demanded. "You'll have the whole block aroused to find us breaking and entering! Riordan's all right! There, I hear somebody moving about inside. Listen!"

McCarty waited, panting and tense, and faintly there came to his ears the sound as of stumbling footsteps within, and a scratching noise from a window at the left of the door which, being protected by an iron grillework, had been left unboarded. A heavy green shade hung close against the inner side of the dirty window pane, furrowed by many past rain storms, and the stout bars seemed at a glance to be firmly imbedded in the broad stone sill, but McCarty strode to them and began trying them one by one, while behind him the inspector drew his revolver and stood expectant.

"Look here, sir!" McCarty whispered. "'Tis fine burglar protection they've got in these houses! See how this bar slides up into its groove in the top of the casement till you can pull it out below and down over the sill entirely! I'll bet the next will work the same. It does! If we'd taken the trouble to find this out at first—Glory be, here's Denny himself!"

The green shade had flown up, and the face of Dennis appeared in a sickly yellow aura cast by his flash light, but he promptly extinguished it and set to work on the catch of the window. As McCarty removed the fourth bar the sash opened upward, and the two, who had meanwhile been exchanging grimaces pregnant with meaning, gazed silently at each other for a full minute. Then McCarty found his voice.

"Where is he?" he demanded. "What did you do with him? We heard the row out here—"

"There wasn't any 'him,'" Dennis interrupted sheepishly. "It was me, by myself. I came on the stairs unexpected like, and took the whole flight of them without even breaking my flash light! But come in, the both of you, and see what I found!"

McCarty scrambled over the sill, and Inspector Druet, despite his added years, followed with the effortless ease of a boy. They found themselves in a large room bare of furniture, but in the dust which lay like a heavy carpet upon the floor, a meandering trail of footsteps, many times traversed, ran from the window by which they had entered to a connecting door opening into a laundry. Dusty finger-marks, with here and there the imprint of a whole hand, were plainly outlined on the white woodwork of the inner sill, and below it greasy pieces of wrapping paper were scattered, while in a corner two pitchers and several small tin cans were heaped.

"Some one has been camping out here, that's evident," the inspector remarked. "Getting his food handed in to him through that window, too!"

"And it wasn't any ordinary bought stuff, the kind that comes ready fixed in stores." McCarty was poking about in the papers. "Here's the carcass of a whole chicken, pieces of fancy rolls, and pastry and other stuff, but it's all stale; it's been here for four or five days, at least."

"And there's traces of coffee in those pitchers and cans, to say nothing of the wine bottles on that shelf!" Dennis pointed impatiently. "He's been living on the fat of the land from one of the houses in this row, and the nearer the likelier, even if it does happen to be occupied by them high-and-mighty Parsons! Come upstairs till I show you more."

The larger adjoining room must have been the laundry, for rows of enameled tubs and washing machines were ranged against the wall, and driers stood about, but all were covered with a thick blanket of dust. Dennis led the way through a se-

ries of kitchens and pantries far more elaborate than those they had encountered in Orbit's house, to the back stairs and up to the second floor rear, into the room with the broken window. All the way they had followed that zigzag trail of overlapping footsteps, and here the floor was crossed and recrossed by a network of them. This apartment had evidently been one of the master bedrooms, for a well-appointed, marble-lined bath opened from it, and heavy, old-fashioned furniture of richly carved mahogany inlaid with tarnished gilt marquetry was ranged with stiff precision about the room. A half-burned candle shielded from the window by an old cardboard box cover stood on a side table, together with a handful of matches and some cigarette stubs, and McCarty pointed to it.

"He couldn't live without a light, but he hid it from the window, and he didn't dare carry it when he went down to get his food; that's why those footprints rambled so, he was feeling his way in the dark. That bed looks as if it had been slept in, with all those old draperies piled on it, and what's in that big pitcher on the bureau?"

"Water," Dennis replied. "There's still a little left, though you can see from the marks on the inside where it has dried down."

"Evaporated?" The inspector nodded. "That would show, too, that whoever the fellow was he hadn't used any of it for a few days at least. Hello, what's this?"

He had turned to the bathroom, and after a moment he emerged from it holding a bright, new razor, a piece of soap, and a very dirty Turkish towel.

"The water has been turned off in the pipes, of course, but there is an empty bucket in there in which some must have been brought to him, and he seems to have had some regard to his personal appearance, at least. The Goddard boy said the man who had tackled him was rough looking and unshaved, didn't he?"

"When he tackled him, yes," McCarty replied. "He had chance enough to clean up after, as soon as whoever was helping him to hide here brought him the things."

"He did more than that!" Dennis declared. There was an unwonted flush on his leathery cheeks, and his gray eyes were alight with excitement. "Why do you suppose he was hiding here, anyway? Why does anybody hide? If 'tis not to do something unlawful, couldn't he have broken the law already and be hiding from it?"

"Denny!" McCarty breathed. "What are you getting at? You've found out something! Who is the man?"

"Who's wanted now, inspector?" Dennis asked. "Somebody that's gentleman enough to keep shaved and clean in spite of everything, who'd appreciate good food and wine and the best in life, and yet was a convicted criminal for all that!"

"'Convicted—'" McCarty started forward. "An ex-crook, do you mean? How did you guess—"

"'Ex-crook,' nothing!" retorted his conferee. "I'm not up in the latest of prison styles, but if this ain't a penitentiary get-up, I'm an Orangeman!"

He flung open a closet door behind him, dived in and dragged forth in triumph a telltale suit of stained and ragged gray.

"Sing Sing!" exclaimed Inspector Druet. "Good Lord, Riordan, you've made a find! Do you remember, Mac, that three men escaped last month? One was killed making his get-away, and another caught and transferred to Dannemora, but the third of those that crushed out then is still at large, and there's a big reward out! Heaven knows how he managed to get into the Mall, and why he should have come here, of all places, but I'll stake my life that the man who has been hiding in this house is George Radley!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE BREATH OF DEATH.

"WHO is he?" asked Dennis, wide eyed. "Who is this George Radley?"

"You remember, don't you, Mac?" The inspector turned to the ex-roundsman. "Radley was a young chemist—"

"A chemist!" caroled McCarty and Dennis in unison. Then their mouths shut like traps, and they stared at each other.

"What's got into you two?" Inspector Druet demanded. "This Radley was accused, together with an accomplice, of sending poison to a mutual enemy, concealed in candy. An innocent member of the man's household ate it and died, but the actual evidence against the accused was so weak that they could only be convicted of manslaughter after two disagreements, and then the accomplice only got two or three years and Radley ten. He'll have several more to serve yet, however, even allowing for good behavior, and then, too, a guard was seriously injured in trying to prevent that crush-out, so he's wanted bad. He could never have got as far as the city in those clothes!"

"He had others outside of 'em, either stole or slipped to him." Dennis returned to the closet and produced a pair of delapidated shoes, gray trousers, and a long mackinaw, together with a soft Panama hat. "Only the shoes are ragged, you see; the rest is in pretty good condition, and there's an umbrella in a corner of the closet. He could have got past the watchman easy on a rainy night, especially if he said he was coming to see a maid, maybe, in one of the houses. Still, that don't account for his grabbing the Goddard kid, if 'twas him, and going through his pockets!"

"His clothes may be a find, but we've not got himself yet. What if he's hid under this roof now?" McCarthy exclaimed. "He'd have no call to harm the Goddard lad unless Horace found out he was here and was going to give him away; but harm or no, if so be he's had no chance to escape!"

"You're right, Mac!" The inspector dropped the clothes he had been examining and started for the door. "We'll smoke him out!"

But a painstaking search of the great house from attic to cellar failed to reveal any further trace of the refugee, and they departed at last through the open window in the basement to round the corner into the court and come face to face with Bill Jennings.

"Mr. Parsons's butler next door sent me," the watchman explained. "He said somebody's heard a noise in there and I'd better see about it. Nothing wrong, I hope, inspector?"

Open curiosity rang in his tones, but the official replied brusquely:

"Nothing. We'll go over the other empty houses on the block later. It's all right."

"What's this we've been hearing about a strange man who scared the Goddard lad in this very court not two weeks ago?" McCarty asked as they approached the sidewalk once more.

Bill Jennings looked uncomfortable.

"There was no strange man got between these gates while I was on!" he averred defensively. "It must have been some butler or houseman that works on the block trying to play a joke on the little feller. It was a week ago Saturday that he raised the rumpus about it, but there wasn't any sign of the rough-looking kind of guy he described when Trafford and I looked, and we went over every foot of the courts. There's Mr. Orbit motioning."

It was to the inspector and his deputies, however, that Orbit beckoned, and when they had crossed to him he asked with grave concern:

"Is it true that Horace Goddard cannot be found? One of the maids from next door told Jean, and that you had been notified, but I couldn't believe it! Trafford came to my house yesterday afternoon, though, inquiring for him—but I forgot, McCarty and Riordan were present. Is it possible that the little boy hasn't been seen since?"

"Not so far as we've been able to discover," the inspector responded. "It's a pretty bad business. If he was a normal, healthy, mischievous kid we'd be apt to think he ran away, but from all accounts he was sickly and timid, not the kind to strike out for himself."

"Horace is very nervous and highly strung, with remarkable artistic possibilities," Orbit observed thoughtfully. "I'm immensely interested in him, and my friend Blaisdell is of the opinion that he'll become a great painter some day if his people don't kill his aspirations by lack of sympathy. Like a sensitive plant he needs encouragement, nurturing. But what can have hap-

pened to him? If he isn't with friends or relatives the child must have met with an accident. Has an alarm been sent out?"

"We're trying every way to locate him. He used to run in and out of your house a lot, didn't he? Did you ever hear him speak of any one he might have gone to, now?" the inspector asked. "We know, of course, how disappointed he was when his father and mother wouldn't let him go on a sketching tour with this Mr. Blaisdell you mention, but he seems to have got over it. Do you know if he had any boy friends his own age?"

Orbit shook his head.

"None. He is a solitary little chap, self-contained and retiring, and I don't think he cares very much for the society of other boys. He would not have gone away and remained like this without a word if he was able to communicate with his family. It seems inexplicable! Goddard must be dreafully cut up about it, to say nothing of the boy's mother, and I feel badly myself. I should hate to think of any accident happening to him. I'm going in to see Goddard and ask if there is anything I can do. Meanwhile, you've no news for me about Hughes's strange death, have you? It is odd that two such mysterious, unrelated incidents should have occurred in less than a week, even though Hughes must have taken the poison either accidentally or through some one's murderous intent, after he left the Mall that night. Haven't you come upon the slightest indication?"

"We're working on several promising ones." The time-worn formula was repeated a trifle wearily. "Let you know when there is anything to give out, Mr. Orbit. Come on, Mac—it's nearly noon."

Orbit turned toward the Goddard house, but the others had scarcely gone a half dozen steps in the opposite direction when again they were halted. This time it was by the pretty little French nurse, and she drew the Bellamy baby closer, gazing at McCarty with wide, affrighted eyes as she voiced her question.

"Pardon, *monsieur,* but is it of a truth, that which I have heard? Must it be that the little *garçon* of that house there is lost?"

"That's about the size of it, ma'am." McCarty removed his reblocked derby with a flourish. "I don't suppose you saw him playing around anywheres yesterday afternoon?"

"But no!" She caught her breath with a slight gasp. "All the night he has been depart, *alors!* It is terrible, that! He is so gentle, so good, the little Horace! He would not run away. Is it that he have been stole? Me, I have fear for the little Maude—"

She hugged her small charge tighter, and the baby stared at them solemnly.

"There ain't much danger of that!" McCarty laughed reassuringly. "I guess the lad will turn up all right. When did you see him last?"

"Yesterday morning, when he have passed with M. Trafford. Oh, if he has been keednap we do not go beyond these gates!"

She nodded, and led the child away slowly, while Dennis remarked:

"Pretty and a lady, but did you ever hear the like of such lingo? No wonder them French have a fit when they talk; 'tis from trying to understand each other."

McCarty darted a quick glance at the harassed frown on the inspector's face, and then replied to his companion:

"She had it straight, though. Horace has been depart all right, and if we don't get him back soon there'll be a bigger howl than ever from the chief. Isn't that what you're thinking, sir?"

The inspector nodded gloomily.

"I'm going to the agents in charge of these houses and get the keys." He indicated the two closed residences east of Mrs. Bellamy's. "Try to get a line meanwhile on who slipped food to the man hiding over there and what became of him, and meet me here in an hour."

"It's not much he's wanting," Dennis remarked as the inspector left them abruptly and strode toward the gate. "Still, if we could trace what cellar them wine bottles came from that was stacked up on the shelf in that empty house— Look! The ambassador's limousine is going away."

The impressive dark blue car was indeed moving slowly away from the curb in front

of the Parsons house, and the great front door closing. They caught another fleeting glimpse of the sallow faced manservant, and then McCarty exclaimed:

"Come on! I want a few words with the butler over there, anyway, and maybe the old gentleman himself, and don't be putting in your oar, Denny, and rocking the boat. I know what I'm after."

Dennis followed in injured silence, and they mounted the steps of the stately house and rang the bell. A lengthy pause ensued. McCarty was about to ring again, when the door opened suddenly and the manservant whom they had seen a moment before stood confronting them. He paid no heed to Dennis, but his dull, sunken eyes fastened themselves on McCarty, and as he stared his sallow cheeks seemed to whiten.

"Hello, Porter. You remember me, I see," the latter said brusquely. "Me and my friend here want to have a little talk with you."

"My name's not Porter; it's Roberts," the man replied stiffly with an evident effort. "You've made a mistake."

"Not me, my lad!" McCarty spoke with easy assurance. "Inspector Druet got you, too, the other day, but he didn't bother you then because we didn't know as much as we do now."

"By God, you'll never frame me again!" The man shrank back, and a harsh, grating note came into his low tones. "You haven't got anything on me!"

"Haven't, hey! How about the neighbor you've had next door for the past week or so?" McCarty inquired, while Dennis held his breath. "Look here, Porter, I suppose you have been pretty well hounded, and I don't want to be hard on you, but I'm going to get the truth."

"'Neighbor'!" The pseudo Roberts moistened his dry lips. "I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Maybe Mr. Parsons does, then. We'll see him." McCarty made as though to push his way past the cowering figure; and the man threw out his hands.

"For God's sake, don't, just when he's giving me the only square chance I've had!" It was more an agonized whisper than speech. "I'm Porter, all right, but he knows that! He knows I got railroaded, and you bulls wouldn't let me go straight afterward; that's why he took me in. I don't know what you're trying to hang on me now, but you're not going to drag him into it. What do you want of me?"

McCarty glanced down the long hall, which seemed almost bare in its lofty austerity in spite of the richness of the carved paneling and quaint old furniture.

"Take us some place where we can talk without anybody butting in," McCarty suggested. "It's for your own sake, man! If you'll come clean—"

"I've heard that before!" Porter shrugged, with a shadow of a dreary smile. "Come along back to my pantry if you want to, but why don't you take me right down town now and be done with it? If you're out to frame me, cut all the bluff!"

"Did I ever?" demanded McCarty. "Did I ever try to send you or any other guy up, unless I had the straight goods on them?"

"I guess not, Mac. I haven't got anything against you, but I've had a rough deal. What's come now is just the luck of the game, I suppose."

He closed the pantry door carefully behind them, and, motioning to chairs, he leaned back against the table, gripping its edge with his thin hands.

"What do you want to know? I'll come clean, all right—about myself."

McCarty noted the almost imperceptible pause, and asked quickly:

"How long have you been out this time?"

"A year and a half. My lungs went back on me, and I would have been a goner if I hadn't got pardoned, but what good did it do me? Every time I got a job clerking in a drug store one of the narcotic squad came along with my record, and I was kicked out. My record! God! And I wasn't guilty! I never knew my boss was crooked and in with the dope ring, making me the scapegoat!"

His voice had roughened again with a sort of savage earnestness. "I was about at the end of my rope, but the—the man who'd had me pardoned was keeping his eye

on me all the time, and saw how hard I'd tried, and—and so Mr. Parsons took me on here to give me a breathing spell. Anything else—about me—you want to know?"

"Yes." McCarty replied on a sudden inspiration. "You were tried with Radley, weren't you, and convicted of sending that poisoned candy—"

He paused, and Porter shrugged again.

"What's the comedy for? You got that from headquarters, and nobody's making a secret of it. It was that old charge, the record of that first case, that convicted me again, and it helped convict Radley, too, for we were both of us innocent. But what is the use of telling that to you now?"

"There'll be a lot of use in telling us, for your own sake, what you had to do with the crush-out last month."

"Nothing. I haven't been outside these gates since I came in June."

"Then, you didn't know anything about it till Radley showed up here a couple of weeks ago?"

"I don't know anything about it now, except what I read in the papers." Porter faced him squarely. "What do you mean about Radley showing up?"

"You didn't hide him in that empty house next door and smuggle food and drinks and a razor and clothes in to him, did you?" McCarty paused for a moment again, but Porter maintained a dogged silence, and he went on: "Does Benjamin Parsons know of it? 'Twill be news to him to hear that after him taking you in and all, you've been making him accessory after a crush-out—"

"He's accessory to nothing!" Porter interrupted. "I know the law, for I have bitter reason to. He's a fine old man, and believes in giving everybody a fair chance, especially if they've been framed; but he'd do nothing against the law even if he thinks it's in the wrong. You've no proof that Radley was here or that any one helped him to hide, but I'm glad he made his get-away—glad! I hope to God he's never caught to go back to that hell!"

"Even though you go, now?" McCarty demanded. "You've one chance to keep clear of it, Porter, and you'll not be giving Radley away, either. We're wise already that 'twas you helped him to hide and then make his get-away, but 'tis not Radley we are after now, except as the alarm has gone out to the whole force. We're on another lay entirely, but we just want to find out when he beat it away from the Mall and how he got out. I never gave my word yet that I broke it, and I'm giving it now that 'twill not be from me nor Riordan either a hint will get out about your part in all this."

"You mean you're not here to frame me nor kid me into snitching on Radley?" A faint tremor of hope ran through his tones as he gazed searchingly into the honest, square jawed face before him. "You've got a name for fair play, Mac, and you're on to enough already to put me away again if you want to, so what I tell you can't matter. It won't hurt George Radley either, as it happens."

Dennis started violently; and McCarty asked:

"Why can't it? You don't mean he's croaked?"

"I mean I don't know any more than you do when he beat it or how he passed the gates, and that's the God's truth!" Porter responded slowly, his gaunt, sallow face twitching. "I read about his escape in the papers, as I told you, and when the days passed and he wasn't caught I was happy, thinking he had got clean away, but I never dreamed of him turning up here.

"Late one afternoon, though—never mind how long ago—I opened the side door to find him all but leaning against it, weak from hunger and thirst and fairly desperate. He'd got past the watchman during a rainstorm a night or two before to try to reach me, his old pal, and he'd been hiding in that empty house next door, without food or water, not daring to come openly and ask for me. When I didn't show myself he made up his mind to beat it, but he found he couldn't get out as easy as he'd got in, and he was near crazy!"

"That 'll be a week ago last Saturday." McCarty nodded. "When you came on him he was just after grabbing a kid that lives on the block here and searching his pockets to see could he find if the lad had a key to the gates!"

"Glory be!" Dennis ejaculated beneath his breath.

"Yes. He was half off his head, but he didn't hurt the boy any—only scared him. I made him go back next door and lay low till the search was over, and after nightfall I took him some bread and meat and a bottle of rare old port from the cellar. It was stealing, and poor return for all the old gentleman has done for me, but George needed it bad, and I figured I owed most to him. He needed clothes, too, but mine fitted him, and I didn't have to steal money for him, either, because the old gentleman pays me good.

"The trouble was, how to get him through the gates, for after the scare he'd given the boy both watchmen were leery of strangers; and if he was held up and questioned I knew he'd go to pieces from the long strain he'd been under, and it would be all up with him."

Porter reached for a silver jug of ice water which stood on the table beside him, and drank deeply, then replaced it with a sigh of relief. "No one has keys except the families themselves, and I'd no chance to borrow Miss Parsons's, of course, nor her niece—Miss Hester's. The old gentleman carries his on a ring and sleeps with it under his pillow, and though I tried twice to get it he woke up both times. I had a job of it to explain what I was doing in his room, and I didn't dare risk it again. George was getting wild with the waiting and worry, and took to prowling out at night in spite of all I could say. I was getting pretty desperate myself, when all at once he'd gone. And that's all I know."

McCarty rose.

"When did you see him last?"

"Sunday night late, when I went to take him some food. I handed it in through the window, and we talked for a minute, but I didn't dare stay longer. George was almost ready to give himself up, for his nerve was gone, and it was all I could do to persuade him to wait. We'd arranged that I was to go to him every other night—I couldn't risk it oftener—so I didn't miss him Monday. Last evening I got some rolls, a cold pheasant, and a half bottle of burgundy, and waited under the window as long as I dared; but he didn't come, and finally I took down the loose iron bars and let myself in. There wasn't the least sign of a light from his candle, and he didn't answer when I took a chance and called, so I left the food and came away, but I was awake all night, worrying, and toward morning I went back and got the stuff, which hadn't been touched. I was afraid cook would miss the pheasant and it might be found and traced. I never thought about the wine bottles."

"So he might have got away any time from Sunday night on?"

"That's right. I'm giving it to you straight, Mac, and I knew when I saw you an hour ago that you'd be after me sooner or later, especially when Miss Parsons—the old gentleman's sister, Miss Priscilla—heard a noise next door and told me to notify the watchman. I was afraid it was all up with us last week when Inspector Druet came, but it was about that valet from across the street who was poisoned, and the inspector didn't even let on he recognized me."

"Do you know the kid that Radley tried to get a key off of?" McCarty ignored the observation.

"Only by sight. Red haired, isn't he, and lives next door to where that valet worked? I see him now and then going by on the other side of the street."

"Have you seen him since he got that scare?"

"Oh, yes." Porter smiled faintly in surprise. "Only a day or so ago. George did not mean to scare him—he wouldn't harm a fly."

"You've been here since June, you say, Porter? Did you know that valet who died?"

"No. I think I've seen him with the butler from the next house, but I don't want to know any of them. I was glad enough to stay here and do a servant's work myself till I could get my nerve back to go out and hunt up my own kind of a position again where the bulls wouldn't keep moving me on."

He smiled again, but bitterly. "I guess there isn't a chance of that now, with you on! I'm not sorry, though; I'd do it again

for George! He was innocent, the same as me, and look what was done to him!"

"If I find you've come clean, I'll keep my word, Porter," McCarty reiterated as he moved toward the door with Dennis in tow. "You may not know it, but I'm not on the force any longer, nor connected with headquarters except to mix in now and then for old times' sake; and the inspector didn't recognize you the other day; he kind of knew your face, but he couldn't place you. Riordan and me will just forget you laid eyes on Radley, unless it comes to a showdown, and then we'll do what we can."

Cutting short the ex-convict's broken thanks, they took their departure, to find Inspector Druet pacing impatiently back and forth before the two closed houses opposite.

"Did you get any dope from Parsons?" the inspector asked.

"We didn't even see him," McCarty parried. "I was getting a line on the servants. Do you recall saying you'd seen one or two of them before? Have you thought where?"

"Lord, no! I've had enough else on my mind! I had an idea one of the housemaids and the page boy who runs errands looked familiar, but there wasn't anything out of the ordinary about them."

Dennis coughed, and McCarty remarked hastily:

"I guess none of them knows what's become of the man who has been hiding next door, nor anything about the Goddard lad, and that's all that matters right now, isn't it, sir? Did you get the keys to these houses?"

"Yes, and explained again to that fool of a watchman, Jennings. I had time to look around pretty thoroughly outside them while I waited for you, and I couldn't find a window or door that had been tampered with, but we'll see what's inside."

One o'clock had come and gone and another hour passed before they emerged from the second of the two houses after a fruitless search. Dust and mold were all they had encountered in the huge, echoing, partially dismantled rooms, and the footprints they themselves left behind them were the only recent signs of human presence.

Dennis blinked and drew in the fresh air deeply when they stood once more in the sunlight.

"'Tis like coming out of a tomb," he said. "What's it to be now, inspector?"

"I'm going to Goddard and make him talk!" that official responded with a certain grimness which was eloquent. "Until he comes across with his suspicions as to who kidnaped the boy, our hands are tied, and every hour counts. You two had better get a bite to eat and meet me at his house later."

Nothing loth, they accepted the hint, and it was mid-afternoon before they approached the east gate of the Mall again, to find Jennings energetically engaged in driving away a swarthy vendor of toy balloons, whose basket, freighted with globes of bright, crude color bobbing on slender sticks, resembled an uprooted garden patch.

"They're a pest, those peddlers!" he declared as he admitted them. "They're not as bad, though, as the reporters that have been trying to get in since you left. Say, did you know Horace Goddard is lost?"

"Sure we know it!" McCarty interrupted. "Didn't Trafford tell you so himself yesterday afternoon? Hurry, Denny!"

Leaving the watchman staring speechlessly, they quickened their pace toward the Goddard house and were passing the entrance door of Orbit's when it was flung open and Ching Lee appeared.

For once the Chinaman's wooden impassivity had deserted him. His slant eyes were rolling wildly, his yellow face distorted as he plunged down the steps and seized McCarty with an iron grip.

"The nurse-baby!" he babbled, his singsong voice high and shrill. "The Flench maid of next door baby! Come quick!"

"Lucette, do you mean? The Bellamy child's nurse?" McCarty halted. "Stop chattering like a monkey and tell me where she is, and what's the matter?"

"Lucette!" Ching Lee nodded vigorously and pointed in at the open windows of the conservatory. "She is the next! She has breathed the breath of death!"

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

Alicia Learns to Drive

By GEORGE M. JOHNSON

TOM WILLOUGHBY started to step on the gas, but changed his mind and stepped on the brake instead, as the car he was on the point of passing swerved abruptly to the left.

"What's that crazy fool think he's trying to do?" he growled angrily.

A moment later, with a clear road ahead, Tom sent out an ear-piercing blast from his horn and swept on by the offending car, shooting a side glance over at the driver as he did so.

"Might have known it all the time," he muttered. "It's a woman driving."

His wife, Alicia, in the seat beside him, pressed her lips firmly together in resentment at the contempt in his tone.

"You make me awfully mad when you talk that way, Tom," said she. "Just as many men do boobish things on the road as women, and you know it. Anyway, that woman was perfectly right; she turned over to dodge a deep hole in the road; she didn't know you were going to pass, because you hadn't yet sounded your horn."

"My word!" and Tom glanced toward Alicia with an amused grin. "At-a-girl! Rally round to the defense of your maligned sex!"

"But it makes me sick the way you men persist in crabbing women who drive cars. I think they do mighty well, especially when so few of them can have a chance at a car oftener than now and then—when hubby doesn't happen to want it. Women are just as good drivers as men; lots of them are better."

"That's what you say," her husband retorted, and for the time being the discussion died a natural death as their car swung up to the Willoughby home. But Alicia was not through by any means.

After dinner that evening, when the children—ages two and four—were safely in bed and Tom had relaxed to the comfort of a fragrant Havana, Alicia opened up on him again.

"Tom," she began, "I think it's about time I learned to run the car."

"I'd rather you wouldn't," he returned shortly.

"But, Tom, dear, please be reasonable.

All women drive nowadays. You know yourself that whenever there's an afternoon bridge at the country club dozens of cars are lined up, and every one of them was driven out by a woman."

"Women rarely become good drivers," he answered impatiently, "and the few exceptions you are all ready to throw in my face only prove the general rule. They are lacking in the mechanical instinct. Driving an automobile involves a great deal more than the simple matter of steering it. An intimate knowledge of the machine itself is essential. No person who fails to understand, for example, the principle underlying the shifting of gears on a hill can ever make a crack driver."

"I don't believe the majority of men know that. To most of them what goes on beneath the hood of the car they drive is a sealed book. You happen to be an exception; and yet you seem to assume that all men know as much about the automobile's vitals as you do."

Tom Willoughby's reply was a non-committal grunt.

"Listen, Tom," and Alicia perched herself on the arm of his chair. "Haven't I got brains?"

"Of course," Tom admitted readily.

"Thank you so much! Well, then, this is a sort of showdown. If silly little flappers like Estelle Simmons and Dot Fenton can sport around in big cars, and get away with it, *I* can. What's more, I intend to."

"It's not necessary at all," Tom argued. "I can usually find time to take you wherever you want to go. If not, you can easily order a taxi. You know that."

"You miss the point entirely. I *must* do it, merely to show that I can, if no other reasons came into the argument; plenty others do, for that matter. It's terribly humiliating not to. Why, I'll soon be a sort of laughing stock—the only woman in my wide circle of acquaintance who is forced to admit that she doesn't know how to drive an automobile. Most of my friends learned to drive practically as soon as their husbands did; some before."

"Women were never intended or designed to drive cars!" Tom insisted, realizing as he spoke the weakness of his assertion.

"Why, Tom Willoughby! You're almost mid-Victorian in your ideas! I never thought it of you. You belong back in the dark ages, when women were mere parlor ornaments, clinging vines, and all that sort of thing; when no woman had any just claim to beauty unless her waist was laced in till it threatened to snap in two if she had to bend over suddenly. No golf, tennis, swimming, or driving cars for them, poor dears! Croquet was their limit in physical exertion."

"I never did admire fat waisted women," Tom grinned provokingly.

"I suppose you mean by that remark that you'd like me to begin pulling my waist in. No, thank you! Women don't do it now, and they never will again."

"No, I don't mean that at all," and Tom glanced approvingly at his wife—as slender and youthful in appearance as the day they were married. "You're far from requiring any such harsh measures. But don't climb up on any high horse regarding what women will or will not do. You'll all do exactly what your imperial goddess, Dame Fashion, demands of her loyal subjects; now the streamline effect is in vogue, but when, in the course of events, the cycle swings round again and small waists are called for, you'll find the poor, helpless women obediently pulling in on the strings until their fingers are blistered."

"Tom Willoughby, you're positively disgusting!" Alicia flared, but Tom only chuckled in exasperating good nature.

His wife deserted him and withdrew to a chair in another part of the room with an air of injured dignity; presently she spoke up again.

"I'm going to learn to drive the car just the same!"

"All right, all right!" Tom exclaimed resignedly. "If you say you will, you will. So we may as well consider it settled. I'm not crazy about the business, but I'll give you a lesson in the morning."

"But I don't want you to teach me, Tom. Have a man sent up from the service station."

"What's the matter with me? Can't I drive well enough?"

"You're too good, Tom—so skilled a

driver yourself that you'd have no patience with my shortcomings. All the women say that you must never, never let your husband teach you to drive. While you're engaged to him, or about the time he wants you to become engaged to him, is the best time; after marriage, never! Husbands jaw you and bawl you out unmercifully, so one must get a stranger. He has to be polite and gentle with his pupil, no matter what she does."

"By Jove, Alicia, if you haven't got it all doped out!" and Tom laughed in spite of himself. "But here's where your gears don't mesh. I'm willing to make a concession and let you learn to drive the car, but I'm not going to have any half baked young salesman from the agency sit back and smile serenely while you in your blessed ignorance ruin the sweetest running motor in the city. I'll promise to try to behave like a gentleman and not yell at you unduly, but if you take lessons in driving, it's got to be with your husband as teacher. I'm sorry, hon, but that's the best I can do for you."

Alicia hesitated an instant, then gracefully yielded to what she instinctively realized was the inevitable.

"All right," she agreed, "but let's make a game out of it. Let's pretend that you're not teaching your wife at all; just imagine that your pupil is that snappy looking little Mrs. Armstrong, of whom you spoke so warmly the other day."

"What's the big idea?" Tom demanded, eying Alicia a bit uneasily.

"Why, if you were teaching Mrs. Armstrong to drive your car, stupid, and she pulled back on a lever instead of pushing forward, or made that mysterious thingumbob under the floor boards chatter like a mowing machine, you'd say: 'Never mind; that's really nothing at all; you're doing splendidly.' That's what you'd say, Tom, and down in your precious old heart you know it. On the other hand, if your poor wife made a frightful mess of things, I'm very much afraid you'd swear—not at her, of course; but swear in a general sort of way. And I'm pretty sure you'd inquire, loud enough to frighten some horses a quarter of a mile away: 'What in the world are you trying to do—wreck the boat?' And so that's why I'd like to impersonate Mrs. Armstrong during the lesson, if you don't mind."

Tom sat back and laughed till the tears came.

"You win the flat tire, Alicia," he cried. "Don't worry; I'll be good."

"You better had, Tom Willoughby," Alicia declared; then she added darkly: "Remember that if you yell at me, I'm going to be awfully mad."

"Fair enough, old girl," Tom laughed, "since you've warned me. Now if you're going to drive we might as well go about this right. You've got to get at least a general knowledge of the principles involved. I think I can make it reasonably clear."

Alicia listened dutifully; at first, that is. But she skidded rather badly on the second curve, and then, her brain a confused jumble of meaningless terms—carburetor, piston, compression stroke, cam shaft, and so on—she wisely reflected that none of the girls who drove cars knew anything about that formidable list and managed to get by on the road in spite of such ignorance. So why worry? Instead, she began dreaming about how much fun it was going to be when she was free to use the car without having to call on Tom to drive her around. Suddenly the instructor ceased his lecture with a brisk:

"Understand so far?" whereupon Alicia dimpled sweetly at him and confessed with praiseworthy candor:

"Not all, I'm afraid."

To her relief Tom took it as a good joke.

"I'm crazy to think of jamming all this into your head at once, hon. What you need you can pick up as you go along. Tomorrow morning we'll have the first lesson."

Tom was really very gentle and patient with Alicia; she admitted that herself. Indeed he was quite puffed up with pride over his forbearance with her slips. As a matter of fact, however, she managed quite well—for the initial attempt.

"Did I do so terribly bad, Tommy?" she inquired when they returned home.

"No-o," Tom answered judicially. "But when you stop the car, remember not to let in the clutch until the gears are in neu-

tral. You stalled the engine that way several times, even after I'd cautioned you."

"Neutral's when the lever's in the middle of the H, isn't it?" she asked, and when Tom nodded, Alicia began repeating to herself over and over: "Don't let in clutch unless gears are in neutral," though not having the slightest idea as to the whys and wherefores.

A few days later Tom gave her practice in gear shifting on a hill, and poor Alicia didn't do quite so well. Actually the engine came in for quite a bit of abuse, though its driver was blissfully unconscious of this. Finally she plugged up a long hill, barely crawling around a dangerous curve in high gear. Alicia had dreaded that place, and getting by it at all was to her very much of a victory.

"There!" she breathed in triumphant elation. "Wasn't that fine?"

"No!" groaned Tom, who had held himself in so far only by Herculean efforts. "It was rotten!"

Quickly she pulled off to one side of the road and stopped; in her hurt bewilderment at this wholly unexpected condemnation instead of the hearty praise she had hoped for, Alicia let the clutch pedal back while the engine was still running, the gears in high. The car gave a little jump forward, and then the engine stalled.

"I'm sorry," faltered Alicia, realizing the mistake too late to remedy it, "but when you get that dying-duck-in-a-thunderstorm look on your face, I'm gone; that's all. Now what in the world did I do wrong coming up that hill?"

"Everything," said Tom shortly. "You were moving too slowly for high, and the poor old engine was knocking its head off. You should have dropped into second, or cured the knock by pulling down the spark lever. I explained that to you very carefully yesterday."

"But there are so many things to remember, Tommy," Alicia cried miserably. "You ought not to expect me to get them all at once." Desperately she struggled against giving way to the tears, which were perilously near the surface. "I got up the old hill, didn't I? What difference does it make how I got up?"

"Gad, Alicia, but that's a terrible line of argument!" Tom fumed, beginning to lose his temper. "What would you think of a surgeon who bungled in an important operation, and then excused it with the careless remark: 'Well, what difference does it make as long as the patient refused to die?' Of course you got up the hill, but a few more successes like that and our car will be ready for the junkman. I don't believe you'll ever learn to drive."

Alicia, her lips quivering, slipped out from behind the wheel.

"Go ahead and drive yourself!" she declared. "I'm through. All the girls said it was always this way when your husband taught you. And that's the f-first t-time you ever jawed at me."

"But I didn't really jaw you, dear," Tom said gently, already ashamed of his momentary temper. "I didn't say anything so very rough, did I?"

"You said my driving was r-rotten when I thought I'd done so well, and you couldn't have looked any blacker if I'd run the old car through a stone wall."

"I'm sorry, dear. But you ought to know by this time that any unnecessary abuse of a fine motor makes me actually sick. To me an automobile is like a living thing."

"That sounds very well," Alicia rejoined in stony dignity, "but your wife surely is entitled to as much consideration as any automobile; you shouldn't think more of a collection of senseless steel parts than of her feelings. Since you do, I suppose I'd better give up my idea of driving. I can see what it will lead to."

"Come now, Alicia, please be reasonable. I was rude, and I apologize. Start the motor and try it again."

"Do you really want me to? You haven't been displaying any alarming symptoms of enthusiasm."

"Well, as long as your heart is set on driving, I want you to keep at it. Please, Alicia!"

So Alicia tried it again, but she was nervous and Tom was also nervous, though he made a manful effort to conceal his condition, which was so pitiable that Alicia was actually sorry for him. She managed to get them home without wrecking the car.

In the lessons which followed she made less rapid progress than at the beginning, for Tom was very exacting as to the finer points of driving. Alicia was more than once close to utter discouragement.

"I must say you're hard to suit!" she exclaimed one day. "Honestly, I don't believe it's humanly possible to please you. No matter what I might do, you'd find something to criticize."

"I'm trying my darnedest in what looks like the hopeless job of making a good driver of you," he snapped back. "There's one thing you certainly are good at; that's forgetting instructions. If you'd only do as you've been told, there'd be no criticisms forthcoming. What I can't seem to get you away from is the footless and silly notion that any old way is good enough provided it gets you there."

Tom and Alicia were really an ideal couple, held up as the perfect model of wedded happiness by all their friends. The only times they ever even approached a quarrel was over the car, and those occasions left both of them miserable.

Alicia was slow in gaining that self-confidence which is so essential to the full mastery of a heavy automobile. This was mainly Tom's fault, for, perhaps unconsciously, his very attitude served to destroy her confidence, to unnerve her. The best drivers do not always make the best instructors.

Came a Saturday when they had been invited for dinner and an evening of bridge with friends—a young married couple living about twenty miles away. The weather was threatening when they started, and as a measure of precaution Tom fitted the touring car with its side curtains. The sky grew blacker, but no rain materialized during the trip, and the storm did not finally break until just as dinner was served. Then it more than made up for the delay—an electrical disturbance of unusual severity, accompanied by a veritable cloudburst which continued fully two hours without intermission.

The storm put an effective damper on the social pleasures of the evening, as both Alicia and her hostess were terrified by the vivid lightning, and Tom himself was secretly concerned as to road conditions for the homeward drive. The rain finally slackened, and Tom announced that he thought they ought to start back.

"Don't think of going home to-night, old man," cried the host. "We've a spare bedroom that isn't earning its keep. Better stay over with us."

"Indeed, yes!" his wife urged hospitably. "It would be foolish to go home now."

"But mother's staying with the children," Alicia protested, "and if we don't appear at all she'll be frantic."

"I'll phone your mother not to expect you till to-morrow," but her attempt to get the central operator was fruitless. The line was dead.

"Storm's put the wires out of commission," Tom Willoughby remarked. "What 'll we do, Alicia? Go or stay? It's up to you."

"We'll have to go," Alicia declared without an instant's hesitation, and no urging on the part of their friends could change her decision.

It was about ten when they set out, the rain decreased to a fine, steady drizzle, though the thunderstorm had passed by. Two miles from the starting point the road crossed a small river, where their machine was halted by a red lantern in the hands of a guard.

"Can't cross this bridge," he warned them. "It's liable to go plumb to kingdom come any minute."

Tom got out to look the situation over. The ordinarily modest little river was now a foaming, roaring torrent, showing brown with its load of sediment in the glare of the head lamps. Even as he watched, one of the bridge supports yielded to the relentless thrust of the flood.

"That bridge is scheduled to take a long ride, I reckon," was the guard's cool comment.

"Right you are," Tom agreed grimly. "But how can I get across?"

"The iron bridge three miles down the river at Haskins's Mills was O. K. the last report I got. But you better shake a leg, for the way the water's still rising even that one won't last."

The low mutter of thunder sounded while he was speaking.

"Another storm like the last one, and we'll not have a live bridge left in the county," the guard continued. "Those birds travel in pairs sometimes. Mebby its twin brother is coming along now. If it is—good night! You familiar with the detour down to Haskins's Mills?"

"Never drove it," Tom told him.

The guard gave detailed instructions as to the road to the bridge; then added:

"When you once get across the river you're all right. Keep straight ahead for four-five miles through the woods, and it 'll bring you back to the State road here again. You'll find the traveling not too easy, but it can be done. Some bad hills. Watch your step on 'em."

"Much obliged," said Tom. "Have a cigar?"

"Thanks!" returned the guard appreciatively. "Good luck!"

Tom briefly explained the situation to Alicia.

"Nothing to be worried over," he remarked as he turned around—a difficult operation because of the ditches full of water on either side of the hard roadbed.

She snuggled comfortably up against him as they headed back for the detour.

"I'm glad I'm not driving now, aren't you, Tommy?" she whispered. Then, startled, "What was that?" as a brilliant flash illumined the sky.

"More lightning. Looks like another storm coming."

"What ever shall we do? You know how deathly afraid of thunderstorms I am."

"Do?" he echoed. "Why, nothing but hit that bridge at the Mills, and then straight ahead through the woods till we're on the State road again. Next stop, home. Don't let yourself get worked up, hon. Really there's no occasion to be frightened."

"But suppose it's a storm like that first one."

"Don't worry. We won't get another like that for ten years."

"I hope not!" and Alicia shivered slightly, nestling closer against her husband.

The second thunderstorm developed far more rapidly than its predecessor, but Tom drove fast—almost dangerously fast for the muddy road they traveled—and pulled up at the iron bridge just as the first big drops were falling. Lightning was almost continuous, though still some little distance away. There was a guard on duty at this bridge, as at the other.

"Is it safe?" Tom inquired anxiously.

"She's safe enough now, mister," he was informed, "but I ain't predictin' what she'll be before morning. Listen to that barrage old Lady Nature's laying down back there."

Tom didn't wait to discuss the matter. He shot across the bridge and on up into the woods, where he immediately found any sort of speed wholly out of the question. Then storm number two broke upon them in earnest, proving Tom a poor weather prophet as regarded his ten years remark. Alicia clutched his arm in terror at the continuous crackle of thunder and the dazzle of lightning.

Suddenly a huge dead chestnut just ahead loomed up for the fraction of a second, clear-cut in the blinding, unnatural glare; with a roar like that of a thousand cannon it actually exploded, heavy fragments of the trunk and branches flying in all directions. Alicia screamed frantically as another lightning flash disclosed a portion of the shattered tree toppling toward them. To avoid it in its fall was out of the question. Dimly she realized that Tom had thrust her down from the seat, his own body bent over hers as protection; a crashing, splintering blow—and silence.

Not many minutes later a trickle of water, flowing through the ruined top of the car on Alicia's face, brought her back to consciousness. She had not been hurt at all; had fainted from sheer fright more than anything else. A crushing weight pinned her down, and a sickening realization of what had happened swept into her brain. The weight was Tom; possibly killed, at the best badly hurt, by a piece of the old chestnut when the lightning bolt hit it. And his last conscious thought and act had been of her—an attempt to save her from the very danger which struck him down.

Desperately, hot tears flooding her eyes, Alicia struggled to free herself. Tom's poor helpless body pressed down so heavily;

panic gripped her at its apparent utter lifelessness. She managed to reach up and turn the latch of the door, which opened an inch and then stuck. Bracing her feet as best she could in such cramped quarters, Alicia pushed backward against the jammed door. Abruptly it yielded, and she sprawled out into the mud and pelting rain. Quickly she regained her feet, intent only on learning the extent of Tom's injuries.

The car lights were still burning, but they gave her no help. However there was a flash light in the side pocket of the door, and Alicia had it out in a second.

The scene it disclosed was startling enough. A long splinter of the chestnut, like a giant rail, had fallen directly across the top of the car, crushing Tom down beneath. But how badly was he hurt? That was the vital question now.

In feverish haste she tugged at his limp body, and after an effort succeeded in getting it free from the jumble of torn mohair and crumpled bows of the top; fortunately the section of chestnut tree, cause of all their trouble, had broken in half across the car as a result of its fall, and now played no part in holding Tom's body prisoner.

"Tom, dear, speak to me!" Alicia moaned, her fingers smoothing back the hair on his forehead.

There was no response, and in a sudden spasm of shuddering horror Alicia felt sure that he was dead. She tore open his coat and shirt, placing her ear directly above the heart. The steady throb, characteristic of a healthy, athletic man like Tom Willoughby, was not there; but straining her ear to catch the faintest sound above the rattle of raindrops on the ruined top, Alicia did get something; a flicker, perhaps even more than that; not much, yet enough, at least, to assure her that Tom was still living.

"Tom, darling! Don't leave me!" she whispered softly. "You mustn't leave me now!" Then turning her face upward into the stinging rain, she sobbed: "Oh, God, don't let him die! He just *can't* die!"

A thin stream of blood trickled down out of Tom's rain-sodden hair, and Alicia, seeking its source, found an ugly bruise on the top of his skull. Tenderly she fingered the wound, immediately realizing that it was serious; she feared a fracture, perhaps concussion of the brain. Prompt and expert medical attention might save him. Otherwise — Alicia shuddered at the thought. But to mention doctors—at such a time and place—marooned there in the depths of that desolate wood, on a lonely road, a dreadful storm raging; it all seemed a hopeless mockery.

A sharp flash of forked lightning, with its nerve-shattering accompaniment, brought no more than a slight start from Alicia. Suddenly she seemed to have lost her former fear of lightning; in the harrowing crisis which she now faced all other things seemed indeed trivial. What could she do?

"I'm going to drive Tom home in this car," she abruptly announced aloud, addressing the raging elements. "Stop me if you can!"

With a degree of forced calm Alicia surveyed the machine by aid of occasional lightning flashes and her small electric lamp. The tangled mohair and splintered bows formed a blockade behind the steering wheel, but she found a knife in Tom's pocket, and succeeded in cutting away the worst of the mess. The section of chestnut worried her, but owing to the lucky fact that it had broken, Alicia shrewdly reasoned that if she once got the car started it would clear itself of that encumbrance.

She settled Tom in the seat next the driver's; the posture was far from a comfortable one, but with a tender little smile which reflected no pleasure and a world of pain, she remembered that Tom was past caring about bodily comforts or discomforts. Then, climbing awkwardly around the obstructions that still blocked the wheel, Alicia pressed the starter.

Slowly, engine racing and wheels churning mud, the car moved ahead, with a sharp cracking from the shattered chestnut. For an instant progress ceased, and despair engulfed Alicia at the thought that she was trapped. Then the spinning wheels found traction and the car leaped forward, free from the dragging fragments of the splintered tree.

The rain increased to a deluge, fairly

blotting out the gleam from the head lamps. The windshield supports were badly bent, though by some strange freak of chance neither of the plate glass sections had been broken. The blur of water made the glass opaque; she could see nothing through it. Alicia struggled with the windshield; finally succeeded in opening it. She had been wet before, but now in an instant she was soaked, the filmy evening gown worn in honor of the little dinner party molded to her like so much adhesive plaster. She could see a little better, however, which was the only important consideration.

That backwoods road was none too good under the most favorable circumstances; now it was a nightmare—mud, rocks, and water-filled holes into which the rear wheels dropped to the hubs with a sickening lurch of the car, there to spin furiously with the racing engine, until at last they gripped the slimy roadbed and again drove the machine forward. Rapid progress was impossible, even had Alicia dared attempt it; most of the time she was forced to keep in second. On that unspeakable road the big car bucked and bounced like a flivver; holding it down taxed Alicia's strength to the utmost.

A stretch of hard gravel roused false hopes that the worst was over, and for the first time Alicia ventured to make fair speed, conscious only of the fact that Tom's life might hang on a few seconds. The gravel ended as unexpectedly as it had begun, and at a sharp curve in the road. When her wheels hit the soft mud, Alicia skidded, and before she realized what had happened, the left rear wheel was bedded deep in the ooze, off to one side, the car headed diagonally across the road.

Alicia made one fruitless attempt to go forward; then tried with no more success to back. She had ridden enough with Tom to learn the danger of letting the wheel churn deeper and deeper in such a situation. Desperately struggling against an inclination to give way to panic, she got out of the car to investigate. The wheel was mired less deeply than she had feared, though it was bad enough.

The headlights disclosed a pile of tangled tree tops and branches, left where some one had been cutting firewood. Toward this Alicia stumbled, sinking nearly to her knees in mud and water, a clump of blackberry briers tearing viciously at her legs, to which the gauzy dress she wore afforded no protection whatever.

Several trips she made, thrusting the dead branches down in front and back of the tire. Half dead, Alicia crawled back into the car, not till then realizing that one of her slippers was gone. The dash light showed a long tear in one of her black silk stockings, the skin beneath white in contrast, the white rapidly changing to red. Yet Alicia had felt no pain; there was a growing numbness over her whole body. It seemed that utter collapse could not be far away. She grimly set her teeth, determined not to yield.

She remembered that Tom had told her the clutch must be eased in very gently when a wheel was mired. She tried this, the gear shift lever in reverse. To her delight the car responded, backing perhaps a foot. Again she left her seat to thrust more of the dead branches deep into the mud where the wheel had been. Back in the car she slipped the lever into low, hardly daring to breathe as she gently nursed the clutch, feeding only a little gas to the engine, striving to the best of her ability to avoid that fatal spinning of the trapped wheel.

She felt the motor slow down as the clutch took hold. Alicia gave a trifle more gas, and she wanted to shout in relief as the car moved slowly forward. She cut the wheel sharply, then straightened out, and was again on her way.

The slow progress made that lonely road through the woods seem endless. Suddenly Alicia woke up to the alarming fact that the engine was no longer responding properly to the throttle; was losing its snap and power. It even knocked distressfully when she tried to push up a slight grade in second. She shut off the ignition, and could hear the water boiling furiously in the cooling jackets.

Sick and dizzy, hardly knowing what she was about, Alicia got the folding bucket from under the rear seat, dipping it full from a roadside puddle; there was certain-

ly no lack of water available. But when she heedlessly proceeded to unscrew the radiator cap, a spurt of steam shot out into the air, scalding her hand and fingers; she didn't feel the pain till later.

It took four pails of water to replenish the exhausted supply in the cooling system, and again Alicia crawled weakly in behind the steering wheel. She felt that to get out of the machine once more would be utterly beyond her failing strength.

The second thunder storm had passed on after the first, and now a cold rain fell with steady relentlessness. A long winding hill loomed up before her. Half delirious, she babbled to the engine:

"Please, oh please take us up this hill! Don't desert me now!" and almost recklessly Alicia's slipperless toes pushed down on the accelerator for a good start. Up she raced in second, but the grade and mud were too much for the overheated motor; it faltered, knocking. Alicia attempted to get into low, a change she had never yet had occasion to make on a hill. The gears clashed horribly, and before she could start up again the car came to a stop—started backing down. In desperation she opened the throttle wide, slamming home the clutch. The entire transmission groaned a bitter protest at such unfair treatment, but everything held, and the machine, with a violent jerk, resumed progress up the hill. At last it gained the summit. Far below lights were visible in the falling rain; they marked the State road.

Alicia was too far gone to appreciate the dangers and difficulties which beset her on all sides as the car had slid down that grade. Under other circumstances, in daylight, she would no more have undertaken the task than attempt to drive an airplane.

On the State road at last, Alicia's brain refused to work clearly. Dimly she remembered that Tom must be taken to a doctor, but like a wounded pigeon her thoughts centered only on home, and toward home she sped.

In the meantime her mother was nearly dead from worry. A phone message had finally come through telling her that Tom and Alicia had started at ten. An hour usually sufficed for the trip, and when one o'clock arrived with no other news from the wanderers, the poor woman was convinced that her fears of some disaster could not be groundless. She sat up, waiting, unable to go to bed, dreading the worst.

It was after two when she heard the sound of a motor at the driveway. She rushed to the door, but there was no answer to her relieved cry of welcome. The porch light shone on a forlorn looking car; at first she could not recognize it as Tom's machine; it looked like a wrecked ship, the top crumpled in, nothing visible but mud. And two unconscious figures in the front seat, Alicia slumping forward across the steering wheel. The last half of that frightful journey she had driven on sheer nerve, but there is a limit even to that. She lasted just long enough to swing the car into the driveway at home.

In a couple of days Alicia was herself again, save for a few minor aches and pains that still persisted, but Tom got by much less easily. In fact, he pulled through by a very narrow margin. Finally they let her see him.

"That was a wonderful thing you did, Alicia," he said huskily, as she dropped on her knees beside the bed, her fingers tenderly stroking his bandaged head. "Do you know what the surgeon told me?"

Alicia said nothing, her head pillowed on Tom's broad chest.

"He said," Tom continued, fussing with Alicia's hair, "that if you hadn't got me home when you did, it would have been the end of the trail for me. You're a wonderful girl, Alicia; not one woman in a thousand could have brought the car in over that awful road. You're a *driver* now, Alicia. I'll never criticize you again."

"But I didn't do at all well, Tom, dear," Alicia humbly confessed, her voice muffled by the bedclothes. "I got the poor old engine terribly hot, and it knocked, and I nearly stripped the gears, and everything. Really I gave a miserable exhibition of driving."

"What of it, hon?" Tom demanded. "Your getting through at all proved that you're a real driver. The accomplishment was the important thing. How you did it doesn't make a particle of difference."

The Stranger at the Gate

By MAX BRAND

Author of "Dan Barry's Daughter," "The Night Horseman," etc.

CHAPTER XXII.

A STRANGE TURN.

THERE are some who are stunned by danger. There are others who strike back hard, an action of swift and unreasoned reflexes.

And though Olivetta had led a most sheltered life, yet now she reverted to the type of what she might have been in the wild and the rough. She was backed against the wall. The loss of the pearls being discovered, she could expect to be quickly found and dragged from her hiding place. And she estimated her strength, and the distances to be covered, and all the things to be done, if she bolted for the window or, what seemed now a far better chance, if she struck straight for the doorway and strove to speed down the hall beyond and down the stairs to the bottom of the house with a prayer of hope that once she was at the bottom she would find a door open, and thence gain access to the street.

Yet all this was a hopeless planning. In two bounds, no matter how by surprise she took him, John Hodge would be up with her. Or if he could not overtake her by running, or if he wished to cut short the thrilling screams which she would begin the instant she started in her break for safety, he would knock her down with a bullet.

She knew him well enough to know that, she felt.

All those hopes, doubts, fears, plans, had been condensed and crammed into the space of a meager second while the girl leaned over the table drawer, her face working. Then she turned upon John Hodge.

"After all," she said in a low voice, "it was only a glorious bluff!"

This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for November 3.

"Eh?" said Hodge, evidently at sea. "I've bluffed now and then, I suppose, and here and there. But what are you referring to now?"

She gestured disdainfully to the drawer and stepped away. John Hodge came to the place in one long stride and stared down. Olivetta, pushing to the side the clothes which were hanging about her, prepared for her desperate bolt, drew in her breath to be in readiness for the first shriek on which she must depend to draw vengeance upon the heads of her enemies, and crouched a little lower. But John Hodge had neither exclaimed nor moved. He merely looked down to the drawer in silence for a moment and then lifted a face which was only a trifle paler, perhaps.

"Oh," he said, "you mean the pearls?"

"What else?" said the girl. "It really excited me, your willingness to leave them in my care. But I see that it was only for effect, John Hodge—simply because you thought that that would be a good way to blind me. Ah, you're a very clever fellow, John, but you've given me just one too many opportunities to see through you!"

Olivetta, amazed, studied him. And for once he had no ready answer. What could possess him? thought Olivetta.

"Wasn't that a natural thing for me to do?" he said. "Particularly in the light of what you said about your father? Good gad, Jacqueline, you couldn't expect me to leave that large fortune around loose after you had warned me about him, could you?"

"There is no reason why you should hunt for explanations, John," she said. "They are your pearls. You can do what you wish with them."

"Nonsense, Jack," he pleaded. "Good gad, don't be silly about this."

"I'm not," she said. "I'm perfectly serious, perfectly calm."

She laughed to prove it. Her laughter was crystal hard. It was plain that she was angered to the core of her heart.

"Jack," he said, "I'd give you one of the pearls if it would buy this anger."

He had made a miscue.

"Bah!" she cried at him. "Do you think it makes any difference to me, whether or no you trust me? Only—let us be frank with one another! For God's sake let us be frank, my dear John! You think I am a thief, the daughter of a thief. I think as much of you. You think I am—amusing; and I think that you are—only a little too thick with your acting, John—only a little too thick!"

The last words were spoken through clenched teeth. She was under the governance of the wildest passion.

"Jacqueline—"

She was in such a rage that his yielding manner threw oil on her fire.

"Will you leave me to be quiet in my room?" she said. "And stop annoying me?"

"If only—" he began.

"I don't want to talk!" cried Jacqueline.

"You have to listen to me, Jack!"

"Not a word. If you will not leave me in peace, then I shall leave you, do you understand?"

"Jacqueline, when you are quieter—"

"Why, if you insist upon keeping the room, I shall go to another place. And—"

She changed her mind about completing the sentence which she had started and flew out of the room, crashing the door close behind her. And before the rapid tattoo of her feet had died away down the hall, John Hodge turned and walked straight to the closet of Olivetta.

She was prepared. Only the closing of the door into the hall had cut down to the point of zero her chances of escape. Yet, when he opened the closet, jerking wide the door, she sprang out like a little tigress, her lips parted for the scream.

But the sound was stillborn. If there had lingered in her any doubt about his possible gentility it was now banished. An iron-hard right hand darted out and the palm was clapped across her mouth with such force that she was half stunned.

She found herself jerked back into his arms and half crushed by the force with which he held her.

"You infernal spoil sport!" gasped John Hodge at her ear. "You confounded nuisance, if you so much as whisper do you know what will happen? You'll have your throat cut! From ear to ear, you hear? And they'll cut mine, too!"

He threw her away from him. She stag-

gered back against the wall, gaping and staring at him. Her mind was refusing to work toward the meaning of his words.

"Give me the pearls!"

She could not resist. She was hypnotized with terror and the nearness of him. She poured into his long, extended hand the stream of great pearls. And he dumped them without a glance into his pocket.

"Now can you come with me?"

She did not answer. There were no words which she could find to answer with.

"It means, very simply," he said, "that if they find you in this house, they'll murder you, my dear, and think no more about it. Is that perfectly clear?"

She managed to nod.

"Get that frozen look off your face," he said. "You've got to think faster now than you ever did before. And you've got to keep yourself under control, as you never did before. The reason is that two lives hang on what you do. If you're caught here they'll blame your coming on me. And they'll get rid of the two of us."

"If there's only her father here—" began the girl.

"They have a half dozen cutthroats in hand, my dear, and they'd think nothing of sending them to get us and whittle the two of us into small bits to be sown on the river waters. Is that plain?"

"Then, lock the door and start making a noise that will bring help."

"Do you think I want help brought? Do you think that I'm mad?"

She shrank from him, and he actually smiled at her, so perfect was his self-control, so deadly cold was his courage in the crisis.

"Follow me," he said. "Step as I step. They mustn't hear two people walking."

She nodded, and he turned his back on her and led the way out of the room, walking with short, quick steps to which she kept time softly behind him. He led down a dark hall which smelled of the dust of long vacancy, long lack of human care. And, opening another door, he showed her into a room where he switched on the light and revealed a great bare apartment with only a cot in one corner, a bureau in another, and nothing upon floor or walls except a single cracked mirror. There were one or two ancient chairs, and there were two closets, whose open doors revealed interiors where only half a dozen garments hung. A suit case had been dropped in a corner and the dust was already whitening on top of it.

"Here we are," said John Hodge, closing the door behind them.

She turned about and faced him again. It was strange above all strange things that she should be trusting to him for guidance, or protection. And now that she was closeted with him in this room, it seemed to her that she would faint from sheer dread.

"Sit down!" he commanded.

She obeyed.

"Now get that look out of your eyes. I'll promise you one thing, that I'm not going to dispose of you immediately, if that's what's on your mind. I haven't brought you in here to murder you, my dear."

In spite of the peril which, it seemed, threatened him, also, he was daring to laugh in his grim way! She gaped at him.

"That's better," he said. "Anything is better than that frozen face. Turn your head a little."

She obeyed. It seemed that she had no volition saving what he poured into her from his overpowering strength.

"By Jove," he murmured, "I hurt you when I crashed my hand over your mouth! I was too rough, but I hadn't the time to be polite. One yell from you would have sent us both to hell. Excuse the word. Won't you wipe that bit of blood away?"

Without a word, studying his face as though the strength to raise her hand came from his scowl, she lifted the handkerchief and under the touch found that her lip was a trifle sore, and wiped away a fleck of blood. John Hodge had leaned his wide shoulders against the wall and was scowling down at the floor thoughtfully.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OLIVETTA CHANGES SIDES.

At length he shrugged his shoulders and looked suddenly up as one who abandons thought, finding it useless for the moment. "We may talk freely enough

for a moment or two," he said. "She's downstairs telling her father about the pearls—just to get it out of her system and to put me in as much danger as possible. After that she'll probably be a bit sorry, for a moment or two, and she'll come back to tell me what she's done and how sorry she is. Some girls are that way. They're full of impulse. They act on impulse enough to damn every one around them, and then they're as sorry as can be."

He grinned at her entirely without mirth.

"In the first place," he said, "you recognized me when you saw me on the train?"

She nodded, then shook her head.

"No?" he insisted.

"I—I—I only thought there was—something—"

"I tell you upon my word of honor," said John Hodge, "that if there is any possibility of harm coming to you in this house, it will not come from me. Will that help you to talk more freely?"

She could not help but believe. Liar and murderer and thief though she knew him to be, yet she found herself, incredible though it seemed, honoring and trusting him as a harbor of refuge!

"In the first place," he went on, smiling on her again, "you must admit that I have made you famous. You won't deny that?"

She was beginning to find it possible to think. Her blood again circulated.

"I put forward that claim to make you a bit more at ease," he said. "Does it?"

"John Hodge," she breathed suddenly, "whatever you may have been in the past, I know that you are now the only thing I can look toward for help in this crisis. I believe that you have told me the truth, and that there is a mortal peril for me, and—let's not talk about things that have gone before—let's only plan how we can best fight our way out."

He nodded to her, stroking his long, hard chin in his thoughtful way.

"You are certainly a Trojan," he said, in the same mild and self-possessed fashion. "But at the present moment there is not an earthly thing we can do. We might go back to the fire escape upon which, I take it, you came to the room of Jacqueline, but we'd never reach the bottom of the stairs. Never! So we might as well rest here and wait for developments. Can you stand the suspense?"

She swallowed hard and nodded. "I'll try," she said faintly.

"And now go back to what happened on the train. You followed your idea—that ghost of a thought that you knew me. You got off the subway in the same crowd with me at One Hundred and Twenty-Eighth Street and trailed me into a taxicab."

She nodded again. To her amazement, instead of betraying vexation, he merely rubbed his long, bony hands together and chuckled down at her. So great was his apparent enjoyment that he started to walk up and down the room, still nodding and chuckling. And as he strode to and fro, turning swiftly at the ends of his walk, he seemed to her more like a panther than ever.

"And by the Eternal," he went on, stopping suddenly and facing her with his legs spread far apart—"by the Eternal, you noted the house I went into, and came around to try the back entrance. Good gad—it's almost more than I can believe, though I have the evidence of my own eyes! With nerve like that for a girl, if you were a man there'd be no stopping you! There would be absolutely no stopping you! But tell me, were you much frightened?"

He had drawn a chair close to hers and facing her. Now he sank into it and leaned forward, bringing his face very near. She could see that he was as excited as he was delighted. And more and more he amazed her; until, at last, it seemed to her that he must have given the right explanation after all when he confessed to Jacqueline that he lived for the joy of danger.

"Yes," she admitted. "I was nearly dead with fear."

"But you kept on?"

"Yes."

"What nerved you? What kept you going?"

She managed to meet his eye, but she could not help flushing.

"Oh," he said, "you can talk right from the shoulder. I know that you understand all of my vices and crimes. And it was

the thought of all that I had done that spurred you on, eh? I had done murder, robbery in your house where you took me in as a guest, and I had wound up the deal by attacking your father with mysterious intent!"

He broke into a soundless chuckling once more, but stopped this to continue: "It was that which kept you going, when you were about to sink with fear. By the Lord, I admire you with all my soul!"

He stopped short.

"Did you hear much of our talk—Jacqueline's and mine?"

"From the time you came into the room. Yes."

"You were there that long?"

He snapped his fingers in his vexation. "But let it go. It can't be helped. As a matter of fact, the one thing that's kept my skin whole in this house has been the interest that Jacqueline takes in me, do you understand?"

"Yes," said Olivetta faintly.

His embarrassment grew; he cleared his throat; he looked down to the floor.

"Let me try to explain more in detail," he went on. "You know that recently it has been necessary for me to lead a rather secluded life, to put it mildly."

"Yes," said Olivetta.

And through her mind swept some images from the crowded mass of headlines and advertisements which had to do with the chase of John Hodge and the rewards offered for his apprehension. Yes, there were certainly reasons why he must keep in seclusion.

"So that, as a matter of fact," said John Hodge, "if I should cut loose from this one last harbor which remains to me, I should be running my head into the noose. The chances would be about five to one against me. I might fool the people for a time with disguises of one sort or another, but in the end some one would be very apt to run me to the earth, just as you have done. Though, by Heaven, I think that there are fewer brains in the list of men I've known than there are in the detective brain of Miss Dascom. But you follow my drift—it is life for me in this house or death outside of it!"

"Yes, yes! But—"

"You are going to tell me," he smiled at her, "that you're sorry you ran me to the ground? Tut, tut! I'm a sufficiently good sportsman to give you all the credit due for the excellent game you have played and the way you have played it. But to come around to the main thing I'm trying to explain: Jacqueline is a charming girl—in ways. But her father is an abysmal brute. The one thing that has kept his cudgel from my sconce has been Jacqueline. And the instant that Jacqueline loses interest in me, I'm a goner. And she will lose interest, I fear, the instant she discovers that there is a girl in this room. Does it begin to clear up the situation for you?"

"Yes, I begin to see. But surely she knows—"

"That you have been trailing me in the name of the law? It will be hard for her to understand that. If she finds that I am protecting you—you see? In short, Jacqueline has to think that I'm prodigiously fond of her—"

He paused, quite red in the face.

"I think," said Olivetta, "that that is a part you can quite easily play."

"Ah, yes," answered John Hodge in an oddly submissive way, "I suppose you feel that you have a right to say that. Some time—but let it go, again. I can't hope to explain. It's all too much of a confounded muddle, just now. It bewilders even me, at times. Only—if the pinch should come and I should have to talk to Jacqueline as though I were devilishly fond of her—"

"I shall understand," said Olivetta, and she flushed in turn.

"There is one thing more I am going to tell you, though I can't expect that you will either understand or believe. And it is this: I did not kill Sam Logan; I did not attack your father to do him any physical injury, no matter what he may say; and, thirdly, the Sheik I can be said to have stolen for a sufficient reason—that it belongs to me!"

So saying, he turned his back squarely upon her and walked to the window. There was an interval during which she stared at his wide shoulders, tapering down to the lean, narrow hips.

He whirled upon her.

"It seems impossible to you?" he demanded.

She did not answer.

"Very well. But just keep a shadow of doubt in your mind until the time comes when I can try to explain. As for nearly everything I have told you, I freely admit that they were lies. All that stuff about the Red Captain and old Hallyt being the same was, of course, just bunk. But these three things are true. I'll try to prove 'em later on. Just now I think I'll have my hands full with quite another problem."

He raised a bony forefinger as he spoke. A heavy footfall was creaking up the stairs. And now it beat out squeaks and groans from the flooring of the upper hall.

"That's her father," said John Hodge; and it seemed to Olivetta that he lost color a little as he spoke. "It's not an easy job to persuade him of anything except what he wants to believe. I'm going to ask you to go into that closet. And wait there quietly. No matter what he does, don't be too frightened. Sometimes his words are a bit worse than his actions—though often his thunder and lightning go together."

As he spoke he had opened a door to the closet and was waving her toward it. She paused an instant as she was stepping in.

"Not for my sake only, but for your sake, too," she said, "oh, John Hodge, I wish you another victory!"

And so she stepped on into the solid blackness of the closet, and the last that she saw of his face was a look of blank wonder, shot through with joy.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BEFORE THE STORM.

A PONDEROUS blow crashed against the door of the room. Olivetta, huddled into the black corner of the closet, craned her head into the white wedge of light that struck in—for the door was left a trifle ajar. But she could only see John Hodge turn toward the sound.

"Hello, Hodge!" called a thick, deep voice from the interior of the hall.

"Hello," said Hodge. "Come in, Tom."

The door was thrown open with a bang and closed with equal violence. A wheezing man whose immense bulk she could sense by the quiver of the floor beneath his tread, made a step or two into the interior of the room.

"This," said Tom, "is a hell of a hole. Come down below, Hodge, and get into a comfortable chair. I got a few things to say to you."

"Why not here," said Hodge. "Besides, I'm about to turn in. Fire away, governor, and you can shoot as straight here as you can below."

Tom grunted in response, grumbled words which were lost in a thick blending together, and then advanced across the apartment and finally sat down in a chair well within the rectangle of Olivetta's vision. She glimpsed his profile as he went by—and there was nothing about it to indicate that this was the father of pretty Jacqueline. His features were small, and apparently they had been further reduced by heavy battering, so that the profile was little more than a straight line, slightly dimpled. The bulge of the scowling brows was well nigh as large as the nose, or the great, out-thrusting lower jaw. He was plainly a man made for conflict.

The lean and active muscles of youth had been clothed, to be sure, with outer layers of fat, but fat, in turn, must have been converted into flesh, and from flesh to muscle. For, wide and round as he was, he seemed as hard as iron. Even the flesh of his face was hard. The drink-reddened cheeks seemed covered with a colored leather. When he sat down, his back was toward Olivetta, but the back was hardly less imposing than the side view.

He was poised gingerly upon the chair, with his feet drawn well back to the side, so that he could support his bulk upon them, if need were. And he overflowed the chair in all directions, just as his great neck overflowed the white, shining collar with which he was so absurdly throttled. He looked as though he must be between forty-five and fifty, strong as Hercules, and a fighter for the love of pure battle.

Opposite him, and facing the closet where she watched, was John Hodge, a lithe

and ineffectually slender figure, in comparison. But there was that in his lounging carelessness which was hardly less formidable than the downright bulk of Tom, when one regarded the pair in contrast for a time.

"My girl's been down talking," said Tom, by way of introduction.

"Yes?" queried John Hodge politely.

"Sure," said Tom. "When a girl gets mad she tells everything she knows. And Jack has been down chattering a lot about your pearls."

"She seemed to admire them," said John Hodge. "Was that what brought you up here, Tom?"

"Fact is," said Tom, rolling his bulk a little in the chair; "fact is that you're a fool to keep them pearls rolling around loose the way you do, Hodge."

"I haven't kept them rolling around so loose," said Hodge. "Matter of fact, there's only one person in the house that's seen them—Jacqueline."

"What sort of puzzles me," said Tom, and his great voice here rolled out into a great volume under it, choked the room with his thunder; "what sort of puzzles me is that you'd trust a girl before you'd trust a man like me. Ain't all women fools, Hodge?"

"In part, I suppose," said Hodge, smiling.

"But look here, Hodge, ain't I been a friend to you? Ain't I acted the part of a man that can be trusted?"

"You've given me a place to live," said Hodge, "but I think I've paid you for it."

"Paid?" cried Tom. "Can a man be paid for keeping the neck of another man from stretching?"

"Ah," said Hodge, "is that it? Is that in your head, Tom?"

"And why not? I'm not a fool, Hodge. I know what I'm doing for you!"

"When I dragged you out of the river like a half dead rat a few years back," said John Hodge, "I knew what I was doing also!"

Olivetta, gasping at his cool impertinence, wondered if this were the proper way to conciliate the big man.

"That's old stuff," said Tom. "That's damned old stuff. I pretty near forgot about it!"

"But at the end of three years," said Hodge, "do you expect that I shall have forgotten about what you're doing for me now, Tom?"

"The point is," said Tom, "that you ain't treated Jacqueline right. You sure been talking rough to her, or she never would of come down to me like she done."

"Nonsense," said John Hodge, setting his teeth. "Do you think that I'm a fool, Tom? Do you think that I'd dare to offend her in this house if I could help it? Why, man, I know what you could do. I know the fellows you have at your beck and call. I know that I'd be helpless if you saw fit to close your hand over me!"

This speech seemed to greatly pacify the big man. He leaned back in his chair, which creaked as though it were on the very verge of crashing to the floor under its burden.

"You got a lot of sense in you, Hodge," he said. "That's why it looks so damn queer to me that you ain't got the sense to let me shove those pearls of yours into the safe. They'd ride there as safe as daisies, wouldn't they?"

He broke off this proposal to fall into a violent fit of coughing, which was no doubt assumed to save his expression. John Hodge looked squarely at his host, nodding as though he seriously considered the offer.

"Couldn't think of letting you do that, Tom," he said. "It's bad enough for you to be taking me on here as a roomer. But if they should grab me here you could say that you never saw me except on the day when I hired the room, and that was a dark day of a thunderstorm."

He shook his head in an increased violence.

"But if they found the pearls in the safe—why, it would be all up with you. They'd give you a sentence, at your time of life, which would mean prison the rest of your days."

Tom showed no determination to follow up this tack. He merely sighed and began to stir restlessly in his chair.

"I might as well be going down," he said, "if you ain't going to see reason."

"About the pearls?"

"Them and Jack and—why, Hodge, she's terrible fond of you. I never seen her take to anybody the way she's taken to you. Most of the boys, why, she simply passes 'em the icy mitt and can't see 'em inside of a mile. You know that. You're making a bum play to kid her like you been doing, Hodge. And if I believed the half of what she's been telling me—why, you and me couldn't come to no agreement by just talk, after that! It'd take a pile more'n talk!"

"You wait till there's a real reason," said Hodge. "She's talking through her hat, just now."

"I'll be going down below," said Tom, and heaved his bulk out of the squeaking chair.

He strode out of the line of Olivetta's sight. Then he paused again.

"But you might give me a look at them pearls," he said, "after Jack's been telling me about them. There ain't no harm in a look, I guess. Am I right, Hodge?"

For the least fraction of a second John Hodge hesitated. Then he scooped out the jewels from his pocket.

"No harm at all," he said.

He held them up so that the electric light glimmered over them, and Tom came suddenly back and bowed his misshapen head over the treasure.

"My God!" breathed Tom, stepping back at last. "My God, Hodge, you're rich—you're rich as hell!"

He came closer again.

"F'you mind me just taking them in my hand?" he said with something childlike in his whispering voice.

They were poured into his great cupped hands. And he began shifting them so that different lights might fall upon them.

"They'd be breaking the heart of one of these millionaire's wives, I guess," he said. "I can see her putting them around her throat, Hodge. God, how they'd look against the throat and the breast of one of them beauties!"

"They're turning you into a poet," said Hodge, smiling, and slapping the other on the shoulder.

At the blow his landlord started violently and glared at Hodge as though roughly awakened from delightful dreams to brutal commonplace.

"Take 'em!" he gasped. "Take 'em back, Hodge!"

He fairly thrust them into the hands of John Hodge and then turned his back and lurched out of the room with his peculiar and clumsy gait. The door banged behind him, and his noisy tread went off down the hall.

John Hodge opened the closet door.

"You're saved, then!" breathed Olivetta. "But, oh, how could you face that terrible man?"

"You really think we're through the pinch?" he asked curiously.

She looked more closely at him. He was worn and gray.

"Aren't you?"

"We're lost," he said. "There's not a ghost of a hope for us now, unless the girl—no, she's out of it now. Even Jack couldn't save us. I knew it the minute he asked to see the pearls. There was no way to refuse him. And yet, once he had seen them the wolf came up in him and looked out at his eyes. He'll never sleep till he has those pearls. And—listen!"

He glided to the door and turned the key softly in the lock. An instant later the knob of the door was wrenched violently over and the whole door shook under a sudden pressure!

CHAPTER XXV.

THE TRAP.

JOHN HODGE turned to Olivetta with a pointing finger and a half rueful, half sardonic smile, as though to say that the danger he had prophesied had already come.

"Hello, Hodge," called a voice from the hall, a voice which was carefully smoothed, but in which the snarl of disappointment could not be quite kept down. "Let me in, will you? What's the idea of locking the door?"

"Who's with you?" countered Hodge.

There was an instant of silence. Then the answer, in tones still more sullen: "Nobody's here but me."

Hodge laughed.

"You've some sort of a joke up your sleeve, Billy," he said. "I heard two of you coming up the hall."

Another one of those ominous little silences followed. Then, with a frank savagery: "You got the ears of a cat, Hodge. And if you got the claws of a cat maybe you can scratch your way out of this hole, eh?"

It was the declaration of war. And immediately upon its heels, a heavy weight crashed against the door and made it sag in. Yet it held, and the sudden echo struck through the distant rooms of the house.

"If you do that again," said John Hodge, "I'll drive a pair of bullets through the door, Billy. I hate to be bothered like this, and if you keep nagging me, I'll send a couple of you to hell!"

"Listen to the damn dude," said one of those in the hall. "We'll tear your hide off for that, you swine!"

Another voice boomed suddenly down the hall.

"Here, here! What in hell is all this? Get out of my way! What you trying to do to Hodge? Ain't he my friend? I'll be learning a couple of you boys some lessons in good manners if you bother him."

It was Tom again, and his heavy, lurching step could be traced in its progress toward the door, while the men greeted him with sullen grumblings.

"Hello, John," called Tom. "Open up the door. I'll find out what's been in the minds of these blockheads and skin a couple of 'em for it."

"Show me their skins when you're through with them," said Hodge, "and I'll open the door to you. That's a bargain."

"What are you after, Hodge?" roared the giant.

"It's no good, Tom," said Hodge. "No good at all. I won't open the door, and if you try to break it down I'll stick a chunk of lead through the wood. I mean it, too."

A wild burst of cursing roared from the throat of Tom. He threw away the last pretense with an open threat.

"You're going to try a hard hand with me, kid? Why, I'll bust you in two. I'll get you, Hodge, and get everything you have. Do you hear?"

But John Hodge turned from the door with a shrug of his shoulders. In vain Tom bellowed in the hall his reproaches for the "ingratitude" of Hodge. He got no answer, and with a final declaration that Hodge would be starved until he was a sick dog and gave in, the big man and his followers departed, all save one who was told to stay behind and was noisily instructed to blow the head off any one who attempted to leave the room.

John Hodge came back and stood before Olivetta.

"When I was at your house," he whispered, "I heard some one talked about the way you could handle a revolver. Was that true? Are you a good shot?"

"Fairly good."

"Then take this."

He pushed a long thirty-eight into her hands.

"What does that leave you?"

"Nothing but my hands." He held them up grimly, and moved the fingers a little in a way that made her blood run cold. "But they're better than a gun to me," he said. "I can't hit the side of a wall with powder and lead. You can do better than that, I hope."

She nodded. It was so unnatural for this big fellow to whisper that the sibilant sound of it put her nerves on edge with a greater fear than ever.

"You really mean it?" she murmured.

He nodded.

"And you want me to use it—when—when—"

"Whenever you please," he said. "The gang of men in this house are a hardy crew. If you can get rid of a few of them you'll be doing a service to society. I've heard them talk. I've heard of the things they've done. There's not a one of them that doesn't deserve hanging and that probably won't get it sooner or later. That's why I say to shoot and shoot to kill when you get the chance. And keep in mind that if they have the chance, they'll shoot just as straight at you as though you were a man. I know their kind!"

She turned in her hands the cold steel mechanism. Then she balanced it and took the butt in a firm grip. It was heavier than

the weapons to which she was accustomed, but the balance was good and by maintaining a strong hold on it, she should be able to shoot well.

"I'll do exactly as you want," said Olivetta. "I'll shoot to kill!"

Something about her expression made him wince, and she heard him murmur to himself: "Poor child!" She wondered at that, but there were so many sudden changes, so many unexplained phases to John Hodge, that she no longer tried to understand everything he did.

"Let me tell you this," he said, still in the cautious whisper which they were forced to use, "that even if I had done all the things you think I have done, the thing which would most damn me would be because my affair has dragged you into this hole!"

But Olivetta shook her head.

"No," she said thoughtfully, "that isn't fair. I started out to trail you, John Hodge. And if I could, I would have turned you over to the police. But instead I was drawn into the trap. And you saved *me,* after I'd compromised you. If I had not come to-night you'd be in no danger. You'd be—smoking cigarettes with Jacqueline right now!"

She managed the faintest of smiles. John Hodge seemed greatly moved.

"Good God," he breathed, "what a great hearted girl you are! But I'll talk no more about regrets. We'll look only one way, and that's toward the possibilities of getting away."

"From the window—" she suggested.

"There's no way down from that. Oh, when they gave me this room I took stock of it, you may be sure. There's a narrow ledge running past the window, but only a circus performer could walk on it. That's the only possible exit. And there's no chance of getting in help. If we start a clamor, there's no one in this block of houses to hear, and there are empty lots behind the house.

"But even if we should be heard, it would be too late. If it were the last thing that Tom Lanier were capable of, he would knock in the door to finish the man who betrayed his hiding place. For this house is almost as precious as life to Tom. He's been condemned to death three times, and three times he's broken away only to be caught, tried under another name in another country, and held again. But this time he's hidden himself safely away for months in this house, and he believes that his luck is tied up with it. If we raised a racket that would bring the police here, they'd find empty rooms except for the one that held our bodies. I know honest Tom!"

"Then—what *can* we do?" gasped Olivetta.

"I don't know—I honestly don't know. I see no hope."

Panic rushed through her brain.

"There must be some way out," whispered Olivetta.

He stepped close to her with a look of the greatest anxiety.

"You understand," he said, "that I'm not holding out on account of the pearls. If they would buy us freedom I'd give them in an instant. But they wouldn't count. If Tom Lanier takes the pearls, he takes my life with them—he would be a fool not to, now that he has the opportunity. And if he finishes me, he finishes off the only other witness, no matter whether it's a man or a woman. I've heard that great beast of a man talk before now. I've heard him say that the trouble with most criminals is that they stop halfway in their crimes. As for his own methods, they are the height of thoroughness."

She made a little gesture of resignation. Then she leaned back against the wall with her arms folded, for it seemed that her heart would thunder its way out of her body.

At last, "Is there water in the room?" she asked.

"Here!" he said hastily, and stepped to a wash basin in the corner. But when he turned the tap the water did not flow.

"They've cut us off from the water line," he said. "That's Tom Lanier again. He loses no time. He knows food is nothing—water is the quick finisher." He came back to her. "God knows how sorry I am!" he said.

She was sick at heart. Her knees were

shaking under her weight. She wanted to drop to the floor and pray and weep and cry out to the brutal guard beyond the door for mercy. But the watching eye of this man who leaned above her held her together. She could not weaken while he was there looking on.

"Listen to me," she said, and the effort to control her emotion made her voice hard and dry. "We haven't time to accuse each other of what's past. Please believe that I'm thinking only of this moment and none other. And — and — But there's something at the window!"

For there had come a light scratching sound just outside the window, and it unnerved Olivetta and sent her cowering back in the corner of the room. There, with staring eyes, and with the revolver leveled, she waited for the first stir of the lowered pane, ready to shoot. John Hodge stepped to the side of the room; he paused with lowered head by the window, listening, and at that moment there was a light, furtive tapping at the pane.

For an instant he hesitated, seeming to doubt whether he should signal to the girl to shoot or else wait for a more definite proof that there was some one just outside the window. But finally he did neither. He gripped the lower sash of the window and threw it up. It revealed a glimmering bit of white paper hanging at the end of a cord which was weighted down with a pencil.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"ONLY ONE CHANCE."

JOHN HODGE caught at the paper and brought it in. Instantly the upper end of the string was loosed and came fluttering in to the room. He lowered the sash again, and, unfolding the paper eagerly, read the contents and then passed it without a word to Olivetta.

The paper was thin, the writing had been done with an indelible pencil, the impression being very faint on the smooth surface, and the writing was crowded together closely. It was by no means the sort of hand she would have expected to come from Jacqueline Lanier, and yet it was from her.

"Dear John," ran the letter, "I don't know what strange devil came into my head and made me do the terrible thing. But I have done it. And now I am sitting in my room, above yours, and wondering how I can undo the harm I have done."

Here she looked up from the writing and watched John Hodge standing patiently on the farther side of the room, studying a problem which seemed difficult of solution. The letter went on:

"It was the thought that you had only been playing with me that drove me mad. It seemed to me that you had been jesting from the first—and I had taken your friendship seriously. But now I know that I must have been wrong.

"At least, I want to try to make up for what I have done. And I think I can. First I'll tell you exactly what I've done. I must do that before you will trust me. And if you don't trust me, there is no way in which I can now be of help to you.

"I went down to father in the first rage. I found him in the dumps, his arms folded on a table, his head on his arms. I should have known better than to tell him any exciting news when he was in such a mood; but, before I knew it, I had told the whole story of what I had seen.

"And from the expression on his face I knew that I had said too much. He listened like a starved man. He began to moisten his lips and smile in a peculiar, starved way. He went up to see you at once. What he said to you I don't know. But when he came back I knew, by the first glance at his face, that he had seen the pearls.

"He went to work at once. He called up the boys from below. He told them that they were to get at you, and that if they did 'finish' you there would be a richer haul than all the hauls they had ever made before rolled into one. Then he told them what to do, and they started for your room.

"I had had a chance to cool off by that time. I tried to change his mind, but it was too late. Nothing that I could do would save you, if I had to rely on persuasion. I waited in a cold terror until I heard that they had failed to get into your room. I

suppose that something father said made you suspect, and you were on your guard when they came for you.

"By that time I had thought of the only way in which you could escape. Even that way is dangerous. But I've come to offer it, John, if you will trust me to help you. Simply wave your hand out of the window, and I shall lower a rope to you. You will find it knotted so that you can easily climb up. And from this room you'll have an even chance of slipping out of the house without being seen.

"John, I know that I have thrown you into this danger, but trust me to take you out of it again!

"JACK."

She lowered the letter and looked across the room to John Hodge.

"There *is* a hope, then!" she breathed.

"I wonder," mused John Hodge. "The chances, I think, are about two in ten. But shall we take them, even so?"

"Yes, yes! Anything to make a start. Without water—why, we'd die in three days, if they cared to keep us here as long as that. Once in that room—"

"Ah, if we could reach that room. But—"

"But with a knotted rope—surely you can climb it, and I know that I can manage some way to get up it."

"If the rope holds, yes."

"If it holds?"

"Aye, don't you see that that's the only dubious point? But of course you don't see. You cannot conceive what goes on inside the brain of that girl. She looks different enough, but there's very little of her father that isn't in her. Clever and shrewd, suspicious and cunning, revengeful as the very devil, cruel as a witch when she's angered—that's what Jacqueline is. I've had a rare opportunity to study her, and though I've only had a few days, I've found those things in her.

"She likes me fairly well, simply because she thinks that I have been completely blinded by her little tricks. If she thought I knew her for what she is, the dear girl would slip a knife into me and kiss her hand to me as I went out to sea. That, very much in brief, is my lady Jacqueline."

"But do you actually think—" gasped Olivetta.

"That she would wait until I was nearly to the top, and then cut the rope and drop me a few stories down to the hard pavement below? I don't know, in fact. I may as well tell you what I tried to hint at a while ago. I have tried to make Jacqueline think that I was about to become her entirely blinded admirer. If she believes that I am sincere, she may attempt the rescue in good faith. But if she really believes that I have not been truthful, she'll cut the rope and let me go."

He made a gesture to indicate the drop. "It would smash a man, a fall like that. A gunshot through the head couldn't be more fatal. And after I'm up, even supposing that I get there, it might not be so extremely simple to handle her and keep her silent while you climb the rope after me. You begin to see the difficulties?"

Olivetta, appalled, reviewed them in her mind. But she was very young, she was very strong, she had within her a wealth of unspent adventure. Moreover, in John Hodge she saw the very spirit of invincible strength and courage. Thief and murderer he might be—yes, she had reason to feel confident that he was—but he was also capable of being a matchless gentleman, thinking only of the woman who was with him, even if it were she who had drawn all this peril on his head. In these last few moments his ugly, hawklike face had become almost handsome in her eyes.

"It only seems to me," she said, "that there is really nothing else to do. Am I wrong?"

"Unless the police *should* come on the trail of Tom Lanier or of John Hodge—and so liberate us."

"And so bring you to prison?"

"That's a danger of the future, and the future is a very dim thing. Our present danger is a concrete fact. But I truly believe that the odds are against the police finding me here, or finding Tom Lanier. He has stayed here several months. Why should he be trailed here now? It would be entirely too improbable."

"Then you think we should go?"

"If we try to climb that rope," he said

slowly, "I know that we shall risk our lives. And yet if we stay here—"

"It's just the same risk, isn't it?"

Suddenly he struck the back of his hand across his eyes.

"I see you swinging up there in the middle of sick, thin space, and it takes the heart out of me. Gad, it makes me weak!"

She stared at him. And it seemed to her that if ever she had seen sincerity stamped deep in the features of a man, she could see it now stamped on the face of this tall John Hodge, that lean and ugly face as he bent above her.

Then. "But you're right," he said. "You're entirely right. There's only one chance, and we must take it. If it were any other place, if they were any other men, I should take the chance alone and leave you here, knowing that a woman would be safe. But in this house—no, no, you must come with me. If anything should happen to you—but nothing shall happen, nothing shall happen, God helping!"

And again a quiver of wonder ran through all of her nerves. Indeed, he seemed sincere, he must be sincere, unless some devil kept him acting with a consummate skill up to the very last moment.

"You see," she said gently, "I take the risk of my own free will."

"I know, I know—well, we'll forget the rest."

He took her hand and crushed it between both of his, and both his strong hands were trembling.

"If only I had not come!" she said. "If only I had let you go!"

"But do you really wish that? Well, I don't. All the danger that comes to a man—that's fate. But the happiness is another matter. And I've found some happiness out of your coming. When you first came, you looked on me as a sort of cold-blooded devil, isn't that true? But if we come through this safe and sound, I think you'll have a slightly different feeling about me. Is that true? A feeling that I am at least not so bad as some men, eh? A feeling, let me say, that I can admire grit, and pay homage to a girl with courage!"

She found herself listening after he had stopped speaking, as she might have listened to music, too delightful to have ended. And she roused herself with an effort. It was the old story; the moment she came near this man she was drawn mightily toward him. Her reason could not keep her at arm's distance.

John Hodge had gone to the window and raised the sash softly. She saw him lean out, and looking up, wave his hand in a broad gesture into the night, and as he did so, a twining length of rope dropped past him and was swept into the room as he straightened again.

His gesture brought Olivetta on hasty tiptoe.

"It's strong enough," he said, and he tested the rope with a great tug of his hands. "It will carry our weight unless she does something to it above—or unless her father is in the room with her. In that case we'll get quickly what otherwise would have been delayed and prefixed with a long agony. Are you sure that you can climb?"

"When I was a youngster I used to climb. I still can manage it."

"I could draw you up, but I shall probably have my hands too full with her, trying to keep her quiet while you climb. Wait for a moment or two after you see me disappear into the window above, if I can reach it at all, and then start yourself."

So saying, he stood up on the sill of the window, reached up as high on the rope as he could, and with his first effort, swung a yard or more clear of the wall of the house.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ALARM.

SHE saw him swing hand over hand up the rope with an incredible display of strength and agility, while the rope swung wildly back and forth. Below was a great black pit with an unseen bottom.

Then, out of the blackness above, appeared the dim pallor of a voice. She heard a whisper of encouragement. Pale hands went out toward the climber, and seemed to help him in his last upward effort. And so he was brought to the sill of the win-

dow above, and an instant later disappeared into the interior.

That was not all. The rope swung trembling back and forth. Once its knotted end actually struck against her cheek. But then it was whisked away and withdrawn completely from her reach.

Olivetta leaned recklessly out and watched that last hope swept away. And, with a sick falling of the heart, all of her former doubts of John Hodge poured back over her. There was some magic in the actual presence of the man that kept her from distrusting him after the first moments. But now her last frail hope of escape was gone. He had caught it up with a consummate selfishness and left her to whatever might come.

He had made only one mistake. He had left her his revolver. And if they rushed the room they would meet with a grim reception. She looked desperately around the room. How blank and empty it was, how utterly devoid of hope since he had gone! Then, glancing back to the window, she saw the dark and serpentine length of the rope dangling and twining back on itself there.

It was a glorious good sight to Olivetta. She reached the window in one flurry of haste and caught at the rope. She gripped it so hard that the harsh fibers bit into her palm. And now, leaning out and looking up again, she saw the rope quiver in a solid, straight line, while from the window above it seemed to her that she heard a light scuffling sound.

That was all she waited for. She climbed hastily onto the sill of the window, just as John Hodge had done. But she crouched there and hesitated. Below her the void of blackness began to stir, as it were, and open enough to show her the dizzy distance to the ground. And the trembling rope was fragile, indeed, as a support.

More than that, it was many a year since she had climbed a rope. There had been a time, in that wild girlhood of hers, when she would have thought no more than a sailor going up this rope as handily as John Hodge, well nigh. Those were times when she had been able to swing like a veritable monkey through the trees, from branch to branch, the delight and the admiration of the boys with whom she played. They had been stronger, but none had been so daring.

Even now, when she remembered, there came again a faint pang like an echo of that great pain with which she had come to know that she must be only a woman, with all of a woman's limitations. With a sigh of fear and of grief and of amusement, she reached up. But when her hands settled on the rope, each clutching a knot, all was banished except her fear. Would there be sufficient strength in her arms to sustain her?

She closed her eyes and let her weight fall forward. Blindly she swung out on the rope. It seemed that she would never cease swaying out. And she began to spin on the rope. The fear was turning her muscles to water. Her wrists shook. The fingers grew numb and weak, and she felt her hold slipping.

Then she opened her eyes and saw, far above, the glittering of the stars. And, instantly, she began to fight her way up the rope.

A danger met and struggled against, she discovered, became less paralyzing than one in the presence of which she had been trembling. The rough rope burned her hands, but in her arms, made strong by swinging a golf club and swimming, drew her up with difficulty but steadily enough. And when she wearied, a little below reaching distance of the window sill above her, she twisted her slim ankles into the rope and let her weight rest in that fashion.

Then she resumed the work until she could swing a hand in and grasp the sill, then the other arm followed: she was drawn up to the level of the sill and then swung through and stood, at last, panting on the floor, safe for that moment, at least.

In a farther corner of the room she saw John Hodge busily at work bandaging the arms of a woman behind her back, a woman already gagged. At that instant he ended his task and lowered the helpless form to the floor. He leaned a moment over it.

"I don't like to do it, Jack," he was whispering. "By the Lord, it goes against the grain. But I knew that the moment

you saw another person coming up that rope, particularly if it were a woman, you'd raise the roof and have that light-handed father of yours upon us in a twinkling. That's why I've had to do this. But besides, this will be a lot better for you. If they find you bound and gagged they'll never dream that you've actually helped me to escape. And as for the girl—they'll never know, I trust, that she was in the house!"

The wild, bright eyes of the captive blazed up at him, but she made no struggle.

"Good-by, Jack," said John Hodge, stepping back and waving to her. "Good-by, and better luck next time."

He motioned to Olivetta. They stole to the door which opened upon the hall.

"There are two ways out now," he whispered softly. "But first, wait here until you've stopped breathing so hard. It was a stiff pull to get up the rope?"

She nodded, drawing in great breaths.

"There's time enough. We'll let you quiet down. And then we'll start. But as I was saying, there are two ways out. One is down the fire escape, the way you came up. But I think the chances are that old fox, Tom Lanier, is probably keeping a guard on that, just in case things should come to the present pass. I say, I think that the odds are ten to one that he's having the fire escape watched. And if he is, we're both hopelessly trapped if we try to go down it.

"There's another way, and that's to go straight down the stairs and out of the house by the front door. Nobody will be watching that way out, I'm sure. At least, there's a chance that's worth gambling on, I think. Once we get past the hall below, where the guard is waiting, we'd have clear sailing. Will you have the nerve to go down that way? You won't break down?"

She shook her head. Her heart was thundering, but she would not admit her fear. It was better to go on in his guidance, doing blindly what he told her to do. He had already brought her to the threshold of escape, she felt.

He waited, watching her a moment. At length he nodded.

"I think we may make the attempt now. And so—we'll make a prayer for good luck and go ahead!"

So saying, he opened the door and stepped boldly out into the hall. Olivetta, following, felt her breath taken as though she had plunged into icy water. But she went on behind him. And now she remembered that when she started to climb the rope she had left behind her the unnecessary weight of the revolver—unnecessary then, but how vital now!

Even in her anxiety she could find time to wonder at the stealthy silence of the movements of John Hodge. The big man stalked down the hall before her, fairly dissolving into the darkness of the passageway without leaving a trace of noise behind him. She herself, with all her advantage of a lighter weight, could not avoid slight whispering sounds, slight creakings.

And the difficulties of proceeding noiselessly were redoubled when they reached the stairway, for here even John Hodge made some noise and she herself stopped time and again, crouching in horror at the squeaking of the boards under foot. But never once did he turn to her with a cautioning gesture!

And so they reached the bottom of that flight. And here he held up a hand to keep her back. She stopped, and looking back, she wondered at the shortness of the descent, for there had been a year of dread in it.

"Listen," murmured John Hodge.

She threw her whole heart into the effort, and above them she heard an irregular and rapid beating, a sort of heavy flutter of sound.

"It's Jacqueline fighting to get free," whispered Hodge. "Little tigress—she'll probably succeed before long. I hadn't the heart to sink the cords into her as far as they should have gone. She'll work out of them. But the guard has heard already, and he's coming to investigate what's causing the racket!"

In fact, up the hall came the thud of the guard's foot, felt in the vibration of the floor rather than heard. And to the horror of Olivetta, John Hodge stepped squarely out from behind the wall and into the view of the approaching man!

The latter halted.

"What in hell—" he gasped.

"Hello! Hello!" grumbled John Hodge in a roughened and deepened voice. "You ain't asleep yet, eh?"

"Who is it?" said the other, approaching nearer in their direction. "I dunno that I remember—"

"Tom sent me up to Jack's room. You must of been asleep when I come by going up."

"You lie! I ain't closed an eye. What *you* been doing?"

The answer was only one of those indescribable intakes of breath when a man leaps into action. There was a startled snarl half formed from the throat of the guard, and then a quick thud, as of a fist striking home, followed by a jarring fall.

Olivetta ran out into the hall. She saw a form in the dim light prone on the floor. John Hodge was already turning toward her.

"Now run for it!" he said eagerly. "Don't mind the noise now. We've got to get out before he comes to, and that 'll be just a matter of seconds."

They turned side by side for the next flight of stairs, but each halted and shrank before beginning the descent, for a door was suddenly cast open on the floor above, and the voice of Jacqueline rang through the house, sharp with fear and rage: "He's loose—John Hodge—"

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK

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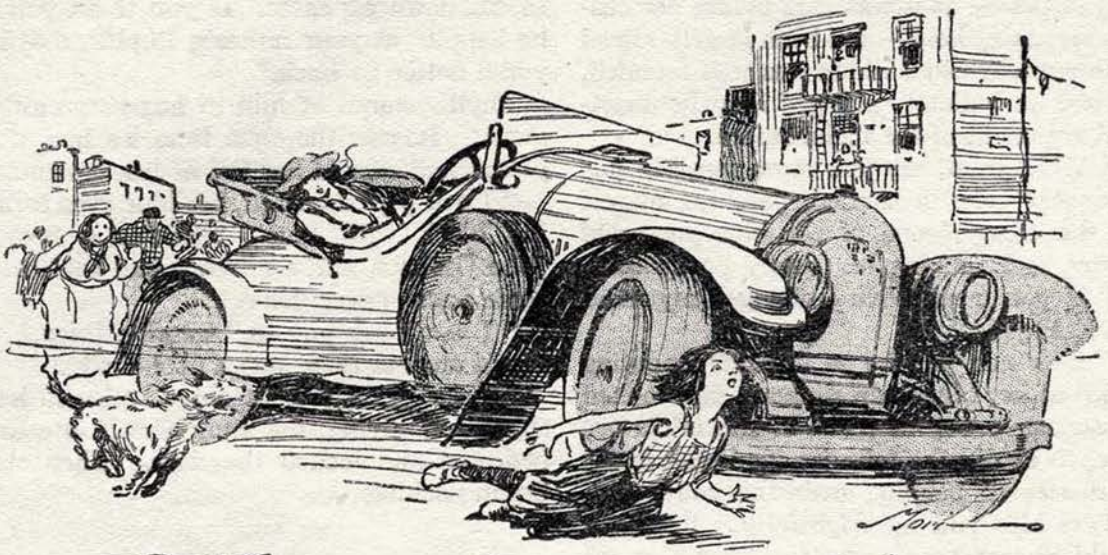
THE MAGIC OF IT

I KNOW a place—I shan't tell where:
A magic stream goes wimpling there.
A bird one hears but cannot see
Flutes near by in a magic tree.
Sweetness you'd have to feel to know
Enters your soul from the locust blow.

I know the place—I'll not tell you!
You'd go and find my words untrue:
A stream you'd see; you'd hear a bird
Singing a song you'd often heard.
The locust by the plank-curbed well
Would bring you only locust smell.

But it was there, one April day,
A magic girl with eyes of gray
Fixed my eyes with a look that made
Fairyland of the locust shade!
Magic for me that lovely spot
Where I met Sally and you did not!

Strickland Gillilan.



A Daughter of Midas

By JUSTA LINARD

"THE I-told-you-so's have it. Food for gossip! Why, they'll have a regular feast!" Phyllis soliloquized bitterly as she packed her trunk, going about it with an anxious-to-shake-the-dirt-of-this-place-off-my-feet sort of air. Silk stockings and silk "other things" were piled in a rebellious heap.

She heard Graham go into the hall and take his hat off the rack; heard him walk toward the bedroom and then abruptly turn away. A moment later the outer door slammed. He had left the house.

"Brute!" she muttered, flinging a bottle of French toilet water viciously into her gold-mounted, black morocco suit case.

Just a year ago Phyllis, the spoiled, motherless daughter of a millionaire, had eloped with a man who had nothing to offer her but love and prospects. She had met John Graham while visiting a college chum, and with both it had been a case of love at first sight. Graham, who during his thirty odd years had been a student in the school of hard knocks, had suggested waiting until he was better established. But she had declared that she would "adore housework," and, being deeply in love, he had closed his ears to prudence and opened them wide to inclination.

Experience proved her wrong. She did not adore housework. Washing dishes and cooking, even with the assistance of a by-the-hour colored maid, was sadly different from her romantic expectations. At first the young wife was delighted with the novelty of the four room bungalow, but responsibility was new and soon became irksome. Gradually she drifted back to her old frivolous life, demanding luxuries quite beyond the reach of the wife of John Graham. Her husband, who idolized her, plunged harder than ever into his work, trying to give Phyllis some of the things which she was continually reminding him she had always had.

The climax had come that morning. Graham was making toast at the kitchen stove when his wife appeared in the doorway, looking like a fluffy chicken masking as a bird of paradise with her disheveled yellow hair and gorgeous, pastel-shaded negligee,

His surprise—as it was long before her customary rising hour—had been largely mixed with apprehension, which was well founded, for she immediately plunged into the unsettled argument of the night before.

"Well, John, are you more sensible this morning?" she demanded, perching herself on the edge of one of the blue enameled chairs, and rubbing her sleepy pansy eyes.

"If you mean have I changed my mind—no, Phyllis."

"How can you be so unkind?" pouting down at her blue satin slippers. She looked as strangely out of place in the miniature kitchen as did the tall, dignified man in his shirt sleeves bending over the coffee pot. "Taxi bills run up frightfully. Really, I could almost own a car for what I spend on them. I'm only asking for a little runabout, although you know that at home—"

"But I explained all that last night, Phyllis," Graham broke in, the lines deepening on his careworn face. "It's absolutely out of the question. Until business improves even the taxis will have to stop."

"Oh, will they?" mockingly. "What do you expect me to do? Ride in street cars? Well, I won't. I'll go back to father first. You don't love me, or you would not make me a laughing stock for my friends; and I was a fool to marry you—a fool, a fool, *a fool!*" She had risen and was brandishing her closed fists, spoiled child fashion, the last "fool" being fairly screamed at her husband, who had stopped his preparations of a hurried breakfast.

Although not the type of man one could suitably call a worm, Graham certainly did turn. If he could have explained the serious problems facing him at the factory—which he couldn't, as Greek was more intelligible to Phyllis than assets and liabilities—his gentle tolerance might not have deserted him; but the strain of many sleepless nights and harried days, together with her incessant complaining, broke down the wall of his patience.

"Stop it," he commanded, although the stern set of his lip was belied by the pain in his gray eyes. "I've tried to make you understand, but either you can't or won't. God knows I'm doing the best I can, but instead of giving you more money I'll have to cut down expenses. If you think you'll be happier at your father's, Phyllis, maybe you'd better go back."

Phyllis stared at him in angry astonishment. It was the first time he had not petted and coaxed her out of her tantrums.

"I *will* go," she cried, her blue eyes turning black with rage. "You're a beast, John Graham, and a miser. And I'll never come back, never, never!"

"I won't ask you to," wearily, "for I'm afraid our marriage was a mistake."

"Beast!" she cried again. And with her silken robe flying, she flung herself into the bedroom and locked the door. Then she began packing.

II.

THAT evening she walked in upon her father, who, having promptly disowned her upon her marriage, had not seen her for a year. Mr. Smyth, who was a stock yards magnate and looked it, puffed thoughtfully at his Havana as she told her hysterical story in the library. He seemed far from displeased at the return of the prodigal daughter.

"I'm not surprised," he told her. "I didn't think you'd go through with it. No, don't interrupt me, Phyllis. It's my fault as much as yours. A poor man's wife must be a good, honest piece of crockery, able to stand hard bumps without breaking or even nicking. I made a dainty Dresden china doll out of you, and with my money and your schooling I figured on getting some blue blood into the family. I'll let you come back home on condition that your separation from that man is permanent. We'll go down and see about the divorce to-morrow."

"To-morrow?" Phyllis choked down a sob. "There's no hurry, is there, dad?"

"No-o-o, I suppose not," with carefully simulated indifference. "Just go ahead and enjoy yourself."

As Phyllis predicted, her return was a feast for the gossips, and she sensed it in spite of the acclaim with which she was welcomed.

Ray Kensington Alexer was among the first to call, accompanied by his mother, a stoutish, white haired lady who wore real

beads with an air. The Alexers had been among the Pilgrim Fathers—so had the Kensingtons. Mrs. Alexer found it rather inconvenient, however, to keep up the family splendor on the family income.

While Ray and Phyllis exchanged merry badinage, Mamma Alexer and Papa Smyth exchanged significant glances.

"It's simply great to see you, Phyl," drawled Ray. "Your husband — didn't come, eh?"

"John? No," with a vigorous shake of her fluffy blond head; "he's too busy. John's a regular human adding machine."

"I'm doing some adding myself right now," Ray laughingly asserted, "trying to put two and two together. Freedom of an old friend, you know."

"I always thought two and two made four," Phyllis smiled impishly up at him from the velvety depths of the tall, mahogany chair. After her jaunt into Poorman's Land she was pleasantly conscious of the gorgeousness of the oriental rugs, the creamy softness of the satin wall hangings, and the luxury of the silently moving footman serving tea in eggshell china cups. Her companion, too—slim, distinguished looking, faultlessly groomed, fitted into the general luxuriousness. Ah, this was her world, she thought contentedly!

"Two and two do make four," agreed Ray, "but one and one— Now, in our case," leaning confidentially toward her, "I had expected—"

"Expectation never hurts. It's realization that's tragic."

"Right-o. But," with an aggrieved air, "it was a scurvy trick you played on me. Nobody would ever dream as you sit there looking like a yellow angel—"

"Yellow! This dress is peach color."

"Is it? Well, you certainly look luscious in it, and if you don't stop smiling at me in that 'come hither' way—"

"Be careful, Ray," demurely; "don't forget that I'm a married woman."

"Are you too much married to play eighteen holes to-morrow?"

"Absolutely. Unless," relenting, "we get up a foursome."

Which they did. This was the first of many days spent at the country club, and it was remarkable how quickly Phyllis slipped back into her old niche of popularity. Loaded down with gold from her father's coffers—which, like Hawthorne's "miraculous pitcher," were always full and running over—she indulged in unrestrained shopping orgies, and plunged with feverish gayety into a round of teas and dances and dinners.

At an exclusive affair one evening Mr. Smyth—a fat, pudgy figure, in spite of his gentlemanly attire—stood watching her with exultant satisfaction. Her eyes sparkling like twin sapphires, her hair burnished gold against the cobwebby midnight blue of a gown upon which sparsely scattered iridescents glistened like drops of dew, she was the center of an admiring group, the most worshipful of whom was Ray.

Smyth—who had been "Smith" before the war had made him a multimillionaire—was obsessed with one idea. Having no pedigree of his own, he wanted to buy one. And it was through his pretty daughter that he had planned on getting it. To this end he had had her carefully trained, hothouse fashion, and her elopement had been a bitter blow. He had shrewdly foreseen, however, that if he disowned her—luxury being woven into the very fiber of her being—back she would come when the lash of poverty scourged her flesh. He smiled complacently as he realized the correctness of his prediction. True, she had thus far evaded his suggestions as to a divorce, but that would come.

He knew that John Graham was struggling along on a shoestring. He knew also that his largest debt was to the Shannon Company, in which Smyth himself happened to be a director and a large stockholder. He had but to say the word— Unconsciously he closed his large, rather puffy hand as though in the act of crushing a small, helpless fly.

Phyllis, passing him with Ray in her wake, stopped at that moment.

"Ray is going to drive me home, dad," she said, turning her flushed, pretty face to his. "You don't mind, do you?"

"Wouldn't do me much good if I did," with pretended displeasure. "You be careful, you two, and don't go over sixty miles

an hour. I don't want to be getting you out of jail at daybreak."

"No danger, sir," laughed Ray. "I'm more liable to make it a mile an hour."

In the machine, Phyllis, leaning back, noticed how the white moonbeams gave a spectral appearance to the shrubs and trees, which waved their arms fantastically. Who can control the mind in scenes like this? Balmy, moonlight nights in the little roadster which John had afterward sold to make a "down payment" on their bungalow—nights when the swaying trees and whispering wind had played an exquisite symphony to accompany the melody which love was playing on their heartstrings! It was on such nights that, against her will, John came into her thoughts. Intuitively she knew that her companion was feeling the intoxicating influence of their surroundings now. As for herself—

"Why the sigh?"

"I hardly know," with a reckless sigh, letting the hand he had taken remain in his. "Guess I hate to think of such a glorious moonlight night ever coming to an end."

Abruptly Ray stopped the car in the leafy, whispering road. "An echo of my own thoughts," he whispered. She felt his hot breath on her cheek as he went on unsteadily. "Wonderful girl, have you any idea how much I love you?"

"Do you—really?"

"You know I do. Why won't you get your divorce, Phyllis, and marry me? Promise me now, to-night, that you will."

She allowed herself to be swept into his arms. She even let him kiss her, assuring herself that she was supremely happy. Yet she did not find the experience particularly exhilarating.

Pushing him away, she drew her ermine wrap about her. "I suppose I should," she answered. "And I will some time."

With this Ray had to be contented. He scowled at the wheel as they proceeded on their way, his lips set to repress words which would not have been at all in keeping with the wondrous scene and his wondrous companion.

Phyllis thought the conversation over as her maid helped her prepare for bed. Ray was right. A divorce was the only thing. She could not go back to that beggarly existence. As for John—she never wanted to see him again; and evidently he felt the same way, she told herself bitterly, for she had never had so much as a word from him in all the months of their separation. Well, he would hear from her soon, she determined, through an attorney.

The very next morning she was spurred on to act. It was her birthday, and her father, on leaving the house, asked her to go out with him to the drive. Under the massive archway built on one side of the gray stone mansion stood a long, tawny roadster, luxuriously upholstered in chocolate brown—a car so powerfully made and yet so symmetrically beautiful that Phyllis gave a gasp of delight.

"Is it for me?" she asked excitedly.

"Yes; a little birthday gift."

"Why, dad, you dear! You're always doing things for me."

"Am I, kitten? Well, suppose you do something for me to-day. We'll christen this car together, not with a bottle of champagne, but with a trip to Lloyd's office."

"Your attorney?"

"Yes. You've never heard from Graham, you've told me. And it seems to me that your pride, if nothing else—"

"You're right, dad. We'll go to-day."

Smyth suppressed a triumphant smile.

"Sensible girl," he commended.

After the case was started Phyllis was conscious of a feeling of expectancy. But no word came from John, and his apparent indifference enraged her. "I hate him," she fumed inwardly. "I only wish he'd come to court so I could show him how little I care.'

She expressed her desire to "have it over with," to Ray, who frequently accompanied her on long rides in the new roadster.

"I can hardly wait for the time when I can claim you," he told her ardently. He did not tell her that her father's millions had something to do with his impatience, nor that he considered it quite something to give people of no lineage the exalted name of Kensington-Alexer. He really felt quite magnanimous about it.

Still, she was a prize, family or no family,

he admitted as he watched her run the car with dexterous skill. Refusing to let any one else have the wheel, she would throw off her hat, and with hair flying and eyes sparkling, would whizz down the long, smooth roads looking like a picture of poetry in motion.

Twice she was arrested for speeding, and twice she listened demurely to her father's warning reprimand as he paid her fines and allowed her to drive him home at the rate of ten miles an hour.

"That car's put the devil into you," he grumbled.

She laughed. "Every time I get my foot on the accelerator and my hand on the wheel, it seems to dare me."

"Can't understand it. You used to be such a sane driver."

Phyllis herself could not understand it. She seemed to be trying to run away from her own thoughts—from fits of restlessness. She did not attempt to analyze these moods—she simply tried to escape from them.

In spite of the lawyer's precautions, the paper printed a sensational story of the impending divorce under the blazing caption,

SOCIETY BELLE WHO ELOPED SEEKS DIVORCE

Phyllis hoped John would see the account. The charges of "cruelty and neglect" stood out like a close-up on a movie screen. He couldn't deny them. Didn't he spend most of his time at his old factory, and didn't he cruelly deny her the decencies of life?

"I don't see how it got into the papers," she remarked to Ray.

"Neither do I. I'm not sorry, though. It kind of casts the die and brings you that much nearer to me."

"Does it?"

"Doesn't it? Look out, Phyl!" as she turned a curve with dangerous abruptness.

She was in one of her reckless moods. Ray vowed that after she was married to him this foolish speeding would stop. He'd see to that. At present—

"I can't understand, though, why he never made an effort to see you."

"He realized it would be useless. Heavens—he doesn't know what real living means! A little two by four house on Main Street, a garden, some chickens, a kitchen cabinet type of wife in a kitchen cabinet type of housedress—those things are realities to him."

"And there's always the possibility," suggested Ray slyly, "of his having met some one who entertains the same foolish notions."

Phyllis started and gave him a strange look.

"Why—why—yes, of course." But it was a thought which had never occurred to her. John, alone and punished, was like a sop to her vanity. But John—and another woman!

After letting Ray out at his club, she drove like mad. The idea of John and another woman, which Ray had hoped would set her more firmly against her husband, stung her like a mental wasp. Soon she was speeding through the poverty section of the big city. Pushcarts lined the curbs; men, women, children and dogs in varying stages of unwashed squalor, cluttered up the streets. It was a section where careful driving was requisite, and it always acted as a brake on Phyllis. But to-day she was scarcely aware of her locality. The idea of John kissing another woman, loving another woman, getting sympathy from another woman as she was getting it from Ray, possessed her. Why, it was unthinkable!

There was a cry echoed by many voices in the narrow street; a grinding of wheels as she hastily applied the brake; and in a moment an excited mob was crowding around the car, shouting in many languages and gesticulating angrily. Phyllis, white as the imported frock she wore, got out as a policeman pushed back the crowd. She stared at the small, unconscious figure that had been ground beneath the wheels; at the frantic mother moaning in an unintelligible language as she clasped the child to her bosom.

But for the policeman, things would have gone hard with Phyllis. Like one in a dream, she found herself starting the car with mechanical precision and taking the officer and the wailing mother with her burden to the hospital, after first aid had been administered in the corner drug store.

She was calm, but her hand on the wheel was like ice. The druggist's face, the look in his eyes, haunted her. If the child should die she, Phyllis Graham, would be— She dared not finish the thought, but her teeth cut deeply into her lower lip as she smothered a scream.

In the hospital the little inert form was carried down the hall, and Phyllis was left in the waiting room with the policeman, who sat at a respectful distance—*but who still sat.*

Presently a tall, gaunt nurse came in. Her unfriendly eyes, like the druggist's, spelled disaster. Phyllis understood that she was being permitted to leave—with the policeman.

Her lips formed an almost inaudible question.

"We don't know yet," replied the nurse. Her cold, businesslike manner was maddening.

"Spare no expense. I will pay," faltered Phyllis.

"We shall do all we can, of course; but money is sometimes quite powerless." The woman's voice was contemptuous.

Unlike the usual dynamic Phyllis was the white faced girl who told her story in a sort of numbly horrified way to Ray and her father in the latter's study. Mr. Smyth, being a man of quick action, left at once to set the powerful wheels of his influence in motion. The girl, staring off into space with a vacant horror in her eyes, seemed scarcely aware of Ray's presence.

"Don't be afraid, dear," he said cheerfully. "Your father is a very influential man. He can fix anything. Even if the child should die—"

"Die," she muttered. It was the word which during those long, terrible hours she had kept warding off—pushing out of her mind. Slowly she fixed her gaze on him. Evidently he thought she was afraid for herself. Her eyes filled, but she said nothing.

How could she blame him? Would she not have felt the same but for the soft body which had scrunched beneath the wheels a few hours ago? Was it a few hours or was it a year?

The words of the nurse came back to her. "Sometimes money is quite powerless." All the money in the world could not efface the memory of that afternoon's experience.

Ray rambled on as if the affair were a mere incident—rather unpleasant, of course, but then—a Ghetto child. Too many of them anyway. But although she tried to smile at his effort to cheer her, she was inwardly conscious of a growing horror as she realized that his reasoning would have been her reasoning had the experience not been a personal one.

III.

In the days that followed Smyth succeeded in obtaining his daughter's discharge on the ground that her negligence was not the proximate cause of the accident. Phyllis asked no questions; showed no interest in the proceedings. Daily she visited the hospital and daily was met by the brusque nurse, who did not soften her concise bulletins. The child was near death. Phyllis always left with the vision of the curling lip and condemnatory eye of the nurse searing into her soul. Formerly a complacent admirer of herself, she shrank from the introspective thoughts which were continually crowding in upon her.

The child fighting for life in the hospital, the divorce case looming up before her, obtruded themselves into every act of her daily life. She wondered dully how other people could go on thinking the same thoughts and doing the same things when such a drastic change had taken place in her own existence.

At a dinner given one evening in their magnificent dining room, Phyllis looked curiously down the long, dazzling, overloaded table with its mammoth centerpiece of rare flowers; its sleek, well-fed occupants fairly glittering with prosperity and twittering with small talk. Involuntarily her mind flittered back to a small living room. She saw its modest talking machine, its cushion filled divan, its simple bookcase of much bethumbed, well chosen books—for John's literary taste was of the best—and as she listened to the frothy conversation buzzing around her she experienced a sensation somewhat like a small boy who has eaten too much pie.

After the guests had gone, Smyth went into the library to glance over the evening paper, whither Phyllis soon followed. She dreaded to go to her room—to be alone with her thoughts.

At last her father looked up from his paper. "For Heaven's sake, sit down, Phyllis," he growled. "What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing."

"H-m! Probably some gewgaw you saw to-day." And, opening a drawer in the polished mahogany table, he drew out a check book.

But Phyllis, springing forward, pushed it from him. "Don't, dad. I can't stand the sight of money to-night—not even a check." Her nervous little laugh caused Mr. Smyth to shoot a glance at her from his steely blue eyes. "I'm tired, I guess. Good night." And she abruptly left him.

Looking after her frowningly, he shook his head. If that confounded divorce case were only over! He'd make sure the next day that the girl should not change her mind.

Troubles, like twins, seem to come in pairs. It was the day before the divorce hearing that the physician, more communicative than the dour faced nurse, informed Phyllis that the night would bring a crisis—the child would either pass out or turn lifeward in the scale.

In a voice she could hardly control, Phyllis repeated the doctor's words to Ray, who was waiting for her in the car, and added that she would return after dinner.

"But, Phil, you can't come back," Ray reminded her. "Don't you know that this is the opening night of the opera, and that you and your father are going in our party?"

"I can't go."

"You don't mean that you're going to miss the first night of the opera?"

"Opera!" she jerked out. "God!" The words came from between her set teeth of its own volition.

And in spite of the combined persuasion of Ray and her father, she did not go to the opera. That night, a tense, solitary figure she sat huddled up just outside the room where the child lay—waiting, waiting. The eyes which had always overflowed at the slightest provocation were now dry and burning. They were viewing mental pictures. She saw the little girl's Russian father, a tailor in one of the down town sweat shops; the thin, overworked mother; and the other four, poorly clad children, who occasionally accompanied their parents. She had made overtures at first, but the family had one and all scorned them. In their evident opinion she saw her reflection. It was not a pretty reflection.

A smothered sob escaped her. No wonder John had not stooped to bring her back. Scene after scene of her married life unrolled before her. Her unreasonable demands; John's endless patience; his efforts to make up for the luxuries which he could not supply. At that moment she fairly ached for the comforting pressure of his embrace; for his quiet dependability.

Ray at the opera ranged himself beside John in her thoughts; Ray, in full evening regalia. It struck her suddenly that wearing the right clothes in the right manner seemed to be his main object in life. Again a sob escaped her and the words: "What a contrast!"

She was aroused by the opening of a door. In an agony of terror she raised beseeching eyes to the unfriendly face of the tired nurse, who said curtly: "It's all right. The little girl will get well."

"Thank—thank you," stammered Phyllish. And then she did something old-fashioned. She fainted.

She had to be helped into a taxi half an hour later, but by the time she reached home her natural resiliency and the knowledge of the child's certain recovery had brought the color back to her face; the strength to her body.

Approaching her father's study, she heard voices. Evidently Ray had returned with him. She would go in and tell them the good news. She stopped short, however, as the name Graham came from her father's lips.

"You see, my boy, Graham's failure is really due to an action taken by me," he was saying. "The Shannon Company was his biggest creditor. I'm an important stockholder besides being a director. At

my request they close in on him, refuse him any more time. The other creditors fall into line. Get it?"

"I suppose it was the only way," approved Ray.

Phyllis, closing her eyes, leaned against the wall outside the door. What was this new calamity? What was it they were plotting against John?

Her father's voice came to her, harsh, decisive. "It was," he snapped. "Don't know what's got into Phyllis lately, but one thing's sure. When she sees this newspaper, she'll realize that the divorce is the only way out."

Pulling herself together with an effort, Phyllis walked into the room, and noted that her unexpected appearance disconcerted both men.

"I thought you were in bed hours ago," mumbled Smyth.

"No, I just came from the hospital. What paper are you talking about and why should I see it?"

She picked up the evening paper and found a small item marked with blue pencil, but outside of John Graham's name it conveyed little to her.

"What does it mean?" she asked.

"It means," answered her father, chewing at the inevitable cigar, "that he's bankrupt—broke—bills and no money to pay. Although he says he'll make good every dollar."

"Of course," Phyllis mechanically averred, "John *would* do that."

She sat down quietly at the foot of the long table, facing the two men on either side of it.

"It's all my fault," she stated simply, "I kept nagging him for money, and because he couldn't give it to me I reviled him. And now, in some way, you've tried to finish what I started. But you can't." She raised her head proudly and looked straight at her father. "John will keep on fighting. He'll rise above it all. That's the kind of a man he is!"

Then her calmness deserted her. Her breast heaved convulsively, her breath coming sharply from between her quivering lips. "Why, when I think of the way I treated him I could die of shame!" she moaned.

"Here, here," railed her father impatiently, "this can't affect you. To-morrow you'll be a free woman."

"Free! What does that mean? I'm beginning to think it means a clear conscience."

Without waiting for a reply she fled up to her room and threw herself, face downward, on the bed. Conflicting emotions caused her slender body to shake with sobs, but when the gale had subsided one thought was dominant in her mind—she must see John, and at once.

On consulting her time-table she found that she had just an hour to catch the train and as she hastily packed her suit case smiles and tears chased each other across her face. At the landing she was confronted by her father, furiously chewing at his cigar.

"Are you crazy?" he demanded. "You've got to be here to-morrow to appear in court."

"I'm afraid the court will have to get along without me," with a tremulous smile.

"If you couldn't stand it before, how are you going to now?" He glared at her angrily. "Why, he hasn't a dollar to his name!"

"I'm going to help him."

"*You*—help him!"

Her father's derisive laugh stung her to the quick. "Help him; he's down as far as he can get—you're going to help him stay down, I suppose."

"No, I'm going to be a wife this time—not a parasite. I've been running around with an apparently solid gold brain, but I'm cured, I think. And I'm going back to my husband. That is," humbly, "if he'll have me. I must hurry or I'll miss that train. I wish you'd say good-by to me, dad."

But he turned from her without another word.

IV.

THE sky was painted with the salmons and grays of dawn as she alighted from the train. The first thing she did was *not to take a taxi.*

Going around the back of the house, she let herself in quietly through the kitchen,

tiptoeing on through the dining room. Dreary, desolateness and deplorable neglect pervaded the atmosphere, and, as she paused on the threshold of the living room, a little gasp escaped her.

Graham, his back toward her, was poring over a litter of papers on the library table, and the unutterable weariness in the bent head would have melted a heart of stone. There was a chill dampness in the air, and ashes were strewn about the dead hearth—ashes which spoke of many cigars smoked and an all night session. As the sense of another presence caused him to turn, Phillis was shocked at the extreme pallor of his face, its emaciation bringing his cheek bones into startling prominence.

"Hello, Phyllis." He evinced no surprise; but he sat up very straight and his hand closed spasmodically over the pencil he was holding. Then, with a smile so obviously forced that it brought tears to her eyes, he continued: "Rather an early call you're paying me. You've heard, and, of course, you've come for the rest of your things."

The simple statement brought a hot flush of shame to her cheeks. "Oh, no, John," she protested, "I—"

"Don't bother explaining. I got that divorce notice and knowing you wished to be free I didn't file an answer, so there won't be any obstacles in your way. You see how lucky you are to get rid of me," with forced lightness; "this cottage must go, and even the despised street cars may become a luxury."

He did not look at her, but kept his eyes glued to a brass bulldog ferociously holding down some of the papers on the littered table. "But to-day at least I can still offer you some breakfast. I'll wash up a little and make some coffee."

But Phyllis sprang forward, blocking his way into the dining room. "No, you won't," she said with tremulous emphasis; "that's my job and after this *I'm* going to get the breakfasts."

What Graham read in her eyes changed his bewildered look to one of radiant happiness. But even while he strained her to him, he murmured over and over: "I shouldn't let you do it."

"Stop me if you can," she challenged, with something of her spoiled child manner. Then, after a moment:

"And you're not sorry I came back?"

"Sorry! If you knew how I've hungered for a sight of you!"

"And you don't think our marriage a mistake?"

"No, no! But I have so little to offer you now, dearest."

"You have everything that counts; and I'm going to try giving as well as taking." Then, after a blissfully silent moment:

"But there's one thing I won't do, John," she whispered from the shelter of his close embrace, "I won't ride in street cars—I'm going to walk."

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HILLTOP LEGEND

A HIGH little, round little hill
In a valley of tender green
That mothers a river winding
Through a quiet, summer scene.

A quick little, fast little dash—
Our motor car carries us up—
The valley becomes a saucer,
Our hill an inverted cup.

Some ancient god overturned it
After he had taken his fill,
And centuries later we found it—
Our high little, round little hill.

Lilian Nicholson.

The Fourth Chum

By JOHN SCHOOLCRAFT

Author of "The Bird of Passage," "Let the Wedding Wait," etc.

CHAPTER X.

THE THREE CHUMS.

MORGAN stooped to go through the low door. He found himself in a small sitting room, bedroom, and kitchen, from which the soldier, Vine, could tend his shop at almost any hour of the day or night by wheeling himself through the door and out into his store. A low fire burned in a stove, and the teakettle hummed.

Two windows looked out upon a green little yard with rosebushes in bloom, along a graveled path scarcely a foot in width, which led to a gate in the garden wall. This in turn gave upon an alleyway along which Morgan could see the torsos of people passing. The gate cut off any view of their lower limbs, and the softness of the soil upon which they walked drowned their footsteps, so that they seemed like figures floating across a dark screen.

The white curtains at the windows, the green window boxes, the high polish of the stove, and the sailorlike cleanness of everything warmed Morgan's heart. It was a comfortable bunk, just the place for an old soldier to stow himself and, even though crippled, spend the rest of his life in a mellow quiet.

The tobacconist himself was by the stove, washing his dishes. They were a cheery white and blue, and he placed them in a rack as he drew them out of the steaming water. He sat in a wheel chair; a rug, thrown across his lap, reached to the floor and concealed his lower limbs.

As he looked up Morgan felt a shock. He was chalk faced, small eyed, and his move-

This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for November 10.

ments were furtive and jerky. He dropped a cup, and both he and Morgan stooped to pick it up.

Their shoulders touched, and in the moment that they looked into each other's eyes Morgan saw cunning, fright and a curious lust in them. He stood up and stepped back a pace. Those eyes were as much out of place in this pleasant, cozy room as a tropical spider would have been.

The man in the chair began to speak.

"Wot cheer, mate? Bli'me if it ain't a gunner from the 'Oss! That's my old regiment. Many's the time I've polished that round button and fought with a field artilleryman over it. They're 'ot because they wear the flat ones, and we're 'ot because they 'ave the grenade and we 'aven't. Wot can I do for you?"

"I came down from Woolwich," said Morgan slowly, "to see you?"

"To see me!" said the cripple, wheeling himself about in his chair. "Tyke a chair, and we'll 'ave a chat about the old times. Wot battery are you from?"

"P Battery."

"I was in P once, but I've been a signaler so long I feel like I belonged to all the batteries. First, you're working with one and then another, when you're a signaler. The bloody times I've spread wire over that practice ground in Woolwich! They told me once to cover a gyte with wire, and I covered it. That was my first time in the field problem test, and I made a bloomin' 'ash of it. The book said to cover every gyte with wire, meaning to run a little along the top and leave a little more for slack, but I'm damned if I didn't run wire up and down it from top to bottom and crossways until you couldn't see a bit of timber. Ha, ha!"

All this tumbled out in a rushed mechanical sort of recital, punctuated with bursts of nervous laughter. The stuff was good and true, and in it Morgan recognized the tone of the signal school where Pearsley had spent much of his time. But Pearsley, whatever his morals might have been in regard to lost and found property, was a big, sturdy English Tommy of Victorian mold, and from what little he had heard of him Crill must have been somewhat the same sort.

In his mind Morgan had built up a picture of three men, all of this kind, and somehow ennobled by their love for one another. The man before him was of another sort, but after the first shock had abated Morgan remembered that Vine had been terribly wounded and that he had spent years in hospitals, most of which must have been in pain. That would alter any man, although he told himself in the next moment that he had seen ex-soldiers going about London as badly crippled as this man, but still cheery, healthy, and honest in look.

"Sit down, will yer?" said the cripple, and pointed to a chair. "Just knock all that stuff off on the floor. I ain't 'ad time to clean up proper. It's a cozy little bunk when it is done up—it always makes me think of Sergeant Russell's at the signal school. 'E was a terror, and no mistake."

The voice trailed off, for in clearing the chair Morgan had come upon a small, modish black hat. He picked it up, and his heart leaped, for there was something about it that reminded him irresistibly of Virginie Eloise St. Alary. It was just the sort of smart, expensive looking little turban she would wear. He looked at the cripple and saw that his face was set in a leer.

"That belongs to my 'ousekeeper's daughter. She's a smart little thing, and she 'as her eye on being a movie actress. That 'at ought to get 'er a job—she looks as fetching in it as any filly I ever saw. Wot 'll you 'ave to drink? I can give yer whisky or tea, but not much else."

"Nothing, thanks," said Morgan, and for the sake of the memory laid the hat carefully on a painted wooden chest. "I have had lunch," he added, and sat down in the chair.

"It's a blawsted good job you 'ave. When a chap keeps bachelor 'all the way I do, 'e don't live very 'igh. I don't see a femyle fyce or 'ear a femyle voice from one year's end to the other. If it's all the syme to you, I'll 'ave a spot of whisky. What cheer?"

He brought a bottle up from beside his chair and poured himself a stiff drink and downed it. When that was done he seemed

to relax—he settled himself back in his chair, and the smile on his face became warmer and more human.

Morgan sat pondering the strangeness of the man, and the inconsistency of him; for in one breath he spoke of his housekeeper's daughter, and in the second of not seeing a female face from one year's end to the other. Still, a man caught in an amour would be more or less bound to make some sort of excuse.

It was a disappointment not to find Vine of the same mold as Pearsley and Crill. He cast about in his mind for some proper means of approaching his mission, but the man in the wheel chair seemed to be crazy to talk, and he went on in his high voice.

"Is Todd still at Woolwich?"

"Yes."

"'E will be until the last trump is sounded. 'E'll be there to devil the last recruit that joins up. Many's the time I've seen 'im pull a driver off 'is 'orse in the square and bring 'im flat on the ground, field kit and all. 'E don't coddle 'em none."

Morgan nodded and smiled. He had seen Todd in action, and the words fitted the brigade sergeant-major's methods. There was a step in the outer shop, and the faint click of a latch. The man in the chair stiffened, and the face became a shade whiter.

Morgan made as if to rise, but the man shot out a hand and pushed him down into his chair.

"It's a customer, I think," said Morgan. "I heard a step and the latch of the door. I'll go out and see what the man wants."

"No. Sit where you are. I've shut shop for to-day, and it's going to stay shut!" the man answered in a fierce whisper. His hand clutched the tall soldier's forearm, and both sat in a silence which had become suddenly tense. There was no repetition of the footstep, however, and after a time the cripple relaxed and fell back into his chair.

"I was blown 'igh as 'eaven," he said, wiping his face with a shaking hand. "A shell blew me thirty feet in the air, and I've never been the syme—inside or out. I 'ave to 'ave plenty rest, even 'ere, and I shut up at noon and don't open till four. It's the only way I can keep from going barmy. There ain't any proper lock on the door, and sometimes people will get in, but I sit 'ere and let 'em stand until they get weary. They can clean out the plyce, for all of me; I won't move to wait on 'em."

A twitching movement made the rug sway that covered his lap, and Morgan saw that from the knees down the man was legless. His history was clear, and with it the little, creeping doubt in Morgan's mind vanished.

Vine had been so terribly injured and shell shocked that it was a wonder he was alive at all; he was but a shell of his former self, and even the impression he gave of cunning must be excused on the ground of his terrible injuries. The man seemed to divine his thoughts, and began to speak of his hurts, of the many months he had spent in this hospital, and the years in that. When he had finished Morgan said: "You heard about Pearsley, of course."

"Aye, that I did," answered the cripple and dropped his forehead on his hand. "Poor old Dick! 'E was always planning that 'e would pass his last days with Crill and me—the three of us in some little shop like this. Wouldn't this 'ave been the proper place for three old sods like us? Not 'alf.

"With Pearsley and Crill to run the shop and me to keep the 'ouse, we'd 'ave been as 'appy as clams. I was always the 'and for cookin'. When we was on maneuvers in India they would get the goat or the jungle cock or whatever else was 'andy, and I would do the cookin'. Both of 'em was good 'ands at foraging. I tell you, mate, we 'ad a system.

"And they always thought I'd be the first to go west, but I didn't. I was unlucky like, and it seemed as if when we went out to France I'd be the first to get it. I was, but wot's left of me is alive, and both of them are underground. It's a bloomin' queer gyme."

"You must have been great chums."

"We was. Ever since we was kids together in the Home for Soldiers' Orphans. Then we was trumpeters together, and arter that gunners. And we fought for each other

from the time we first began smuggling fags into our rooms at the 'ome and blowing the smoke out of the window arter lights was out.

"We ruled the trumpeters, too—the three of us against any other three, or the 'ole lot. It didn't myke any difference—they couldn't bust us up. It's a wonder wot three kids can cook up and make stick. And if one was punished, the other two would get into some blawsted 'ole and tyke the confinement or the stopped pay along with 'im. Dick was always in trouble with the schoolmaster. You mind the school over by the magazines?"

"Yes."

"We went there three days a week for God knows 'ow many years. Crill was always a lad for 'is book, and I was quick enough at catching onto the pot 'ooks, but Dick could never tell one letter from another. And the sergeant-major that was schoolteacher was always whaling poor Dick for his dumbness, but he never whaled 'im that 'e didn't whale us for sticking pins into the other lads.

"Arter we'd been gunners for a time, the major told us we could go to signal school if we could pawss the tests. You 'ad to figure a bit, and write somethink that the corporal read to you out of a book, and explain somethink in writing—'ow to get to Beresford Square it was the time we three took it.

"We all three wanted to get into the school for the reason that the life was cushy—no guards, no stables, and two 'alf 'olidays a week. Everybody wanted to get into the flags.

"But Dick couldn't tell 'ow to get to Beresford Square. 'E'd been there three times a week say for ten years, and 'e could tell a bloke 'ow to do it, or 'e could draw a picture, but to put it in words was more than 'e could get around. Bli'me! 'E ate up 'is pencil trying to think, but he couldn't do it. The figures didn't bother 'im so much.

"Arter the test was over the sergeant told Crill and me that we was all O. K., but Dick was to go back to the battery. So we told 'im it was all three or none, and since we was three likely looking soldiers 'e let Dick *tell* 'im 'ow to get to Beresford Square. 'Struth! I laughed until I was near crying."

There were tears in the man's eyes when he finished. He dropped his forehead on his hand and sat still again for a time.

"The things us three bloomin' Tommies went through!" he said. "I mind the time we first went out to India. When we got aboard we 'ad to go up a gangplank that was 'igh and thin and rickety, and it broke with the three of us on it. Crill 'ad 'is leg broken and I 'ad my ankle twisted, but Dick wasn't 'urt. They put us to bed in our proper bunks because the hospital was full of worse 'urt than us. I mind the time when Dick came in to open the ventilator. 'E 'ad to stand on a little ladder not two foot off the floor, but Crill and I laid there and sweated blood for fear 'e would fall."

These scenes moved Morgan deeply, for they had a significance in his own life. He forgot the chalky faced, ferret eyed man opposite him, and saw only the three young soldiers, chums from babyhood almost. Together they had gone through the home, through the rigors of the trumpeter's life, through the molding, and chipping, and fining that had made the old time British soldier.

There was no more sacred relation in life than that of chum to chum, and there was no side of life in which the relation flourished as it did in the old time British army. This much he knew from observation and experience. Low pay and harsh treatment threw men on each other, and all the pleasure of the old Tommy's life must come from the courtesy, wit and generosity of his pal.

The tall young soldier seemed to shrink and sag as though he had taken on fifty years. His face was white and drawn as he looked out of the window into the quiet garden plot, and beads of sweat stood out on his face. He wiped them away.

"You three had better luck than I did," he said in a voice which became loud and harsh as he tried to control it. "I had a chum who was as much to me as you and Crill and Pearsley were to each other. *I killed my pal—boxing!*"

"Garn!" said the man in the chair, startled.

"Yes. That is why I've taken so much interest in you and Pearsley. Pearsley died in my arms, and his last thought was of you. He asked me to bring six diamonds to you. *I'd have gone through hell to put them in your hands!*"

"*No,*" said a low, clear voice.

Morgan's heart leaped, then seemed to pause in his breast, and wait for a second word. He knew that low voice, with the thrushlike break in it. A slow tremor went over him, and his big hands closed convulsively.

"Wot's the trouble, mate?" said the man in the chair in a ghastly attempt at gayety. "You look like you'd seen a ghost."

Morgan stared into the cunning, wolfish face. It was paper white, with dirty shadings about the eyes and the mouth.

The tall soldier arose, and, tiptoeing to the shop door, threw it open. There was no one there, and he went next to the garden door and threw that open; but the little plot was empty, and for the time there was no one passing beyond the gate. He turned back toward the cripple, who was gripping his chair and raising himself on rigid arms.

"Sit down, chum," he said hoarsely. "Sit down. There's nobody 'ere but you and me."

In answer the voice began to sing.

"Petit mouton, ou vas-tu?
Je vais—"

The voice stopped suddenly; and Morgan heard a quick step over his head. Then it began again, with a note of terror in it.

"Petit mouton, quandre viendras-tu?
Jamais! Jamais! Jamais!"

"Good Lord!" said Morgan. "*You're not Vine!*"

For answer the cripple's arm shot out and seized a caseknife from the table. He raised himself by his arms, and as the rug fell away Morgan saw that his legs were doubled up under him.

The man put one foot to the floor, then the other, and crouched.

"'And 'em over!" he said in a fierce whisper. "'And 'em over!"

Morgan fell back and put up his hands. The blood was boiling in his breast and his great muscles twitched, but the dread of a fight was like a lead weight on his spirit.

"No!" he said. "No! Don't make me strike you!"

"'And 'em over!"

From above came the clear voice, saying, "No!" again. It ended in a soft, choked scream. The ceiling creaked under the weight of a falling body, and at the sound he straightened. His big hands went out, and he took a long step toward the cripple.

"Where is she?" he demanded. "Tell me, or I'll break every bone in you!"

One hand fell in a long sweep and caught the wrist of the knife hand. The bones cracked, and the man's lips curled in agony, but he made no sound.

"Tell me!" The man went to his knees, biting and scratching at the inexorable grip. Then he fell to the floor; he had fainted from the agony of the crushed bones.

Morgan left him and, whirling, ran into the garden. It had appeared to him that the voice had come from above, but there was no door in the room except the one which led into the shop and the one which opened on the garden.

He looked up at the narrow back of the house, and saw a woman's handkerchief fluttering at the sill of a partly opened window.

He could hear the movement of a body there, and a savage, doglike whimper. By standing on a bench he got his finger tips on the window sill, and by setting his foot on the frame of the garden door he was able to swing himself up and look in.

She lay near the window, face down, and the hair, instead of being gray, was black; but he knew her for the woman of Blackheath. Beside her knelt the batman. Her warning song had roused the lust in him, as had the opposition of the old soldier of the coal yard, and his answer was the same. So intense was his fury that the smashing of the window frame did not pierce the crimson fog that clouded his senses.

Morgan knew him, and as he raised his malletlike fist there was no pity, none of the leaden apprehension of hurting a man,

in him. The cheek bone cracked as the fist fell, and the batman shot through a half arc, only to meet the other descending fist. He put up his hands uncertainly to ward off the thunderous blows. The soldier hauled him to his feet and let him stand for a moment while he gathered his strength.

Under the impact of the blow that struck against his dark, suffused face, the batman rose and sailed like a heavy bird through the air until he struck the wall. There he fell, but Morgan would not let him rest. Once, twice he hauled him to his feet, and struck again, then raised him bodily above his head and hurled him against the wall. The man fell in a confused, broken mass.

Morgan bent over him, fighting for the control of his runaway muscles. They were crying out to break the batman as a man is broken on the rack. Slowly the fever in him abated, and as he saw the curiously malformed face, and the pinpoints of blood standing out on great patches of bruised flesh, he was suddenly weak. He stood up blindly, then, making his way toward the girl, swept her up in his arms and held her close.

A clock struck a quarter and then the hour. The wild beating of his own heart had abated, and he felt cold and tired, but she still fought her terror. Tremor after tremor swept the slim body, and the arm that encircled his neck clung desperately. Her other hand was at her bruised throat. The clock struck again and again before she was calm. She slipped out of his arms to the floor and looked up at him with a wavering smile.

" Ah!" she said in a broken whisper, laying one of her hands on his. " I have known that big han' would be of service to me."

Morgan got stiffly to his feet and stamped to set the blood flowing again in his knees. The truth dawned on him that it was all a plant, and that she had been the brains of it, and as a corrollary to all this came the certainty that she was a soldier of fortune; woman of charm though she might be, she was a criminal. *But she had warned him.*

She seemed to read his frowning scrutiny and spread out her hands. A slow flush crept into her cheek and her eves left his.

" It has been very badly manage'," she said in a stronger voice. " When he drop' the cup I know it cannot go. Sir, you will have no respec' for me. You will laugh at me as long as you live."

He shook his head.

" No, *mademoiselle,* I can never laugh at you."

" And my hat," she said ruefully, " which you foun' on the chair. Never before have I made such a blunder. I have call' myself many hard names as I sit here and listen to you talking below. Such a willing sheep, and such a clumsy shearer! It is a sad waste."

" But you warned me," said Morgan. " Why?"

" How do I know? Perhaps I have los' my nerve; perhaps I do not like it because it is so easy. An actor, sir, does not value an audience that is too easily move'. And perhaps you have so touch' me with your story that I cannot bear to see you hoodwink'. *Perhaps!* But no! It is leaving the hat on the chair that has disgus' me with it all. Things so badly begun cannot turn out well. Sooner or later I should have trouble—"

A stertorous breath from the batman cut her short. Her eyes closed and her hands flew to her throat. Morgan stooped and touched her; after a moment she opened her eyes and looked up at him with the wavering smile.

" You will forgive me," she said. " It is not customary that people try to—kill me. Ah, such a bad dream!"

Morgan went to the batman. He was breathing thickly through puffed lips.

Morgan straightened him out, suddenly happy that the man was not dead, and, in looking about for something with which to bind him, got his first glimpse of the room. It was a small, dowdy chamber, with bed, dresser, chairs and washstand. At the foot of the bed was an automobile trunk, and he took the straps off it to bind his prisoner. It was initialed on the end—V. E. St. A.

" I have live' here," said the woman, who was watching his movements until they took him so close to the batman that she must see him, " since yesterday at noon. It is

a furnish' lodging. Here I have made my plan, and here I have listen for hours to tales of the army. Then when I hear' one that is about chums, that brings the tear to my own eye, I say: '*Bon!* Use that. He will like that.' It was a good plan, still it could not succeed.

"Vine is travel' to London, and will not be back until we have the stones and are well away. But that man below! I have not like' his face from the first, and, sir, I think you did not either. He is a beggar who sits with his legs doubled up—a Whitechapel beggar.

I have been in favor of a soldier, a real soldier, who is out of work and who will do it for ten pounds. But, no! I am overrule' and we mus' have a crafty man; one who will know how to whine, an' not to fall into traps."

"*We!*" said Morgan when she had finished. "*Mademoiselle, what are you?*"

She laughed her delicious, low chuckle, but the delicate color flushed her face.

"Years ago," she answered. "I have hear' a man in a music hall ask: 'Why is a cow?' The people have shriek with laughter. Answer me that, sir, and I will answer you."

He looked down at her soberly, for she had touched him as no other woman had ever done. Indeed, she had touched him as no other person, outside his chum, had ever done.

His life had changed when he walked with her on Blackheath; the melancholy which had sapped him had lifted to a degree, and he had felt within himself the low stirrings of his old self. The ghostly hands of a life which he had thought dead were plucking at him; he saw in a flashlike vision the tall elms of his college campus, heard voices singing. Even now, *that was where he belonged!*

The woman got to her feet, and he put out a hand to steady her. She held up a finger solemnly, and the haunting smile curved her lips.

"You will remember this of me," she said in a voice in which the mocking quality did not hide a strain of earnestness, "that there are good souls doing bad things, and bad souls doing good things. I mean there are people who have live' inside the law all their life, inside *every* law, yet they are not good souls, and there are people who have broken all the law, yet they are good souls.

"Whenever you think of Virginie St. Alary, you will think that, too? And now, sir, I hear people in the garden. Will you please to look and tell me who it is?"

There were two men in the garden, both looking up at the back of the house, and at the gate was a blue uniformed and helmeted member of the constabulary.

"Quickly!" said the girl with a stamp of her foot.

"One is tall," said Morgan. "He has big, brown eyes, and he wears a gray bowler hat, and a checked overcoat."

"And the other?"

"Same height," said Morgan. "He has a pale blue eye, and a red face and a thin, sandy mustache. He wears a gray tweed suit. And there is one thing I can tell you about him, *mademoiselle,* he *loves cricket.*"

"How do you know?"

"He was in the same compartment with me coming down on the train. He got out a few miles from Winchester and rode off in a trap with a policeman."

"Ah!" she said. Morgan turned and saw that she was pale and that she pressed one hand against her lips. He went to her and, putting his hands on her shoulders, spoke earnestly.

"Who is he, *mademoiselle?* Tell me. It may be that I can help you."

"He is Cartier's man," she said.

"Cartier? The great jeweler?"

"Yes. It is his man, Crissey. I will tell you he is the one most fear' by all, for he has the police of every country at his finger tips. Until now I have never met him face to face, but often we have brush' shoulders in the dark, as it were. He will be very glad to see me!"

Morgan could feel her trembling under his hands.

"Why's he here?" he asked. "On account of Pearsley's diamonds?"

"Yes—he is here for the same reason that we are all here. But he will try to do other business. Perhaps he will arrest us, and I am sure he will make me try to tell.

He is a very cunning man, and in his work he has no pity. Sir, it is for me very desperate."

"Third degree stuff!" he said, backing away from her. The blood boiled in him. Whatever Virginie St. Alary might be, she was by far the most lovely woman he had ever seen, and the thought of a heavy handed policeman catching her and pinning her as if she were a moth angered him uncontrollably. He forgot Vine, he forgot his promise to Pearsley; for the time he was a crook fighting for the head of his gang.

"*Mademoiselle,*" he said, "I am with you—body and soul."

She stared at him out of heavy eyes.

"You mean you will fight for me?"

"Yes. *And I hold the trump!*"

"Ah!" she breathed as a flash of light went across her face. "The stones of which we are all so weary. You mean you will not give them to him?"

"No. A thousand times, no!"

The change in her was galvanic in its suddenness. She straightened and was suddenly full of vibrant life. The gray eyes glowed, and the color flooded richly into her face.

"Twice," she said, "you have save' my life—and now you have done a greater thing, sir, for you have save' my self-respec'. It would be a sad thing for me to fail as a workman and a woman, too. But now that I have succeed' as woman, I have a hope that I shall succeed as workman.

"We must go below, for I have learn' that to defen' one's self against danger it is best to go to meet danger. You mus' put those stones from you if you have them on you. You will be search', I am sure. You must say no more than is necessary.

"I have no idea what it is I shall do, but I think Pauline Laboulaye is not done yet!"

CHAPTER XI.

HAMPSTEAD WINS.

MORGAN was the last to enter the room. Crissey sat on the edge of the table, swinging his leg; Wales was in a chair by the stove, and the girl stood in the window. She had put on the small black hat, and a coat lay over her arm. It was an admirable effect; she seemed to be just on the point of leaving in a motor after calling on a dependent on some sweet errand of mercy. Her eyes were lowered, and her face almost completely in the shadow.

On closer examination Morgan could scarcely feel that Crissey was the formidable man the girl had thought him to be. He turned out to be thinner and more nervous looking with his top coat off. His shoulders sloped so sharply that his coat sagged a half inch away from his collar, and his favorite gesture was a hitch which tried to remedy the defect. A pair of gold rimmed spectacles, the hooks of which did not quite fit his ears, gave him an old womanish look.

When they were all before him he appeared at a loss for an opening. Morgan seated himself on a chest, linked his hands across his knees and waited. Crissey stared as he entered, and nodded. He spoke almost apologetically, and addressed himself to Morgan.

"Here we all are, Pauline Laboulaye, Jimmy Wales, alias Frank Morton, alias Jerry Hoke, alias Howard Dicey—"

"You haven't forgotten some, have you?" asked Wales in a nettled tone, and the detective answered almost humbly: "I haven't mentioned three—but they were names you worked under in America. You, soldier, I met on the train, but I didn't have the pleasure of hearing your name."

"Morgan. Gunner Patrick Morgan R. H. A., regimental number two hundred and eighty-two thousand six hundred and sixty-six. Here is my pass, if you care to see it, and my number is stamped on my boot tops, on my cap band, on my—"

"That's enough," answered Crissey, "quite. You didn't go on to Southampton."

"No."

"I remember now you spoke of stopping off at Winchester to see a crippled old soldier who ran a tobacco shop. You must have been a trifle surprised at the people who were keeping your shop, what?"

Morgan maintained a stony silence. The batman was a lesser trump—he was a murderer, one intensely wanted by the army, and it must redound greatly to this man's

benefit to get him. Morgan was planning to turn him over at the proper moment, and it was on the tip of his tongue to speak then, but he thought it best to wait. Instead he kept a non-committal silence, and nodded.

"Winchester is a lovely place," went on Crissey. "Where else would you get poplars and old gray walls and a little garden like this one? You ought to see the cathedral, too. Repairing it and restoring it was one of the great engineering tasks. For the first time," he said impressively, "in the history of ecclesiastical architecture, a diver was employed in repairing the foundation.

"I'm a bit interested in brasses, too, and there must have been some fine ones on the floor there—you can see the outline where they were sunk into the stone. Gone, gone in the time of the Reformation with most of the world's best glass. Pauline, where did you get that bruise?"

"Ah, sir," she answered, startled out of the abstraction into which his soft, monotonous voice had thrown her, "I have—" Her tongue faltered and a red flush of shame climbed into her cheek. She glanced at Morgan, and at Wales, and then looked down. Morgan was shocked—she seemed so faltering and nonplused.

"Is he upstairs?" asked Crissey, and the girl nodded.

"Oh, Tom!" called Crissey into the garden. "Take two men upstairs and get that soldier chap who's wanted at Woolwich, will you? I fancy he'll need first aid. Yes," he finished, turning back, "Winchester is a lovely place. Jolly historical, too. They have a leather jack in the college which holds about two gallons. For eight centuries—eight centures, mind you—that jack has been brought into the dining hall full of ale for the young men. *Eight centuries.*

"I suppose Canterbury is a bit older still. Thirteen centuries, I think, is the age of Canterbury School. Thirteen continuous centuries of education! My word, it speaks for the solidity of England."

"For God's sake, what do you want?" asked Wales in a hoarse voice. Crissey whirled on him, surprised, apparently, by the tension in his voice.

"I'm just a plain con man," said Wales, "one step up from a yegg and not a very tall step, either. I always did hate these private dicks. You never know where to find 'em, and you never know what they're going to do once they find you. Give me a copper every time, who has a locust in his hand and the Black Maria around the corner. They don't kill you with suspense, anyhow."

"You will see that my frien' is a very, very nervous man," said the woman. "It is not kindness so to treat him. Soon I expect he shall need to go to a rest cure, and sit in a chair, and have a nurse."

It was a rebuke, Morgan saw, to Wales, and it worked. The cool voice seemed to bring back his self-control; he stirred in his chair, reddened, and muttered an inarticulate answer. Crissey turned to her when she spoke, as a somewhat deaf person turns to people taking part in a general conversation.

Morgan found that his hands were cold; one trump was gone, and there was something in the personality of Crissey that seemed to take away one's powers of falsifying. He knew the time would come when he himself should be questioned, and he went cold at the thought of it.

"Speaking of rest cures," said Crissey. "I saw a friend of yours a few weeks ago, Pauline. Louette Anisterre. I know she was not exactly a friend—you saw her only three times to my knowledge, but you know how it is—you always think that girls of the same age *are* friends.

"Let's see," he said, closing his eyes and putting his forefinger on his lips, "you are about the same age, I think. Yes, but she's the older by three months. She was born in January—and you were born in April. It's a beastly custom the French have of cutting off a woman's hair when she enters prison. It's bad enough for a convent—she'd been washing something in lye water, too, and her hands were swollen and knotted and red—I keep track of my patients—and she wanted to see me, asked me to do a kindness for her.

"She has a boy with some friends, a little chap of two or so, and she was looking ahead to the time when he should go into the army. She earns a few sous a week

in the prison and she wants them put away at interest. At the time when the boy is of military age, he will have a little money for comforts. It was a jolly unpleasant task, I can tell you, talking to her—"

Crissey wiped his glasses. Morgan's knee slipped from his hands and his foot struck the floor with a thump that made them all jump. His heart was like ice, and when he looked at Wales he could see that that man had his eyes on the girl and was trembling like a wet dog.

Crissey had drawn a picture of Louette Anisterre, but in his mind and in the minds of his listeners was the picture of Virginie St. Alary, in the same prison, with her hair cut off and her hands swollen with lye water. Of them all she was the one most quiet. Her face had gone white, but her voice was cool and steady as she said: "You cannot frighten me, sir. I am no child to be scared by bogy men."

"I suppose we all began at the same point," went on Crissey more cheerfully, "and with about the same amount of information. I suppose you found that Vine was Pearsley's old chum and would try to get the stones down here some way or other. By the way, I have seen the Marquise de Perthuis, in her old *château*. She showed me the tile under which the stones had been hidden and from under which Pearsley evidently took them. Like all Frenchwomen, she is brave.

"I take it that you rigged a plant for the messenger—or it may be that the stones are here when you get here. Then you fall out somehow or other with the little swine that Wales picked up at the Red Lion and he tries to murder Pauline. Wales, you're a rotten judge of men—rotten! Then this big soldier blunders in here on his leave and saves Pauline.

"Am I right? No? Probably not. I am usually wrong when I let my imagination get the better of me. But let me tell you this," he said, shaking his finger like a schoolmistress, "I know that Clure wasn't in on this. If Clure had had it under his direction—good God! You ought to think of Clure once every day, Wales, and then walk to Jerusalem on your knees. If I could lay my finger on that man—ah!"

He took a long breath and sank back to his seat on the table. Wales moved forward in his chair, and wet his lips.

"Look here, chief," he said. "I'm a yegg, as I told you. This stuff about honor among thieves don't go very far with me. I'm out to save my own bacon—and hers. If I put you onto Clure, if I tell you now where you can lay your hands on him, if I give you the low-down on some jobs that he pulled that are still puzzling the dicks, will you let us go? Will you?"

Crissey pushed his glasses farther up on his nose and stared at Wales. Morgan caught a curious glance that Wales flashed toward the girl, a pleading, apologetic, agonized look.

"Why, I don't know," said Crissey uncertainly, "this is extraordinary. Very unusual. It would make a difference—naturally, I have to have information to work on, and I have to get it where I can, and unfortunately, how I can. What can you tell me about Clure? I give you my word that if it is of value—"

"He can give you nothing of value," said the girl, in a low, clear voice; "sir, my husband is dead."

She trembled and pressed the back of her hand against her lips. Morgan, hanging on every word as if it were the most thrilling play he had ever seen, felt a dull shock run through him, first of surprise, then of pity, for there was no pretense in the tremendous grief which she was fighting. Crissey watched her for a moment, then again wiped his glasses.

"That was cricket, Pauline," he said huskily. "Dead! What a pity. He was a god, in looks and in his abilities. He was too great for this life—he could live to his height only in some great crisis such as war furnished, and when there was no war, he turned to crime. And, you will forgive me if I ask how he died?"

"He was kill' in an accident," she answered, her voice sunk to its lowest and most thrilling depth, "a street accident. Ah, sir, it is one of the puzzles of this life why a man who have live' through the air as he have live' should die from a cab."

"It is. It is." Getting up, he walked across the room and back briskly.

"I mustn't forget what I'm here for. I always make it a rule to be rather severe, just after something has moved me. Of course, that puts a different face on things. With Clure gone, you are both about as harmful as bees with their stings drawn. You can buzz, but tell me, honestly, has either of you had any luck with *him* gone?"

"My God, no!" said Wales.

"And you, Pauline?"

"Alas, no!"

"You won't have. You're like Napoleon's marshal after he went. Wales, my boy, drive a taxi. Pauline, go back to your ivory carving—you will do something with it if you work. And, remember, all women need a manager, and the more clever and more beautiful they are the more need they have of one. You French girls come along too fast. When you came out of the convent at fifteen you knew more than my grandmother did at ninety."

"Yes?" she said, with a flash of spirit. "And you who are the all seeing eye of the *bon dieu,* I have a commission for you. Every month some one have sent me twenty guineas, yet never have I been able to fin' out who it is that does it.

"As I listen to you, I say to myself: 'Ah, Pauline, it is the oracle. *He* can tell what makes the rivers run, and the moon to turn, and why this year dresses are long, and the next they are short.' Perhaps you can tell me who it is that sends me twenty guineas every month."

"Twenty guineas!" said Crissey. "No, I don't know, and I take it very unkind of you to rag me this way. God knows, I've worked hard enough—I've had every man I could lay my hands on laboring like beavers on this business, from the old general at Woolwich down. And now, soldier, I think I will take the stones, if you are ready."

Morgan got to his feet and looked at the girl. It should have been a carefully guarded, significant glance, a communication confined to the two of them. Instead, it was an open-mouthed, blundering question, which any one could read who cared to. She nodded and spread out her hands in an eloquent gesture, and he strode back into the shop. Crissey followed him and closed the door.

On the counter was a small mountain of black, shag tobacco, and into it as he passed it on his way into the back room, Morgan had plunged the Perthuis diamonds. He retrieved them now, and gave them to Crissey, who put them into a vest pocket and buttoned his coat over it.

"You're a queer chap," he said in a friendly voice, "to be in the army—our army. It's a lark, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Morgan and heaved a sigh, a big sigh that relieved not only the oppression of the moment, but of the last two years, "I'm going home within the year. My time will be out."

"I used to think I wanted to go to your country and be a cowboy," said Crissey in the same friendly voice, "and I suppose you feel the same—especially after Kipling. I understand he's even more popular in the States than here. I say, you'll be about London for a year then, won't you?"

"Yes."

"Keep your eye on that girl, as a favor to me. She's—she's a rainbow, if you know what I mean. She'll do something some day if she works. She fell across Clure's path just as she came out of the convent, and she thinks now she's a great crook. She isn't—and if she has some one to—to boss her a bit, if you get what I mean, she'll go straight.

"Just between you and me," he finished, sinking his voice to a whisper, "Clure wasn't the great man she thinks him. He wasn't killed by a cab—that's a story somebody told her to cover up his death. He killed himself because he was cornered—*by me!* And I've been sending her that twenty guineas a month."

He looked at Morgan and nodded slowly to drive his points home. A policeman tapped at the door, and Crissey opened it to receive the newspaper which the man thrust within.

"Going back to America," he said in a louder voice, as he turned the pages to the sporting sheet. "It's a good thing—a man does best in his own country—what I mean is, he does his best work." His face brightened as he read.

"I say, Hampstead's won again."

THE END

Shanghaied Furies

By LIEUTENANT C. DONALD FEAK

AN assorted variety of liquor sodden beach combers decorated the uninviting portals of the Hawse Pipe. They lent a vast amount of local color by their varying attitudes and altitudes of drunkenness and sprawling positions. A rickety covering of boards protected them from the white hot rays of the sun. A row of empty whisky kegs held a promise to thirst parched throats.

Leaning against the rough boards that formed the wall were two men: Mike and John Slagin, proprietors of the dive and den, the Hawse Pipe. They were by far the most uninviting objects in sight. Mike was dozing in a chair, his legs drawn up like a grasshopper poised for a record breaking leap. His face was long and thin; his nose had been set aside deftly by a flying whisky bottle and had since followed the new direction with astonishing faithfulness. His eyes were set close together, necessarily, because of the hatchet-thin head. His ears were large, hanging downward by their sheer weight. His brother and twin—John Slagin—was a second edition of Mike, both in character and bodily resemblance. Except for the nose, which John had managed to protect, he was Mike Slagin in another body. Both, however, retained their twinly qualities as to reputation.

The Hawse Pipe itself squatted like a huge toad on the water front of Port Resolution, in the New Hebrides. Its mission in life, governed by the twins, was to dispense evil tasting drinks to careless sailormen. Sailormen—those who *were* sailormen—did not hesitate to leave the pest hole behind. Those who were unfortunate enough to linger were promptly shanghaied by the Slagins on the first ship requiring their services, collecting in return a fee. Hence, real sailors were scarce. The beach combers and wine legs enjoyed a peaceful amnesty—a perpetual armistice with the Slagins. No skipper would take them, and even that pair of vultures, Mike and John Slagin, tired of foisting them off for seamen.

At present Port Resolute was suffering a scarcity of sailors.

The skipper of the schooner Paddy Boy had just placed an order for two deck hands at fifty dollars apiece, as soon as they were placed aboard his vessel.

"An' remember," he said warningly—"remember, none o' yer shenanigans! I know every bamboo white man in this corner o' hell, so don't try an' send me none o' this ballast—none o' these human whisky bottles. If you do—I'll break yer necks!" With that he stalked out.

Mike smiled—a smile he meant to be symbolical of his inherent honesty; his nose distorted it into a grin that suggested the snarl of a hyena.

Mike cast a calculating eye over the assembled beach combers. Each specimen of manhood was a living example—a living threat of a broken neck as a reward, instead of fifty dollars. Hardly had the brothers assimilated the order than Jack Mullen and his partner, Percy, arrived.

"Where's that pair o' half witted convicts?" Mullen roared, glaring around. Out of the group of lounging men Mike and John Slagin came forward sullenly.

"I want two new men. The last two disappeared two days ago." He glared suspiciously at the brothers.

Jack Mullen was of medium size, tough, stringy, and ornery. He habitually glared ferociously at every one. His neck was knobbed with an enormous Adam's apple that worked rapidly when he grew angry. His jowls were hung with folds of tough, hairy skin, and his nose was long and pronounced. His speech was fiery, his temper worse, and his fists faster and more deadly than both combined. In direct contrast was his partner, Percy, half owner of the trim schooner Burweed. He was small, wizen and runty. His thin stooped shoulders were topped by an enormous head. Superimposed on his shiny bald pate was a cap many sizes too small for him. Beneath the thin, sparse eyebrows were two watery orbs, faded a pale azure.

He hopped from foot to foot, gnawed at his fingers, and generally exhibited the symptoms of advanced insanity. His small body seemed driven by some enormous dynamo of energy that found an outlet only in his nervous pacings and gestures.

Clearly distinct from the odors of the dive was the scent of costly French perfume. It stained Percy's shirt front in large concentric circles. His remaining characteristic was his tremendous sense of vanity.

His speech was halting, stuttering. He stumbled and fumbled when any one addressed him. If the anomaly can be more complete, he was born on the north side of San Francisco; the north side of Frisco is to Frisco as the gas house district is to New York.

"Now, looka here," Mullen said, shaking his finger at the Slagin twins—"we want two sailors. We don't care how ye get 'em, nor who ye get—only get 'em! An' none o' yer didoes, either! If ye send any o' this dunnage out, ye'll do well to slip yer cable an' drift away." He indicated the group of loafers as the unwanted dunnage.

"Sure," Mike rejoined placatingly. "Sure, Cap'n Mullen, ye know us better'n that."

"Aye!" answered Mullen with conviction. "That I do! An' a more unprincipled pair o' bla'guards never lived!"

Frankness was one of Mullen's outstanding points. A spade was a spade, and a Slagin a crook. The Slagins were not in the least offended by Mullen's truthfulness; it was first rate advertising.

Mullen went inside out of the sun and sat down at a table. Percy followed meekly and sat at his left. When Mullen ordered "smoke," Percy meekly asked for soda water.

Mullen, coming ashore with the avowed intention of getting drunk, was fast approaching the state wherein missing sailormen had no call, and was doing his best to sponge Percy of his sin of teetotalism.

II.

THE Slagin twins were as nearly frantic as flea brained human beings can be. Here was a perfect demand, and no visible supply. Mike, by a superhuman mental effort, had managed to make a sum total of the receipts for the day, providing the orders were filled. The sight of the lounging beach combers tempted him. They had been

shanghaied so often, and mauled so much in the process of shuttling back and forth between the ships and the Hawse Pipe, that he had lost heart of ever disposing of them.

John had visited every nook and corner in the town where he might reasonably or unreasonably be expected to find a seaman. The only available members of the fraternity were two distressed mariners, nursing a perfect collection of Solomon Island sores commonly called yaws. He had cherished a thought that perhaps they might be renovated. When withdrawn from the thatched hut into which they had crept, and into the broad light of day, they disgusted even that hardened wretch and his sense of gain. The two sailors resembled nothing so much as a pair of moth-eaten feather dusters, age old and useless.

He returned to the Hawse Pipe, and found his brother Mike in the act of rolling a drunk for the change which Mike had found impossible to annex before the man lost consciousness. It jarred John's ethics—this slot machine thievery.

" Mike, knock that off! Here's some real money. Come here." John pulled him aside and in a back room delivered his message. Not a sailor had he been able to find. He suggested shanghaiing a couple of native women and putting pants on them. Mike, however, was more cautious. Better give Mullen a couple of beach combers than that. It would be infinitely more healthy were they ever caught. Mike's hide, and its condition of health, was the only thing Mike cared for. He took excellent care that it didn't decorate any one's barn door—John's included. Mike played in John's back yard, simply because there was no one else who would trust him, and because John was the only one who had the foresight and hindsight necessary to keep a check on his brother.

No matter how quickly Mike moved, nor how fast the toboggan of their morals dropped, John was there on deck.

" John," Mike said suddenly, almost knocked full length by the thought that struck him, " s'pose—s'pose—" Mike was not given to thinking, consequently when his mind did not function it left him in a sort of a temporary daze; it was a kind of mental flipflop. " John, s'pose we fix the skipper o' the Paddy Boy up? There's that that old duck of a Mullen in there, and his sissy partner. Give 'em a knockout drop an' a sleigh ride; then put 'em aboard the Paddy Boy. She'll sail, an' we'll be a hundred dollars ahead! Listen—I got an idee!"

He bent forward and whispered into John's ear. John shook his head. Mike repeated the whisper, with verbal garnishment. John, heretofore cold, smiled, grinned, and then laughed. He waxed warm with the idea, clapping Mike on the back. They chuckled at this clever piece of close business. Oh, they were clever! Yes, they were!

" Edication? Bah!" Mike said. " We don't need it. We wuz born clever! Here's where we're so dumb we're smart!"

When the plan was as complete as their minds could make it, they shook hands. The heavenly twins were thumbing their much battered noses at Providence.

III.

In due time Mike had mixed the drinks—one for each of them—and turned his back on the tray holding the whisky. John took the drink Mike had prepared for himself, and gave Mike his own. John's hindsight was working smoothly.

Later, Mullen was under the table, and the frame of his partner, Percy, was draped carelessly over his chair like a rag doll. With a caution that marked him as a lesser Napoleon, John, before the knockout drops had taken effect, had reminded Percy that they, the twins, would see them to their ship, should the necessity arise. That was to be one of the main threads of the defense, should the half witted brain child of Mike's ever turn on them, as it was apt to do. Soon the two conspirators could be seen carrying the inert forms of Mullen and his partner Percy toward the water front.

They explained to inquisitive passers-by that the partners had partaken of whisky in " large doses," and that they—the Slagin twins in the full bloom of civic pride—could hardly be expected to see the much

splattered escutcheon of Port Resolute further defiled.

"Don't fergit, John," Mike warned, "that big idee o' mine. 'Tain't every day a chanst comes like this."

John wasn't likely to. That "idee" represented a bulwark, all that stood between him and the fiery furnace—a sort of reprieve from his specially allotted reserved corner of hell.

"I ain't gonna!" John said. "Our edication might 'a' been neglected, but, boy, we ain't showin' it none!"

Then the twins wandered from the path of safety. Instead of taking the recumbent forms to their own schooner, the Burweed, but a little way down the dock, they hired a boatman and pulled out to the Paddy Boy, anchored in the stream.

When they dumped their unconscious burdens on the deck, they held out their palms to the mate.

"Wait a minute," he said cautiously. "I ain't buying a pig in a poke. What's this—a coupla Noah's deck hands?"

"Better take what ye kin get," Mike said. "They's the only sailors in the town."

"From our own garden," John added with a grin.

"What's wrong with 'em?" the mate queried. "Are ye sure they're alive?"

The mate had in mind a specific incident wherein the Slagins had disposed of a dead Chinaman under similar conditions, collecting in return good legal tender.

"Wait 'll they wakes up." Mike grinned.

The mate paid over the hundred dollars and escorted the pair back to the gangway, a wary eye peeled for possible straying fingers. The twins left, much satisfied. Although the market remained still unsatisfied, they were content to rest on their laurels.

IV.

For the first time in Percy's life, he experienced the rocky awakening so closely associated with Scotch whisky in large quantities. The mate of the Paddy Boy had dumped them into the forecastle. Mullen was snoring contentedly, a few feet away. Percy sat erect, clutching his head. A mystified gaze about him awakened no familiarity with surroundings. He staggered to his feet, shook Mullen violently, and, getting no response, made his way to the deck.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw the aggressive mate start toward him.

"Well, whatta you think you're gonna do?" he demanded truculently. "Get back in that fo'c's'le."

"But—but—" stammered Percy; "this isn't my ship. Something's wrong here! Have we been shanghaied?" he questioned. "I'm Mullen's partner. We're owners of the schooner Burweed. How—how did we—we get here?"

"You were carried here, me bucko! Down ye go! If ye can't remember signing articles, ye shouldn't drink bad liquor."

"But—but—we didn't sign articles!" Percy quavered. "We were shanghaied! That's Jack Mullen down there, and I'm—I'm his partner. There"—he pointed to the Burweed, a hundred yards distant—"there is our vessel!"

"D'ye know any more funny jokes?" the mate asked sarcastically. "If ye do, ye better tell 'em to yer pal down there. Shut up!" he roared when Percy interrupted him. "Stow yer jawin' tackle. I just paid a hundred good American bucks fer you two birds."

"But—" Percy edged toward the side.

"No, ye don't!" the mate snapped, and dived for Percy's legs. Percy leaped clear. The mate rose and swung an enormous fist at him. Percy chattered for peace; he avoided the insane rushes. He led the mate a race around the decks, pleading for escape. When he found that talking was useless he whirled about and leaped into the air. One foot flashed out—and patted the mate on the nose. Before he could leap again the mate had punished the little man with a bony fist in a blow that shook Percy to his heels. He staggered clear, waiting for the daze to work itself off, and circled again around the deck. Then, when his brain had partially recovered, he turned on his tormentor and fought.

The mate disappeared beneath the avalanche of flashing feet. Percy was over him, beneath him, on both sides of him, behind

him, and always those feet were prodding the mate into insensibility. When he stopped, it was solely to pant for breath.

Then Percy went forward, seized the still insensible form of Mullen, and began dragging him aft to the gangway. He hailed a boat that was passing, and dumped the inert form of Mullen into it, cast off, and headed for the Burweed.

Arriving at the schooner, he had his crew hoist the unconscious Mullen aboard. They did it in a matter-of-fact way; hoisting Mullen aboard was a matter of routine. Sometimes they did it in a bosun chair, sometimes in a cargo net.

Percy hesitated only long enough to erase the signs of the struggle, then went ashore. He headed straight toward the Hawse Pipe, ignoring the gibes sailortown flung at him. Their shanghaiing had already become common gossip.

When Percy arrived he found two incredulous crimps awaiting him.

" I think we was shanghaied," Percy began. " We woke up on the Paddy Boy. You said you would take us—to the Burweed. The mate—tried to make us stay aboard. Every one is laughing—at us." He gulped down the remaining words, as a small boy might, on the verge of tears. " I got—to have an explanation."

" Sho!" Mike gasped. " Do tell? Well, whadda ye know about that? We must 'a' picked the wrong ship. We can't read!"

" But—but—" the little man gasped—" couldn't you see the name Paddy Boy had two words in it—and—the Burweed—only one?"

" Naw!" Mike snarled. " I tell ye, *we can't read!*" Then his injured pride gained the upper hand. " We takes ye out, an' then ye says ye was shanghaied!"

" But the mate says he gave you a hundred dollars," Percy went on, pulling on his fingers nervously. " I—think you're—telling an untruth. It was unfair—of you."

John shook with mirth. " Aw, gwan, little boy! Didn't me brudder just say we can't read? If ye don't believe it, ask any one. How d'ye expect us to make out the name on the ship? We got all we can do to sign our names. Didja expect us to refuse the money? We thought it was a gift."

For the first time in John's fantastic existence he had uttered the truth. They could not read; but a missionary had patiently taught them to write their names. That was the extent of their education.

Percy could appeal to the commissioner if he chose, but he knew that the twin's ruse would carry them through. They could swear they thought they were taking them to the Burweed, and were innocent of any wrong. As he stumbled his way back to the Paddy Boy he could hear the gibes flung at him. All sailortown knew that Jack Mullen and his partner had been shanghaied. All sailortown laughed and wheezed with mirth.

" Babes in the wood!" they howled at Percy. " Go get yer mamma!"

Percy found Mullen on deck. His Adam's apple was performing spasmodically. His eyes flashed, and he choked with suppressed wrath. Percy explained that the Slagins couldn't read.

Mullen cried " Bah!" Percy suggested that they think it over. Mullen snarled: " I did! I thought it all over in one second! I'll wring his neck! I'll nail his carcass on my fore truck for the crows to pick! That dirty pair of blackbirds!"

When he landed on the dock he heard the gibes directed at them. It was like a quick match to a powder magazine. The disgrace was more than Mullen could bear. His soul was struggling for vindication, and nothing but blood would wipe out the stain. He, Jack Mullen, twenty years in the South Seas, to be shanghaied like a cabin boy! He would wreck the joint! Shanghai *him*, would they? Well, they had a buzzsaw by the tail!

Mullen was almost running, with Percy hopping along, pleading with his partner to stop. He prayed, ordered, commanded, and still Mullen strode on. He had grasped his pistol by the muzzle, intent on braining the twins.

Percy was frantic. " Please, Jack, heave to! Wait—wait! I got a plan! Stop!" He was scared.

The angry Mullen would have nothing short of their scalps. " Go 'way, Percy," he snarled. " This is my turn. Go 'way an' stop botherin' me—or I'll scuttle you."

"Wait—Jack—the Bible says: 'The meek — meek shall—inherit—inherit—the earth.' Stop!"

"Who the hell wants the earth," Mullen threw over his shoulder, "with a coupla coyotes like that on it?"

Percy continued to plead, pulling on Mullen's coat tails. His voice was threatening to break. His shirt tail stuck out of his trousers—he had lost his hat, and his mind was in chaos. He must stop this madman! He would murder those two ruffians. He was about to give up when he saw Port Resolution's sole keeper of the law and the jail.

Deliberately he waited until they came abreast of the officer—deliberately he angered Mullen the more—deliberately he hurled the last, back-breaking, soul-shaking barb.

"You big cheese! You can't handle yer liquor! You big drunken bum! Mike 'll beat yer head off!" Percy shrieked, and he danced up and down in defiance.

This insult referred to Mullen's lack of capacity for alcoholic drink was deep and deadly.

"What?" Mullen roared, stopping. "You little runt, you little sawed-off hunk o' nothin'! You mean to say that that skunk 'll lick me? D'ye mean to insinuate that *I* can't carry my liquor?"

"Yes," Percy shrieked again, shaking his puny fist, "yes, you big Irish Mick!"

Then Mullen hit him. For the first time in all their career, they quarreled. The officer advanced on Mullen. Percy grabbed the gun and yelled hysterically: "He hit me! He hit me! Arrest him, officer! Lock him up!" Over and over tumbled the irate Mullen. Percy clutched the pistol, and after a short battle, Mullen was led away by the constable. The tussle had drawn a crowd.

"I'll git that little runt, too!" Mullen roared back at them. Some of the spectators warned Percy to disappear. "He'll git *you*, little feller. Better make knots out o' here."

Percy stood aghast at his own audacity.

"Do you—you think—think so?" he quavered, reaction robbing him of his strength.

The news that Mullen and his partner had quarreled spread all over town. They were known as fast friends by every one, and the split came as a thunderbolt. Several minutes after it had happened, Mike and John Slagin were breathing easier. They grew solicitous for Percy's aid. The little chap had wandered about forlorn, saddened—greeted everywhere by the warning to "drift." At last, seeking companionship of any sort, he had gone to the Hawse Pipe.

John asked him sarcastically: "Where's yer knittin', ole lady? I hears yer got a bust in the jaw from yer pal. Didn't cripple 'im, did ye?"

Percy dropped into a chair, tired, as if from long running. He pulled at his nose, moved his feet nervously, and at last answered: "Jack says he'll kill me! And he will! I'm—I'm afraid! I gotta go soon—before he gets out," he finished helplessly.

"Yep," Mike said judicially, "he'll probably kill you like a worm now! There's the Paddy Boy goin' to Fiji to-night."

"But—but—my schooner share—what 'll I do with that?" Percy trembled with fear. "I can't give 'im that. What 'll I—I—do?" He was wringing his hands. "It's worth—five—five thousand dollars. It's all I—I—got!" The little old man was gulping back the tears. Who'll buy my half from me?" he demanded chokingly.

Mike looked at his brother. Another brain child that showed all the humanity of a snake and all the appearance of a hyena. They drew apart, leaving Percy with his wreck of friendship to suffer alone.

They talked and whispered and argued, at last reached a decision and came forward again.

"Ye know ye're in trouble," Mike began, "an' money's scarce." He seemed to condescend in his bargaining. "But me'n me brudder 'll take yer share o' the schooner offen yer hands; the best we kin do is five hundred dollars." He finished with a wave of his hand that was meant to impress Percy with his munificence.

"But—it's worth five thousand—not—not counting the—cargo," Percy chattered. "I oughta have—more than that."

Mullen's partner was fidgetting, casting

quick glances at the jail behind him. John shook his head in a negative to Mike, and whispered in his ear "Put the screws on 'im. We'll freeze Mullen out in a week."

"Don't fergit." Mike paused impressively. "They might let Mullen out tonight. You gotta be out o' this place afore then. Five hundred dollars is all I'll pay." Mike still had the sledge hammer up his sleeve; when Percy wavered, he brought it out.

"I guess I better go down an' bail Mullen out. Come on, John; Mullen 'll give us a hundred fer interest, anyhow."

He started away, followed by John Slagin.

"Wait—wait!" Percy almost shrieked. "I'll take—take it!" When the two came back, Percy was almost groveling on his knees.

"I've got a little—stake stowed away—from some pearls—maybe that 'll be enough to get away with," he rambled on. "Don't bail Mullen out till I get away, please!" He was scraping his feet nervously together.

"All right, but yer better be good, or we'll git him out. Then ye'd better say yer prayers. Come on, we'll look at yer damn ship! Un'erstand, we're doin' it as a favor fer you. We'll probably lose money on it."

Percy incoherently agreed. They left the saloon and started toward the Burweed, the Slagin twins complimenting themselves on their cleverness.

Arrived at the schooner's berth, her well-kept rigging, teakwood decks, and clean paint made Mike's mouth water with gain.

They went below and into the cabin. The Slagins casting appraising eyes about them at the well-kept room and found it impossible to hide the grin that comes of success in close bargaining. With the cargo, their share was worth about ten thousand dollars.

Percy had gone into his room and returned with a large, official looking piece of paper, and a pen. He scribbled a moment, surveyed what he had written, then passed the paper to Mike.

"Sign here—it's all straight and proper. Give—give me the five hundred dollars."

Mike drew the paper toward him and with much physical labor scrawled his signature, gazing at it as if it was suddenly imbued with supernatural powers. All he had to do, was to sign his name, and the schooner was his. Mike passed the paper to John, who signed it in turn with an equal amount of physical effort, then Percy handed them a copy and put the original in his pocket. He had gathered his portable belongings together and stood ready to leave.

Followed by the Slagin brothers, he went on deck, and headed forward, toward the fo'c's'le. At the entrance to the latter was a sand locker. He lifted the heavy hatch and was preparing to enter when Mike interrupted. Here was additional meat for the hammer. For the moment he had forgotten the stake of which the little man had spoken.

"Hey! Where're you goin' to?" he questioned. John seconded the demand belligerently.

"I gotta get something—something I—got—here," Percy mumbled. "It—it isn't in the agreement—you—you didn't buy nothing but my share of the schooner," he said, fumbling at the latch.

"No, you don't, little boy," John snarled, "the schooner's ours. We got the paper here. Ye don't take nuthin' out o' the ship now, see?" Cupidity blazed in their narrow, piggish eyes. This was the summit and culmination of their day's luck.

"If we bails Mullen out, ye won't need any money where ye'll be agoin'," Mike reminded him calmly. "Don't fergit, we got the paper, all signed an' bindin'. We got our signatures on it!" Anything that had Mike's name on it was possessed of a mysterious power—the power in direct ratio to the effect it required him to scrawl it.

"But—" Percy was flustered. "You—you bought the schooner—not my savings." The little man was writhing, biting his nails; his eyes were filled with tears, his feet shuffled and twisted. "Please—please—I gotta get it! I—I gotta!" He dived for the narrow opening and wedged his shoulders in.

"No, yer don't," Mike growled, jerking him out. "Beat it!" He advanced on Percy, menacingly. "G'wan! Make knots, fer I'm goin' ter bail Mullen out in an hour."

They shoved and shouldered the protesting Percy aside and on to the wharf.

As soon as Percy was on the dock, Mike and John piled hastily for the sand locker, and wedged themselves through the narrow opening.

"Ho! Mike, me boy, ain't this luck?" John chuckled. "Ain't this a fine piece o' business? A crackin' fine vessel she is, an' all ours, too. We got the papers all signed, an' they're bindin'!"

"An' a stake all stowed away, too," Mike added; "a nice little nest egg. Let's go an' dig in the sand."

Conversation languished in the heat of the search. They dropped to their knees and pawed the clean sand over, digging in the corners, in the center, everywhere. Perspiration began to dot their faces. They dug harder, and faster. The sand fell in cascades from their backs, where their eager hands had flung it. John found a piece of coral rock; Mike snatched it, thinking it the fruit of their search. They had half buried themselves in the sand when John suddenly stopped. Over his head had sounded a stealthy footfall.

Suspicion began to dawn slowly, like the head of a turtle, breaking through a scum of slime on a pool of stagnant water. The suspicion materialized into a hatch top that rattled and jammed into place, the bolt shooting home.

"Hey! On deck, there! We're down here!" Mike shouted at the top of his lungs. "Open up!"

They heard a voice answer, a voice that was mild, gentle, and reassuring.

"I'm—I'm sorry—can't let things go on like this—terrible—regrettable."

It was Percy. His voice quavered.

"I'm going down—and bail Mullen out."

They heard his footsteps grow fainter and fainter. Then Mike began to shout frantically

"Let us out! We own half o' this schooner! We order ye to!" Then to John he gasped "He's tryin' to git out o' his bargain! He's craw-fishin'! There ain't no stake down here—he was lyin'—it's a trick!"

Another voice, harsh, forbidding, sounded through the hatch

"Youse guys pipe down! I gotta handful o' marline-spikes here. We'll get yer hair parted in a minute."

"But this is our ship. We're the owners!" Mike yelled. "We got the papers to prove it."

The ominous rattle of a marline-spike sounded on the hatch. "G'wan back to sleep!"

John gazed once at Mike—Mike gazed once at John, and with that they hurled themselves forward. The sand locker reverberated with the sounds of combat. Groans, shrieks, curses, and thumps came forth. Accusations, denunciations, denials, and over it all, was one of Percy's sailors sitting on the hatch, marline-spike in hand.

V.

THE schooner Burweed was at sea. The early morning sun bathed the clean limbed little vessel in a flow of molten brass. Two figures were on the afterdeck. Percy was explaining to Mullen

"You see, Jack, I hadda make the fight look real. I hadda do everything up all ship-shape and Bristol fashion."

Two angry, wild-eyed men interrupted him.

"Yer crooks! We got yer where we want yer. Yer shanghaied us! Yer ain't got our names on yer articles! We own half o' this schooner. Here's our bill o' sale." Mike waved it over his head. "We signed it, an' it's *bindin'*."

The bosun led them away forward, handed them a deck scrubber, and commanded:

"None o' yer slack, savvy? Massage that deck a while."

Mullen had Percy by the collar. "Ye little runt! What did ye do?"

"It's—it's like this, Jack," Percy chattered, "they can't read. They—they said so themselves—they shanghaied you an' me—'cause they couldn't read the ship's name.

Mullen cut him off: "But they have a bill o' sale, all signed by themselves. You saw it!"

"'Tain't a bill of sale," Percy answered. "They signed articles as deck hands for a six months' voyage."

One Word

By HARRY VARLEY

WORDS are queer creatures. They have in them more possibilities for good or evil than men and women. They are not, as you may think, self-contained colored blocks of wood, which, arranged in certain sequence have a definite meaning. No! Sometimes they live and breathe with the accumulated power of a volcano which has stored up cussedness for a thousand years and, with no heraldic grumblings, erupts and vomits fire and brimstone on an innocent world.

One word sent Howard Jackson halfway around the earth. It was not a woman's "no" or "yes." Goodness knows those two words have enough to answer for.

Jackson was strolling through a native bazaar in Bombay doing nothing for once in his busy career. Two women—Americans, he judged from their dress—were looking at some ivory chessmen. As Jackson passed them, the tail end of a speech fell on his ear: "—reminds me of Miller's shop on Fifty-Seventh between Fifth and Madison."

That "Madison" stopped Jackson in his tracks. It is possible for a drowning man to see his entire life in the moment before he loses consciousness. For this one word Madison flooded Jackson's ears and literally swamped his mind, a slice of his life passed before his eyes a million times faster than the speeded-up movies could show it.

He was seven years younger and back in New York City. In a little front room in the brownstone house at 340 Madison Avenue—he and Jane Overton were talking. It was two hours before steamer time.

"You will be true to me, Jane, even though we have agreed not to bind each other with a formal engagement?"

"Yes, Howard."

"And you will wait for me. I know that I'll make good with the Standard Rub-

ber Company. And when I do—it 'll only take a year or two—I'll come back for you. Will you wait?"

"I will. I love you, Howard, and I don't care if you stay away ten years, you'll find me waiting here by the window when you come back"—which was a silly promise to make, particularly in New York.

They kissed and parted. On the ship Howard wrote several letters. When he arrived in Bombay, he immediately became altogether entangled in the business of "making good." So that he neglected his correspondence. Finally he stopped answering Jane's letters, until she, in her pride, could write no more.

For a time conscience gnawed Howard's internals, but he opposed his conscience by all the tricks men use, and then one night he figuratively seized his conscience by the scruff of its neck and kicked it out of his existence.

And he made good. Money came to him easily. Work, even under the scorching sun of India, was second nature to him. Whisky and soda and women—the terrible trio of temptations for the American in India, could not touch his life. His mind was a vase, full of the pea soup of business—too full for one drop of the perfume of romance to be added.

It was too full until, after the long seven years, he heard that one word Madison. The word haunted him. It had no definite form. It was fluid—alive. Neither had it a settled color. It was opalescent. But in every shape and every light it fastened itself upon his imagination. He would wake up at night hearing again the woman in the bazaar say Madison.

And soon he realized that this thing had become a part of him—that he could never rest or be happy again unless he made his pilgrimage to his special Mecca which was 340 Madison Avenue, New York City, there to confess his sins of omission to the lovely Jane Overton and receive her forgiveness.

He made up his mind and packed his trunk simultaneously. As he put in layers of shirts he thought of the great desirability of Jane, that her lovely personage would be one to possess. How she would grace his household and make his exile sweet! By the time he clamped down the lid, he was already married, little Jane and Howard, aged three and five approximately, were playing in the garden and the *ayah* was calling them to tiffin.

All the way across the ocean Howard dreamed his dreams of married happiness—to the great annoyance of some of the women passengers who would have been glad to flirt with him could they have broken down the barrier of visionary stuff more real than concrete, that surrounded or enveloped him.

That Jane may not be waiting never occurred to him. Not once did the faintest suspicion cross his innocent heart that she might not have kept her promise—that she would have been a foolish maiden if she had, and that, however much she loved Howard, he had been away seven years and she lived in New York.

New York! And Jane was a lovely creature who would be exceptionally fascinating to the jaded, bored men of Manhattan. Through a habit formed because of an invalid mother who needed her care, she had always kept herself away from the turmoil of Broadway and had a minimum of seven hours' sleep at night. Therefore, she was radiant as a fresh May morning in Killarney.

Jackson was spared from even the imagining of knowledge that might have proved his mission a wild-goose chase.

When he saw the skyline of New York it gave him a thrill. It meant Jane to him. A white gull, sweeping over the ship as it steamed through the Narrows, sang Jane to him—but a prophetic fog came up and shut out the gull and New York and slowed down the boat, until it was late before they finally docked and had passed the customs.

Jackson taxied directly to the Biltmore across the street from 340 Madison. He tried to get a room on the Madison Avenue side of the hotel so that he could look across at her house and think of her sleeping there not knowing how near he was. There was none. He had to take a room on the Forty-Third Street side of the hotel. He consoled himself by thinking of the good night's sleep he would get, the careful toilet

he would make in the morning, and of the fact he would look so much better after sleeping again in a bed that kept still.

He undressed, put on his white silk pyjamas, stood in front of the mirror in his room. He looked at his face and imagined he had not changed much in seven years. True, he was tanned and had grown a small mustache in imitation of the British officers he knew in Bombay. Then he rehearsed his meeting with Jane. Trying to put an agony of appeal into his voice he talked aloud, seeking to get just the right note in it and with the note the Barrymore gesture of supplication.

"Jane! My Jane! I have come back to you. Will you forgive me?" He even debated whether it would be better to say "Come back *to* you" or "*for you.*"

He dropped into sleep still murmuring: "Jane! My Jane."

II.

Now while he was sleeping we could go back and find out what happened to Jane, but we may as well dispose of Howard Jackson.

He arose in the morning. He bathed. He shaved, trimmed his mustache and dressed carefully in a light suit. Then he went out to meet his Jane. He came to the corner of Forty-Third and Madison and his eyes leaped across to find the brownstone dwelling at 340. Instead, he saw cut in the side of a big commercial office structure, "Canadian Pacific Building."

Bewildered, stunned, literally overwhelmed by the shock that Jane had gone, that life had played a cruel trick on him, he stood stock still for fully five minutes. The absurd asininity of his behavior in dashing across the earth when a cable would have saved him the trip, smashed him between his mind's eyes. Turning, he dashed into the hotel, talked hurriedly with the man at the "Travel" desk, picked his ship for India and checked out of the Biltmore to go to the Astor Hotel until his boat sailed. He simply could not stay near the scene of his tragedy.

Three days later he boarded the boat and went back to Bombay, where, confidentially, whisky and soda and women, the trio of temptations that beset Americans in India, found that competition against them had vanished. Which is what Jackson richly deserved. He had no right to treat the lovely Jane as he had.

Now that he is disposed of—what of Jane?

III.

JANE'S mother died soon after Jackson's letters stopped. That was coincidence—not cause and effect. She left Jane the two brownstone houses at 340 and 342 Madison, but they were both so heavily encumbered with mortgages and other obligations that she had to give up one of the houses to save the other.

Fate flipped a coin. Her lawyer found a weakness in the deed to 340 not visible in the deed which held 342. The result made it unwise for her to keep the corner house at 340 so she moved into 342. She could wait for Howard there just as well.

A few months elapsed. Along came the Canadian Pacific Company and bought up the entire block except the house and lot at 342. They argued with Jane. They used every method they knew to persuade her. They made out a deed of sale and left the purchase price open for Jane to fill in—but she refused. Her own lawyer wept copiously thinking tears would melt her adamant will. He discovered that water takes a long time to wear away stone. He quit finally as they all had to quit.

Around the brownstone house at 342 Madison they built a big white building. It overshadowed the house. It does to this very day, but it could cast no shadows on the soul of Jane. Within her all was sunshine, and the birds were singing "He will came back for me. He said he would."

She had wooers. Several tried, in the early days of the Canadian Pacific controversy, to win her hand and make her sell out. She was obdurate. Only one succeeded in establishing himself more or less permanently in Jane's life.

He was Rodney Stewart, a young bank clerk who had pushed Jane from the path of an automobile one wet day and rescued her beaded bag from a puddle. He used

a silk handkerchief to wipe the bag and start a conversation.

So Rodney Stewart had called on Jane three times a week for years. Regularly he drove up to the house on Sunday morning, took Jane for a drive on Long Island and always he proposed to her three or four times before she kissed "her dear brother" good night.

Jane had told Rodney about the lover who had sailed away. A hundred times Rodney tried to show Jane the absurdity of waiting for one who had forgotten her or who was dead. He told her of the deadly cobra, the man eating tigers, the cholera, the fever, the whisky and soda and women —all the dire possibilities of India, but Jane put her rosy fingers on his mouth and would not let him talk.

But the years began to have their effect. Time was on Rodney's side. A woman who wants love, husband, babies, will not forever be denied. Nature waits in ambush, and sometimes, though it be in the most inopportune, inappropriate and unromantic time, Nature will have her way and the barrier will be downed.

And so it was with Jane. One Sunday morning she was standing in the window looking across the avenue at the Biltmore. Rodney was glancing at the morning *Herald* picture section, when suddenly he looked up to ask Jane to come and see a new picture of Mrs. Castle. But the words died on his lips. The sunlight, softened as it filtered through the courtains, fell on Jane's face and he saw such a loveliness that poets vainly try to describe.

It was a new Jane. The same yellow hair, the same blue eyes and small, delicately chiseled aristocratic nose, and the full, beautifully lined lips. But there was something different. Not just expression. It was a *feeling*, that was the word, a *feeling* in her face he had never seen before.

Love swept through him. Inspired with a masterful courage strangely new, he called:

"Jane! Come here!"

Without wonder, smilingly and with utter surrender, she went at his outstretched arms, and lifted her lips.

"No more of this 'brother' stuff, Jane."

"No, dear!"

"You will marry me!"

It was a declaration—not a question.

"Any time you say, Rodney."

And so for a time they talked the intimate and glorious nonsense which would have to be set down if this were a love story. But the only part of their conversation which we care about is this.

"Tell me, Jane, why have you refused me for so many years? No! Never mind that. Tell why, on this Sunday morning of all mornings, you finally gave in and promised to marry me."

She waited a moment. Rodney saw the same feeling come over her face that he saw when she stood in the window.

"For seven years I waited for Howard Jackson. You know that. I used to dream about him at night. When I curled my hair, I would look in the glass and see his face instead of mine. It grew worse lately. I began to be afraid I was losing my mind. So to-day, this morning, something happened while I was at the window. I—I—" She stopped. He squeezed her hand.

"Yes, Jane! Tell me."

"I actually thought I saw Howard Jackson himself standing on the corner looking up at the house. But, of course, it was my imagination. This man had a mustache. Besides, Howard never wore a light suit and this man did. I don't want to keep on seeing ghosts, so I decided to forget him. You will help me, dear, won't you?"

They kissed each other.

At that precise moment Howard Jackson was paying his bill at the Biltmore across the street.

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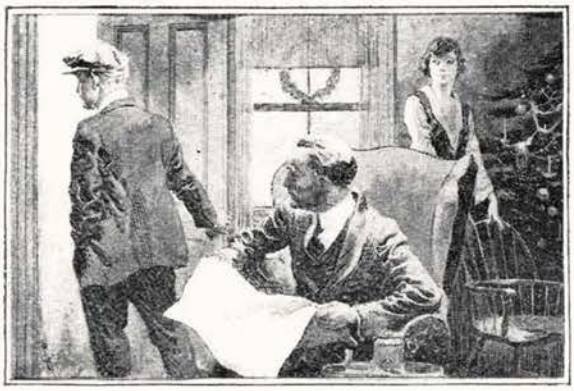

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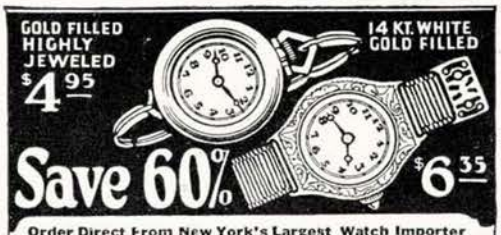

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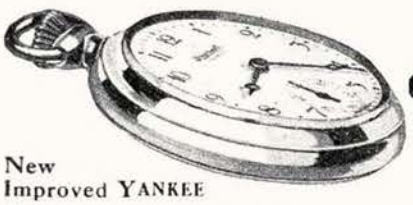

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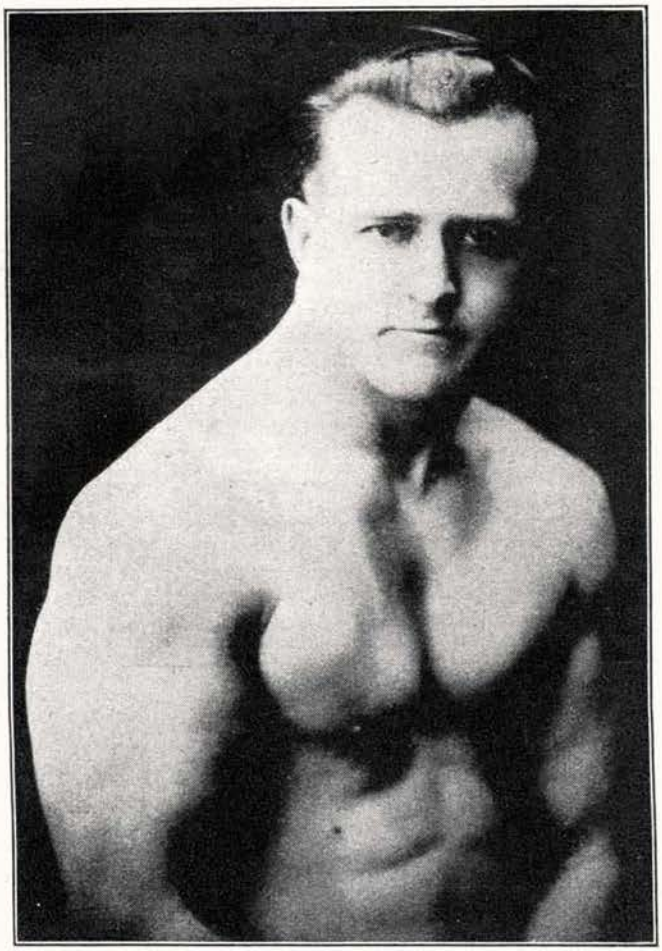
WHAT'S the use of living when you're only half alive? You get up in the morning and you don't have the pep of a jelly fish. Your work is a burden and life has ceased to give you a thrill. You don't seem to get anywhere and nobody cares whether you do or not. What's the use fellows? Call the Undertaker, for you're dead and you don't know it.



EARLE E. LIEDERMAN,
America's Leading Director of Physical Education

A New Life

Stop! It's all wrong. There is another life right here before you. A *new* and a *better* one. A life that is full of *thrills* and *sunshine*. Every day opens *new worlds to conquer, new joys, new friends* and *lasting ones*. Come with me and let me guide you to it.

I have a system that knocks those gloom bugs higher than a kite. I'll put pep in your old backbone that will make you feel like a jack rabbit. I'll put a spring to your step and a flash to your eye so that your own friends won't know you.

Health and Strength

That's what you need and that's what you get. Come on now, pull in your belt and throw out your chest. Take a good deep breath of that pure air that's all about you. Give your heart a treat with some rich blood. You will feel so good you will think it's your birthday. Drop me a line and I'll show you how to do it. I'm going to put a chest on you that will make your old ribs strain with the pressure. I'm going to change those skinny arms and legs of yours to a real man's size. You will have the strength and vitality to do things you never thought possible. Come on fellows! Get busy. I don't promise these things—I guarantee them. Are you with me?

Send for My New 64-Page Book

"MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT"

It contains forty-three full-page photographs of myself and some of the many prize-winning pupils I have trained. Some of these came to me as pitiful weaklings, imploring me to help them. Look them over now and you will marvel at their present physiques. This book will prove an impetus and a real inspiration to you. It will thrill you through and through. All I ask is 10 cents to cover the cost of wrapping and mailing and it is yours to keep. This will not obligate you at all, but for the sake of your future health and happiness, do not put it off. Send to-day—right now, before you turn this page.

EARLE E. LIEDERMAN
Dept. 5012, 305 Broadway, New York City

EARLE E. LIEDERMAN,
Dept. 5012, 305 Broadway, New York City

Dear Sir:—I enclose herewith 10 cents, for which you are to send me, without any obligation on my part whatever, a copy of your latest book, "Muscular Development." Please write or print plainly.

Name.....

Street.....

City.....State.....

All the other gifts are forgotten when they see how easy it is to coax those joyful Yuletide tunes out of the melodious Hohner!

HOLIDAY HARMONY

"There is no music you enjoy like the music you make yourself." That's as true of your friends as it is of you. Give them Hohners for Christmas—no other gift at the price will give half the pleasure. The Hohner is a whole orchestra in itself—it makes real music—sweet, tuneful, delightful music. Anybody can learn to play it in an hour. Ask the dealer for the Hohner Free Instruction Book; if he is out of them, write "M. Hohner, New York." Hohner Harmonicas are sold everywhere; 50c. up.

"Own Your Own Hohner"

HOHNER HARMONICAS

! fear

Are you self-conscious about the impression you make on people?

FEAR is probably the greatest handicap anyone can have in life. It keeps you from being your own real self—from doing your downright best and from getting on in life as you should.

Personal appearance has a lot to do with the way you feel. Clothes count, of course. But still there is one thing so many people overlook—something that at once brands them as either fastidious or careless—*the teeth.*

Notice today how you, yourself, watch another person's teeth when he or she is talking. If the teeth are not well kept they at once become a liability.

Only the right dentifrice—consistently used—will protect you against such criticism. Listerine Tooth Paste cleans teeth a new way. The first tube you buy will prove this to you.

You will notice the improvement even in the first few days. And, moreover, just as Listerine is the safe antiseptic, so Listerine Tooth Paste is the safe dentifrice. It cleans, yet it cannot injure the enamel.

What are your teeth saying about you today?

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She Found A Pleasant Way To Reduce Her Fat

She did not have to go to the trouble of diet, exercise or unpleasant greases and salves. She found a better way, which aids the digestive organs to turn food into muscle, bone and sinew instead of fat.

She used *Marmola Prescription Tablets,* which are made from the famous Marmola prescription. They aid the digestive system to obtain the full nutriment of food. They will allow you to eat many kinds of food without the necessity of dieting or exercising.

Thousands have found that *Marmola Prescription Tablets* give complete relief from obesity. And when the accumulation of fat is checked, reduction to normal, healthy weight soon follows.

All good drug stores the world over sell *Marmola Prescription Tablets* at one dollar a box. Ask your druggist for them, or order direct and they will be sent in plain wrapper, postpaid.

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BE COMFORTABLE—Wear the Brooks Appliance, the modern scientific invention which gives rupture sufferers immediate relief. It has no obnoxious springs or pads. Automatic Air Cushions bind and draw together the broken parts. No salves or plasters. Durable. Cheap. Sent on trial to prove its worth. Beware of imitations. Look for trade-mark bearing portrait and signature of C. E. Brooks which appears on every Appliance. None other genuine. Full information and booklet sent free in plain, sealed envelope.

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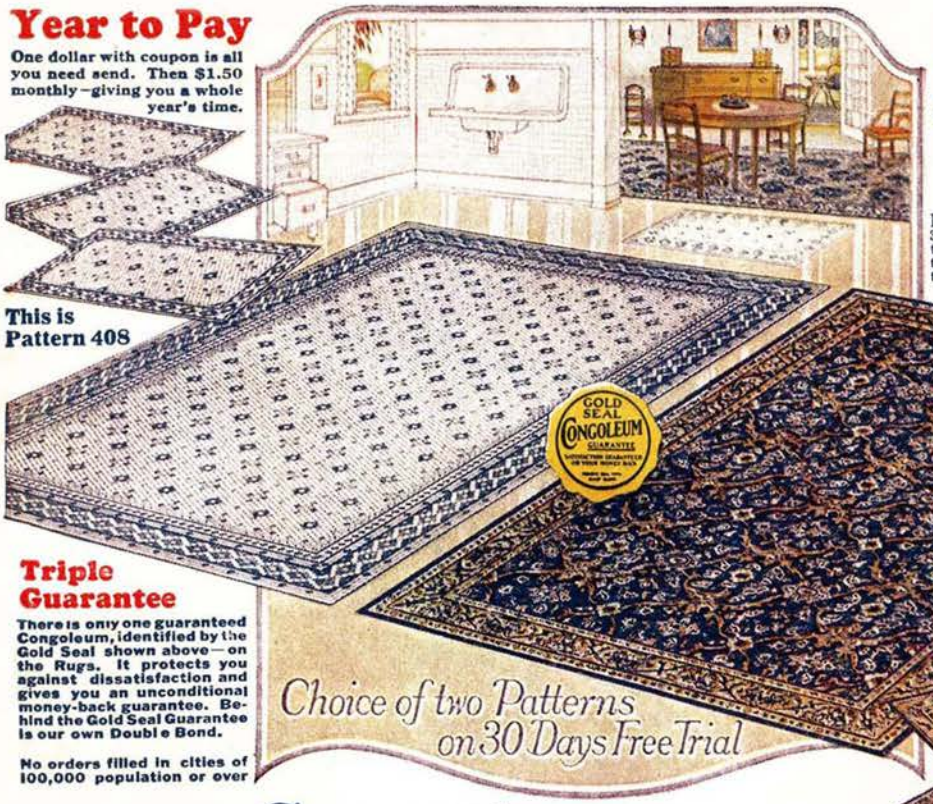
One dollar with coupon is all you need send. Then $1.50 monthly—giving you a whole year's time.



3 Rugs Free

Each small rug measures 18x36 inches. They match exactly the large rug you select. While this offer lasts, we give three of these small rugs free with each large rug; **all for less than the price of one.**

This is Pattern 408

This is Pattern 534

Triple Guarantee

There is only one guaranteed Congoleum, identified by the Gold Seal shown above—on the Rugs. It protects you against dissatisfaction and gives you an unconditional money-back guarantee. Behind the Gold Seal Guarantee is our own Double Bond.

No orders filled in cities of 100,000 population or over

Choice of two Patterns on 30 Days Free Trial

Four CONGOLEUM *Rugs for Less than the Price of One*

$1.00 Brings All Four

Ours is the only house in America that can make such an offer. No one else can bring you a genuine guaranteed Gold Seal Congoleum Rug, in the full 9 foot by 12 foot size, with three small rugs extra, and all for **less** than the **regular price** of the big rug **alone. And on a year credit.**

Clip the coupon below. Write your name and address plainly. Say which pattern you want. Pin a dollar bill to it—mail at once. We will ship immediately—on a month's trial—**all 4 Congoleum Rugs**—in one complete neat package. No muss, no bother, no trouble to lay. **If satisfactory take a year to pay.**

The Rug of Guaranteed Wear, Year to Pay—3 Rugs FREE

Congoleum Gold Seal Art Rugs are the most popular floor covering known. They are rapidly becoming the national floor covering—highly prized in good homes for any and all rooms.

They Are Waterproof. No burlap for water to rot. Surface is hard, smooth and wear-resisting. Does not stain. Not marred or hurt by spilling of hot liquids.

They Lie Flat from the first moment without fastening. They never curl up or kick up at edges or corners. No need to tack or fasten them down. Dirt cannot accumulate underneath.

Less Work. Rid yourself of back-breaking drudgery. Dirt, ashes, grit, dust or mud cannot "grind into" Congoleum Gold Seal Art Rugs. A damp rag or mop keeps it clean and colorings bright. No laborious cleaning, no sending to cleaners. Absolutely sanitary. All this guaranteed by the famous Gold Seal that means complete satisfaction or *your money back.*

Tile Pattern No. 408

Probably no floor covering of any quality or kind, ever piled up the popularity of this wonderful design. It is a superb tile pattern that looks like mosaic. Lovely robin's egg blue, with shadings of Dutch blue, and a background of soft stone gray, give a matchless effect. Particularly suited for a kitchen or a dining room. Don't fear muddy boots and shoes. A damp mop whisks it clean in a jiffy. Shown at the left side, above,

Only $1.00 with Coupon — $1.50 Monthly

No. E4C408 9 x 12 ft. Congoleum Gold Seal Rug with 3 small rugs to match, each 18x36 in.—all four only . . **$17.95**

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This is the beautiful Gold Seal Congoleum Art Rug as shown at the right side, above. On the floor, it looks unbelievably like an expensive woven rug. The richest blue color dominates the ground work. Mellow ecru, old ivories, and light tans, set off the blue field. Mingled with these lovely tints are peacock blue, robin's egg blue and darker tones. Old rose, tiny specks of lighter pink and dark mulberry are artistically placed. Darker browns and blacks lend dignity and richness.

The border background contrasts with the blue all over center by reversing the color scheme. Ecru and tan shades form border background. An ideal all purpose rug, beautiful in any room.

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No. E4C534 9 x 12 ft. Congoleum Gold Seal Rug with 3 small rugs to match, each 18x36 in.—all four only **$17.95**

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I enclose **$1** for the **4 Gold Seal Congoleum Art Rugs**—exactly as described—in the pattern selected below, on 30 days free trial. If I return them, you are to refund my $1, also all transportation costs. Otherwise I will pay **$1.50** monthly, until special bargain price of **$17.95**, is paid.

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Be sure to write in space above the **Number** of the pattern you select. If you wish both patterns, put down **both** numbers send **$2** with order and **$3** monthly **and get all 8 rugs.**

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