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MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE

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THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY

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FEBRUARY
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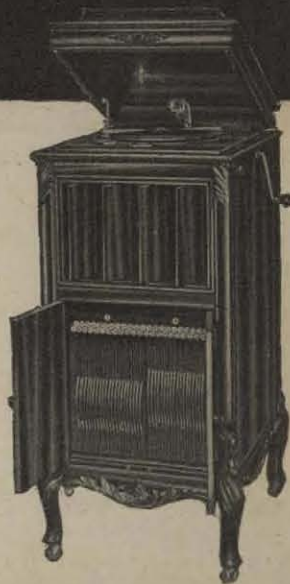


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MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE

Vol. LIV No. I

February 1915



BELGIUM

The Story of the Brave Little State Famous
as the Battle-ground of Europe

by Richard Le Callienne

THE assassination of William the Silent, Prince of Orange, on July 10, 1584, while it failed to accomplish the purpose of Spain, and did nothing to shake the stability of the new-born Dutch

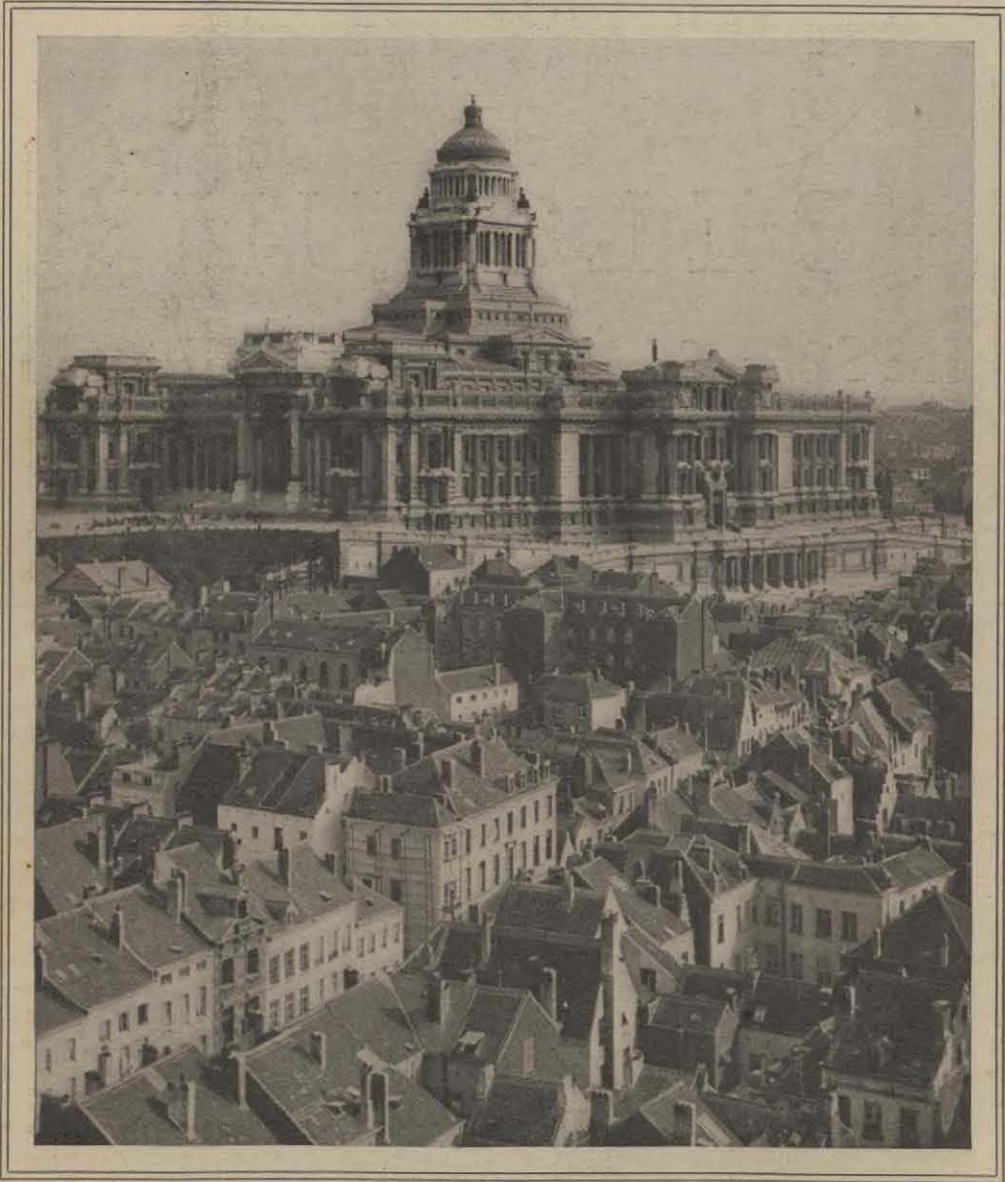
Republic, so soon to expand into so commanding a world-power, was the event of all others which decided the destiny of that most distressful little country which to-day we call Belgium. It was by that assassina-



THE ROYAL PALACE, BRUSSELS, A MODERN STRUCTURE ON THE SITE OF THE CASTLE OF THE DUKES OF BRABANT AND THE SPANISH GOVERNORS

tion that she became the "cockpit of Europe"; for, had William lived, it is very probable that, as Motley has speculated, he would have been able to reconcile the jealousies of the southern Netherlands,

Frisian races with the subtler, more delicate, and more graceful national elements in which the genius of the Frank, the Roman, and the Romanized Celt were so intimately blended." William the Silent's



THE PALAIS DE JUSTICE, OR LAW-COURTS, BRUSSELS—BEGUN IN 1866, AND COMPLETED IN 1883, AT A COST OF NINE MILLION DOLLARS, THIS IS ONE OF THE LARGEST BUILDINGS IN EUROPE

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and, by bringing them into union with the northern provinces, would have created one state strong enough to defy foreign aggression.

Such a confederacy "would have united the adamantine vigor of the Batavian and

wisdom and persuasive will removed, the southern provinces not only fell an easy prey to Spain, but were to suffer unnatural wrong from their own kinsmen of the Dutch Republic, who, whatever their success, had battled no more bravely for re-



PICTURESQUE BUILDINGS ON THE GRAND PLACE, OR MARKET-PLACE, THE CENTRAL SQUARE OF THE OLD TOWN OF BRUSSELS—IN THIS SQUARE COUNTS EGMONT AND HOORN WERE EXECUTED BY THE SPANIARDS IN 1568

ligious freedom and the civic ideal than the burghers of Flanders and Brabant.

Though the kingdom of Belgium, as we know it to-day, is technically a political creation of the powers by the Treaty of London, signed on November 15, 1831, its territory and boundaries roughly correspond to the states of those southern Netherlands left outside the Dutch Republic at the death of William of Orange. Previous to that their history had been shared in common—in its larger political features, at all events; so up till 1584 the story of Belgium must include much of the general story of the Netherlands.



THE BRUSSELS MONUMENT TO COUNTS EGMONT AND HOORN, TWO OF BELGIUM'S NATIONAL HEROES

The name Netherlands or Low Countries "low land, nether land, hollow land, or Holland"—arose naturally from the character of the region, a low-lying triangular plain, partly delta, partly recovered sea-bed, situated between France, Germany, and the North Sea, traversed by three great rivers—the Rhine, the Meuse, and the Escaut or Scheldt, and bounded on the south by the mountains of the Ardennes. For long at the mercy of the sea, which, as late as the thirteenth century wiped out in one vast inundation hundreds of Frisian villages, leaving behind the Zuyder Zee, it seems strange that so



THE CATHEDRAL OF STE. GUDULE, BRUSSELS, A FINE GOTHIC CHURCH DATING FROM THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY, AND FAMOUS FOR ITS STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS

forlorn a "waste end of land and sea" should have seemed worth all the blood that has been poured out over it almost like another sea.

Even Rome, with all her sunlit possessions, must have this wild Hercynian swamp as well; and its history, like most European history, begins with Cæsar.

As Cæsar knew them, the inhabitants of these nether lands were partly German and

partly Celtic in race. In the extreme north, between the Rhine and the Ems, were the Frisians, a Teutonic race famed even among their indomitable neighbors for their instinct for freedom.

"The Frisians," said their own laws, "shall be free, as long as the wind blows out of the clouds, and the world stands."

South of them, on an island made by two arms of the Rhine, dwelt the Ba-

tavians, another shade of Teutons no less stubborn and independent. After their conquest by Cæsar, these Batavians—who, blended with the Frisians, made the modern Dutch—became one of the firmest allies of Rome. Cæsar's regard for their fighting qualities was such that "the Batavian legion" was his favorite body of troops, and till the times of Vespasian it remained the imperial body-guard.

One may recall, in parenthesis, that the South African Boers are the direct descendants of these sturdy Batavians. So durable are racial characteristics, and so early in the history of a race is its destiny foreshadowed—a remark which applies no less to the third race inhabiting the remaining portion of the nether lands, the Belgæ proper.

These were mainly Celtic in stock—"bravest of all the Celts," Cæsar declared them. They were of the same race as the Gauls, and shared their brilliant qualities, while adding something of Teutonic fiber

from their intermarriage with Frankish settlers from beyond the Rhine. The descendants of the Belgæ are to-day called Walloons, and make about three-eighths of the population of Belgium, living almost exclusively in the basin of the Meuse, and speaking a language which is basically French. The other five-eighths are Flemings, confined to the basin of the Scheldt, their language being basically German.

Modern Belgium, therefore, presents the singularity of a nation composed of two essentially different races, speaking two distinct tongues mutually incomprehensible. French is, for the most part, the governmental and "polite" language; but their religion, the Roman Catholic, is probably the strongest cement of their political union.

"The boundary between the Walloon and Flemish languages," according to one authority, "is a fairly straight line from Visé southward past Brussels and Courtrai to Calais, though Walloon is spoken in a few isolated districts to the north, and Flemish is spoken here and there to the south of the line."

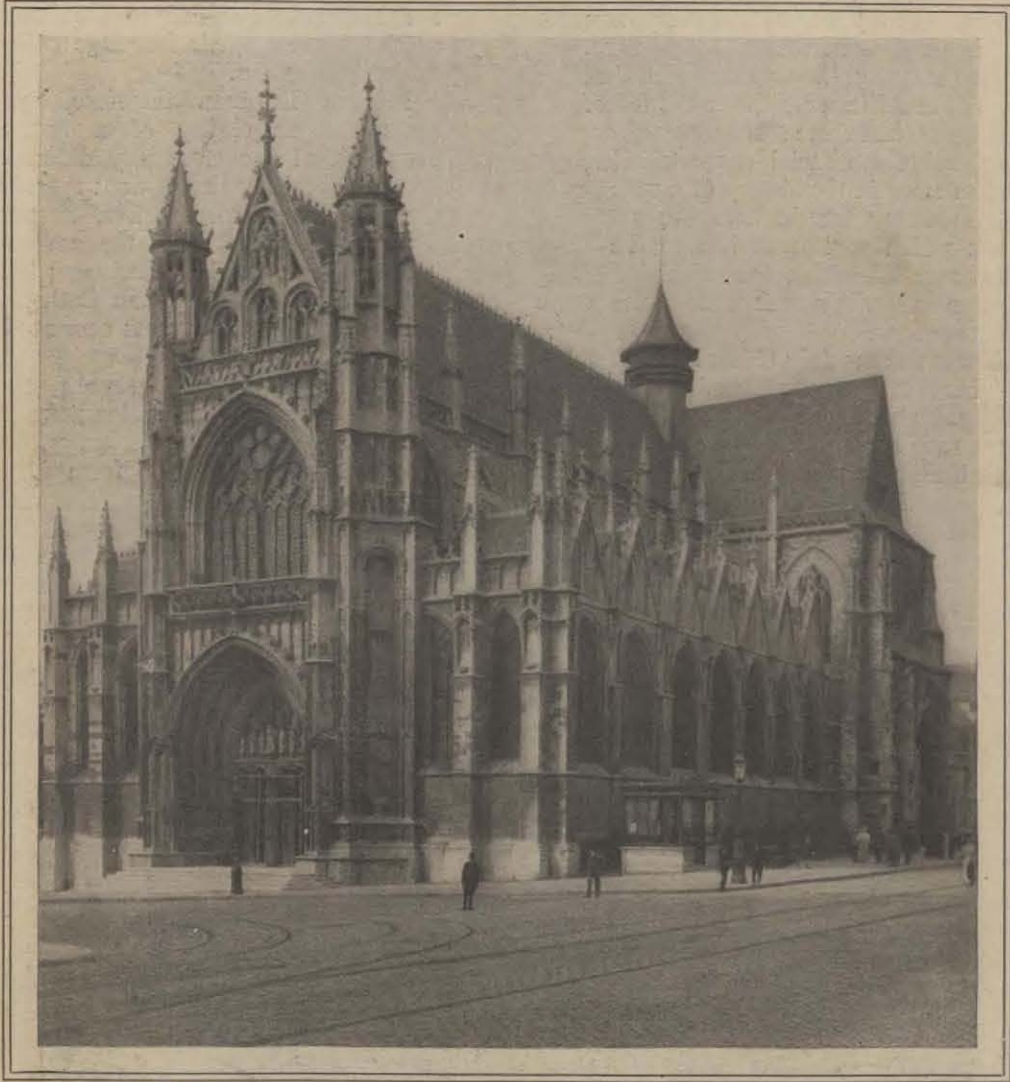
If any land in Europe more than another may be said to belong to its inhabitants, it is the triangle of the



THE HÔTEL DE VILLE, OR CITY HALL, BRUSSELS, A SPLENDID AND ELABORATELY DECORATED GOTHIC BUILDING OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY, WITH A TOWER THREE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY FEET HIGH

Netherlands, for to no small degree they have literally "made" it. From the earliest times they have fought with the sea for its possession—a fight which doubtless did much to temper their hearts and hands to resist still more cruel aggression. Its fertility is largely due to their agri-

That world owes the conception and the creation of the free city to the courage and industry of the Netherlands. English and American liberty, English and American commerce, alike began in Flanders, and the British Empire and the American Republic may be regarded as extensions of



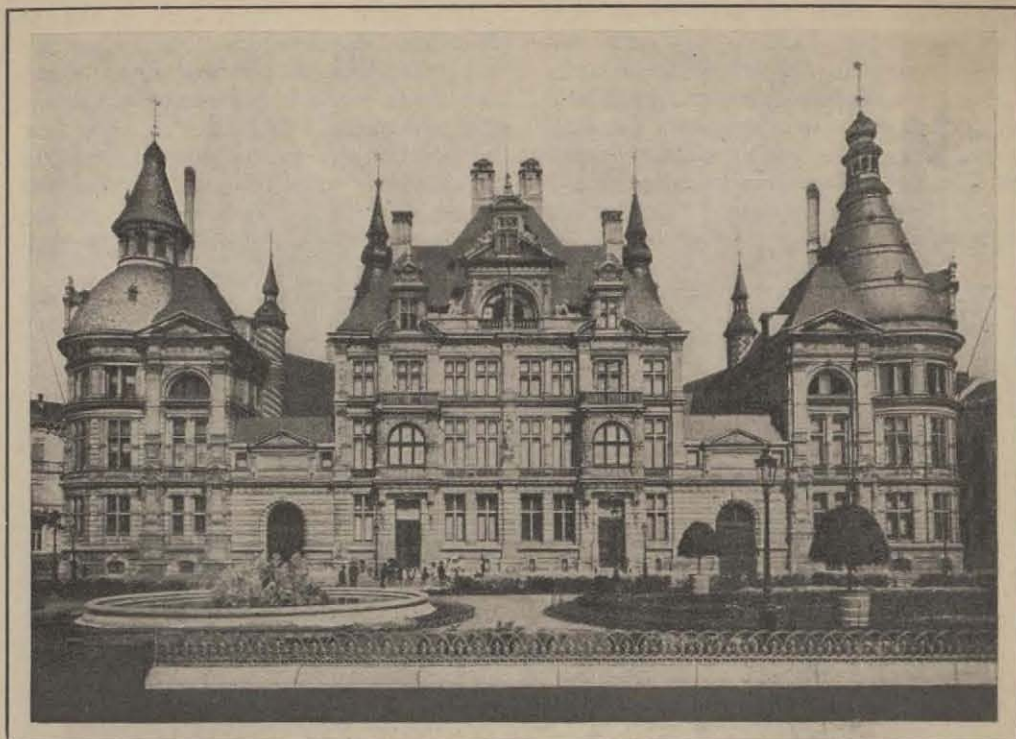
THE CHURCH OF NOTRE DAME DES VICTOIRES, BRUSSELS, FOUNDED IN 1304 BY THE GILD OF CROSSBOWMEN, BUT REBUILT IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

From a copyrighted photograph by the H. C. White Company, New York

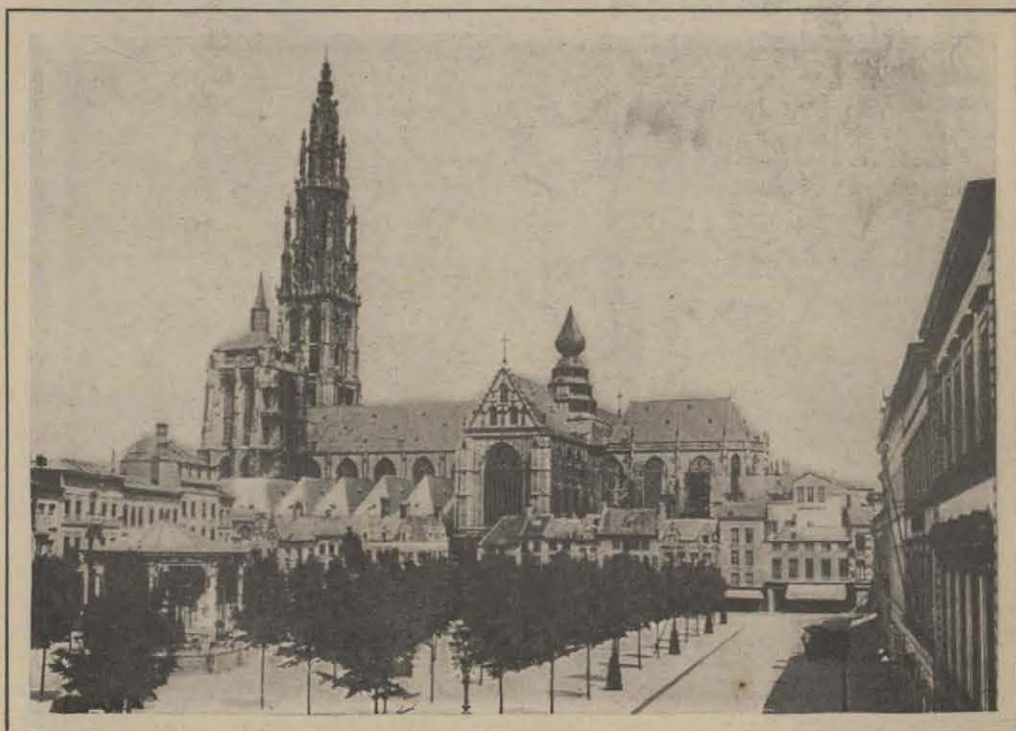
cultural skill, and a commercial prosperity which is historical, contriving as it would seem almost miraculously to coexist with a history of continuous warfare, has been the creation of racial industry, thrift, and skill, combined with a genius for civic administration, which has been proverbial in the modern world.

what one might call the Flanders idea. Given Jacob van Artevelde and the burghers of Ghent, and Chicago is a foregone conclusion. Indeed, to the philosophic eye, the creation of the elder city, under the anarchic conditions of the times, is the infinitely greater marvel.

With the decay of the Roman régime,



THE NATIONAL BANK, ON THE AVENUE DES ARTS, ANTWERP, A MODERN BUILDING (1875-1880)
IN THE FLEMISH RENAISSANCE STYLE



THE CATHEDRAL OF NOTRE DAME, ANTWERP, THE LARGEST AND FINEST GOTHIC CHURCH IN THE
NETHERLANDS, WITH A TOWER FOUR HUNDRED AND FOUR FEET HIGH—MOST
OF IT WAS BUILT BETWEEN 1352 AND 1592

early in the fifth century, the southern provinces of the Netherlands—Gallia Belgica—came under the rule of the Franks. The Frisians of the northern provinces held out against the new invaders till the final subjugation of the whole country under Charlemagne, whose family had originally sprung from the town of Landen in Brabant.

After the death of Charlemagne, uncontrolled by his degenerate successors, the various feudal lords who had governed the country as his deputies began to set up local sovereignties in their own right. At the beginning of the tenth century, even the nominal suzerainty of Charles the Simple, of France, was exchanged for the equally nominal suzerainty of Henry the



THE BUSY WATER-FRONT OF ANTWERP IN TIME OF PEACE—A SCENE ON THE RIVER SCHELDT, ON WHICH THE GREAT BELGIAN SEAPORT LIES, FIFTY-FIVE MILES FROM THE NORTH SEA

From a copyrighted photograph by Underwood & Underwood, New York



THE GATEWAY OF THE STEEN, OR CASTLE, OF ANTWERP, WHICH DATES FROM THE TENTH CENTURY, AND WAS ONCE THE QUARTERS OF THE SPANISH INQUISITION

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Fowler, of Germany. Though thus technically a part of the Holy Roman Empire, the Netherlands tended more and more to become a group of independent duchies, counties, baronies, and bishoprics no less warlike than their lay neighbors.

A Count of Holland and a Bishop of Utrecht were the two petty potentates of the northern Netherlands, but the southern or Belgic portion was much more perplexingly subdivided, and by the twelfth century all central government is lost sight of in a cloud of Dukes of Brabant, Luxemburg, and Guelders, Earls of Flanders,

Counts of Namur, Hainault, Limburg, Zutphen, Barons of Mechlin, Marquesses of Antwerp, and so on. Such law and order as existed depended on the will and pleasure of these self-imposed rulers, who levied taxes, made war, issued money, and executed justice with royal independence. Of them all the most powerful were the Dukes of Brabant and the Earls of Flanders.

The chief occupation of these various potentates was to quarrel among themselves, to their frequent impoverishment. Their regal state and petty warfare could only be kept up in one way, then as now—

by taking toll of the industry of the working population.

With all their combative instincts, the people of the Netherlands united an uncommon capacity for hard work, great skill in handicrafts, and rare commercial energy. The nobles were quick to see that the

like services, to win for themselves those charters of incorporation which made them "free cities." Established on this footing, they gained a greater and greater degree of self-government and a civic representation among the estates of the realm.

Thus the richer merchants gradually be-



THE FLEMISH THEATER, ONE OF THE HANDSOME MODERN BUILDINGS OF ANTWERP

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encouragement of this commercial spirit meant a steady revenue, and the workers, on their part, soon realized that in the necessity of the nobles lay their opportunity. Thus in exchange for various financial contributions in the form of tolls and taxes they bought certain rights and privileges. As the towns grew up and prospered, they were able, by providing funds for the campaigns or crusades of their overlords, and

came a sort of civic aristocracy, which in its turn was at once supported and threatened by those protective associations of individual crafts known as guilds. It was a long and complicated process of evolution, every step of which had to be painfully won by patient struggle, and not infrequently by stubborn and bloody contests. In this way were created cities which, in all but name, were miniature



THE HÔTEL DE VILLE, OR CITY HALL, ANTWERP, A FINE SPECIMEN OF FLEMISH RENAISSANCE ARCHITECTURE, BUILT IN 1561-1565 AND RESTORED IN 1581 AFTER ITS PARTIAL DESTRUCTION BY THE SPANIARDS



THE GRAND PLACE, OR MARKET-PLACE, THE SQUARE IN FRONT OF THE ANTWERP CITY HALL, WITH BUILDINGS THAT DATE FROM THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES— A CORNER OF THE HÔTEL DE VILLE APPEARS ON THE LEFT



ANOTHER VIEW OF THE GRAND PLACE, ANTWERP, SHOWING THE PICTURESQUE HALLS OF THE ARCHERS, THE COOPERS, AND OTHER ANTWERP GILDS

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republics, able to raise armies on their own account, and to treat independently with dukes and even kings.

Before the end of the twelfth century we read of "the community of the people of Ghent, proud of their towering houses, their treasures, and the number of their population," and of their sending twenty thousand armed men to the help of King Philip Augustus in 1184. We hear of Bruges, too, which "with many thousands came to his help"; of "proud Ypres," whose inhabitants are "experienced in the dyeing of wool"; of Arras, "the ancient city of the Atrebatians, full of wealth, eager after gain and profit."

Flanders counted already forty similarly prosperous cities, and Brabant was not far behind with Antwerp, Brussels, and Louvain. The civic progress of Liège, owing

to its masterful bishops, was slower, but of the martial spirit of its burghers, and of the position of such cities in the life of the time, one gets a vivid idea in Walter Scott's "Quentin Durward." But the dramatic story of Ghent and Jacob van Artevelde best illustrates the proud prosperity of the medieval Flemish city, and the princely rôle often played by its chief burghers.

It must be premised that a chief element of the general prosperity of Flanders was its monopoly in the importation of English wool. In the early part of the fourteenth century as the Flemish weavers led the world for skill, so England, owing to its comparative freedom from war, was the only wool-producing country in Europe. Thus the finest cloths and linens were woven in Flanders, and on this account it

was the policy of the Counts of Flanders to cultivate English friendship. Wool was the bond on both sides between England and Flanders for three centuries, from the period of the Edwards to the end of the time of the Tudors (1272-1603).

Now when Edward III claimed the throne of France, so essential to his success did he consider this friendship of the Flemish weavers that he sent over an embassy to make sure of their support. And the importance of Ghent and its burghers

may be realized from the fact that his ambassadors were instructed to win over its chief burgher, Jacob van Artevelde, first of all; for Artevelde was an even greater power in Flanders than the Count of Flanders himself.

It was at Artevelde's advice that Edward proclaimed himself King of France, and such was the affectionate familiarity between the great king and the Flemish burgomaster that Edward called the worthy Jacob "*cher compère*" and "*grand ami*."



THE CHURCH OF ST. PAUL, ANTWERP, AN EXAMPLE OF LATE FLEMISH GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE, BUILT BETWEEN 1533 AND 1621

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ON THIS AND THE OPPOSITE PAGE IS A VIEW OF THE WATER-FRONT AT OSTEND, THE SECOND SEAPORT AND CHIEF WATERING-PLACE OF BELGIUM

For seven years, at Artevelde's bidding, Flanders and England fought side by side, the power of the Captain of Ghent, as he was called, growing all the time, and with it, unfortunately, an arrogance and intolerance too princely for burgher tastes.

Artevelde's proposal that the English

Prince of Wales should be made Count of Flanders gave his enemies in the city's counsels their opportunity, and in the course of one of those turbulent riots not infrequent in the evolution of Flemish cities, the man who more than any other single figure had been not only the creator



THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. ROMUALD, MECHLIN (MALINES), THE METROPOLITAN CHURCH OF BELGIUM—THE UNFINISHED TOWER, WHICH WAS PROJECTED AS THE LOFTIEST IN CHRISTENDOM, IS THREE HUNDRED AND TWENTY FEET HIGH



THE DIGUE, OR SEA-FRONT, OF OSTEND, WAS OCCUPIED BY FORTIFICATIONS UNTIL 1865—IT IS NOW A LONG ROW OF HOTELS AND VILLAS

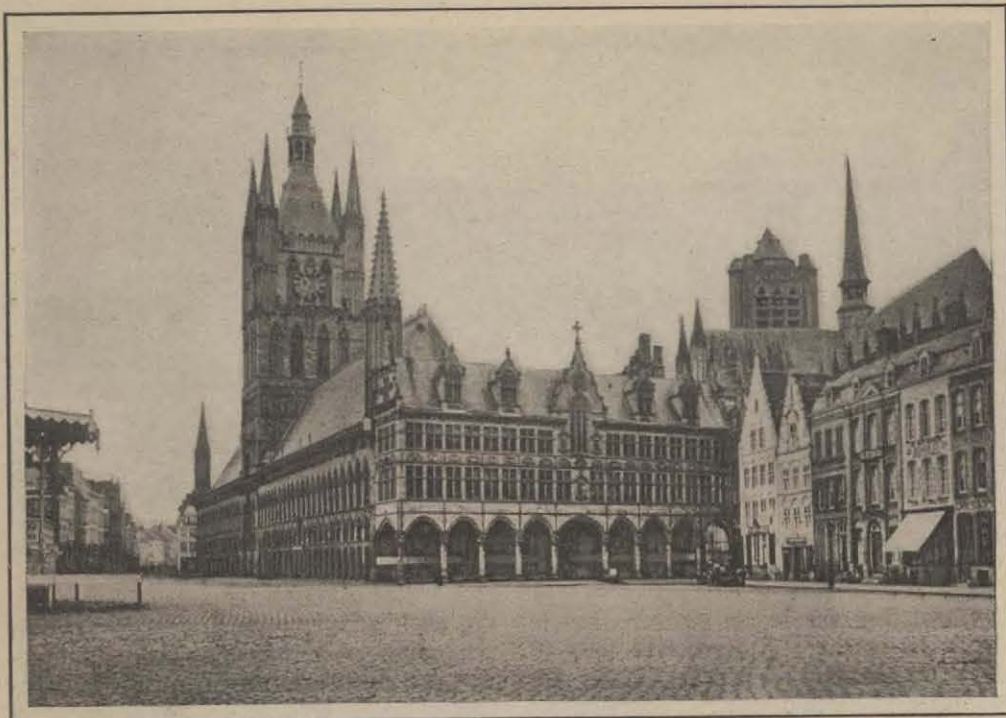
of Ghent, but the heroic pioneer of civic liberty in northern Europe, was torn to pieces by the mob he had benefited. So, too frequently, democracy has rewarded its champions.

Those internal gild jealousies which were largely responsible for Artevelde's

downfall, added to the jealousies between rival cities, were to prove sources of weakness and disaster throughout the whole history of a country whose very existence depended on unity. If only the cities evolved with such courage and industry had held steadfastly together, some of the most cruel



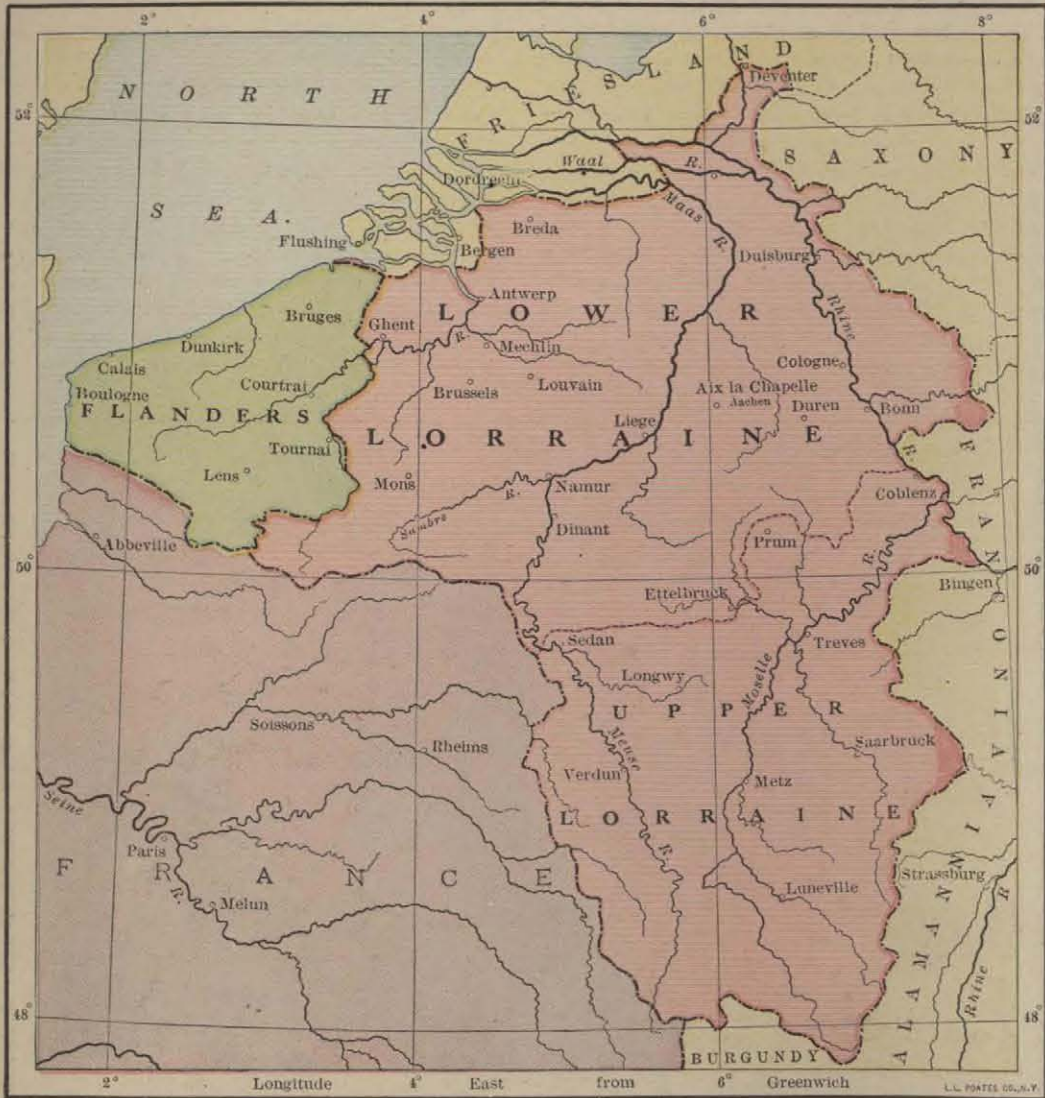
DINANT, ON THE MEUSE, WITH ITS OLD CITADEL AND THE CHURCH OF NOTRE DAME—THIS PICTURESQUE TOWN IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN DESTROYED IN THE EARLY WEEKS OF THE PRESENT WAR



THE HALLES, OR CLOTH HALL, OF YPRES, THE FINEST BUILDING OF THE KIND IN BELGIUM, BUILT BETWEEN 1200 AND 1304, AND SAID TO HAVE BEEN DESTROYED BY BOMBARDMENT IN OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER LAST



THE PALAIS DE JUSTICE, OR LAW-COURTS, LIÈGE, A BUILDING WHICH DATES FROM THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY—IT WAS ORIGINALLY THE PALACE OF THE BISHOPS OF LIÈGE, WHO FOR FOUR HUNDRED YEARS WERE RULING PRINCES



BELGIUM IN THE TENTH CENTURY—AT THIS TIME, AFTER THE DIVISION OF CHARLEMAGNE'S EMPIRE, FLANDERS WAS A FIEF OF THE KINGS OF FRANCE, WHILE LOWER LORRAINE (KNOWN LATER AS BRABANT) BELONGED TO GERMANY

pages of history might never have been written.

As it was, it was soon to be seen that by checking the power of the nobles the cities had only played into the hands of ambitious sovereigns, and helped to build those absolute monarchies which were now to replace the feudal system. In 1384, on the death of Louis II, Count of Flanders, the male line of the reigning house became extinct, and Flanders passed to his son-in-law, Philip the Bold of Burgundy. By the beginning of the fifteenth century the whole of the Netherlands had been brought

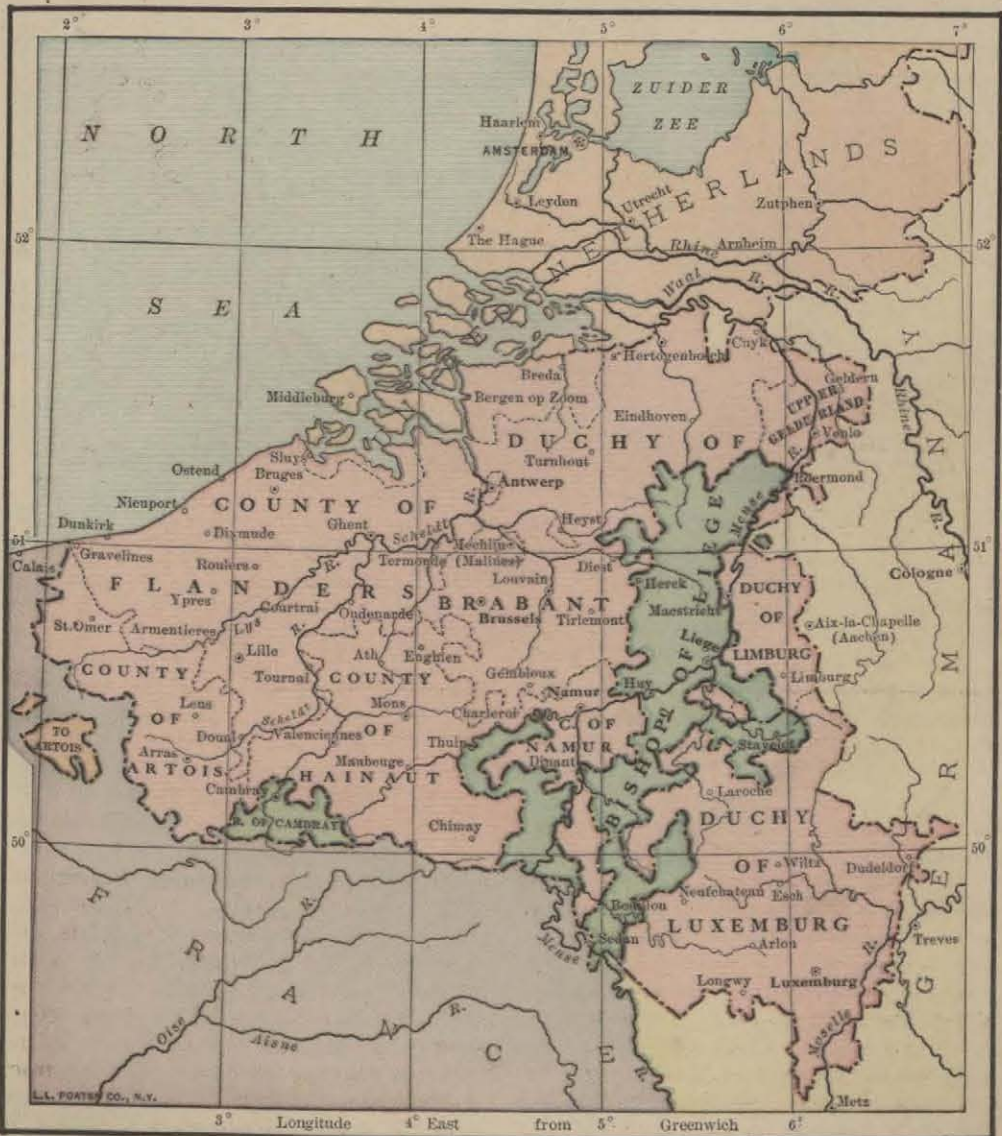
under the Burgundian rule of Philip the Good.

In one important respect the Burgundian princes were of benefit to the Netherlands. They were liberal patrons of the arts, and it was under their protection that the great school of Flemish painting took its rise, the master Jan van Eyck being court painter to Philip the Good. But their rule was not imposed without resistance from the burghers, the city of Ghent being once more the storm center of revolt. For this it paid by heavy humiliation and the curtailment of its ancient liberties.

The institution of the famous Order of the Golden Fleece at this time was one of the means employed by the Duke of Burgundy to create a party of nobles in opposition to the free cities. One advantage for some time enjoyed by the burghers over the nobles lay in the use of artillery, which was still a novelty. An iron gun five meters long, of a caliber of sixty centimeters, employed by the burghers of Ghent in 1380, has become historic, and bombs were also among their weapons. Their wealth enabled them to hire those "free companies," bands of professional soldiers,

which were now becoming features of warfare, and of which we hear so much in all the Flanders wars.

As a result of the insecurity of the country, large emigrations of Flemish weavers into England added to that country's prosperity at the expense of Flanders, while nature herself, by the silting up of some of the smaller rivers, brought about the decay of Bruges and Ypres, to the advantage of Antwerp. Still, amid all the turmoil of repression and revolt, the manufactures and commerce of the Netherlands continued to increase, as by irrepressible natural energy.



BELGIUM AS THE SPANISH NETHERLANDS, AFTER THE SUCCESSFUL REVOLT OF THE NORTHERN PROVINCES, NOW THE KINGDOM OF HOLLAND—THE COUNTY OF ARTOIS WAS ANNEXED TO FRANCE IN 1649

The accumulation of wealth seemed to be in the very nature of the people.

In 1477, by the marriage of Mary of Burgundy with Maximilian, afterward Emperor of Germany, the Netherlands passed under the rule of the house of Hapsburg. Of this marriage was born Philip the Handsome; and he, in turn, was the father of the great Charles V, with whose reign began the heroic age of the history of the Netherlands and its tragic struggle for religious liberty.

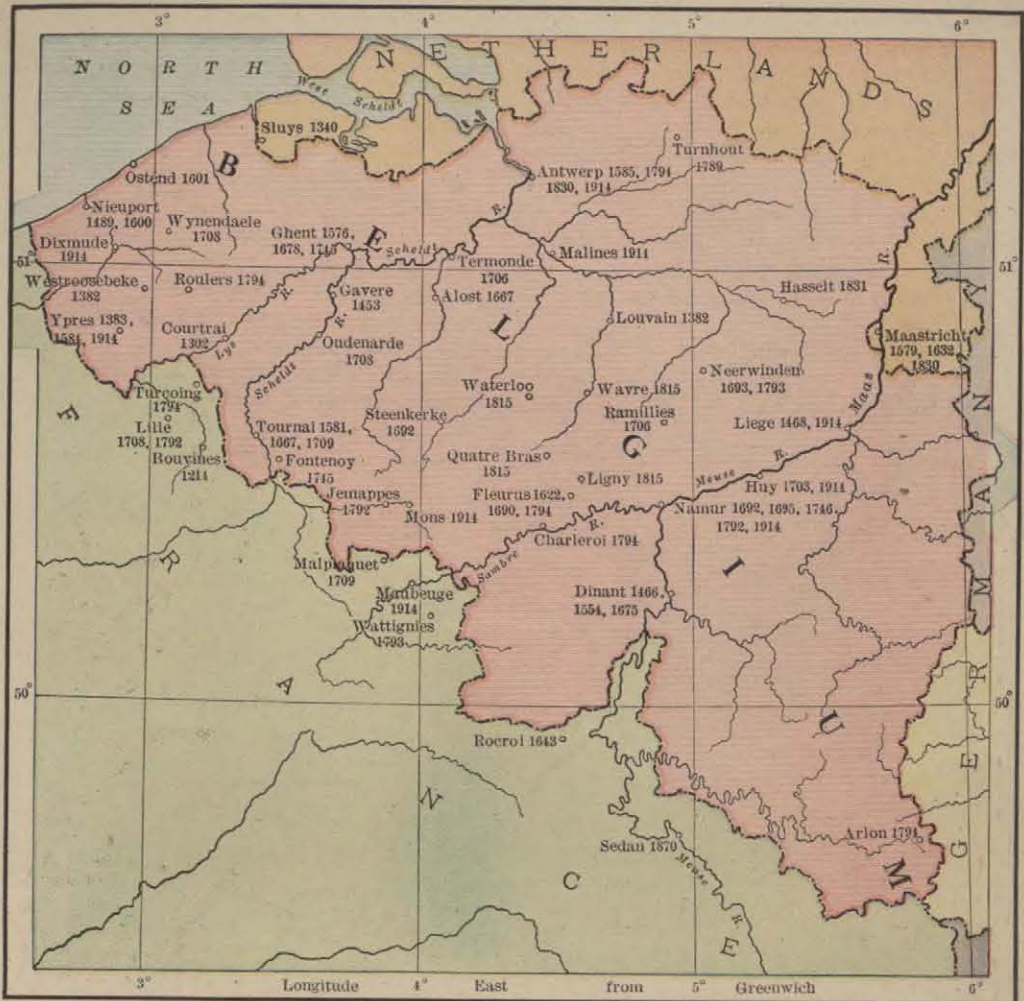
The Calvinism which had by this time taken strong root in the Low Countries found an enemy in Charles V less as being

a religious heresy than a political one. It bred fearless patriots and opposed the divine right of kings. It made the wealthy Flemings less ready to submit to the enormous exactions on which Charles V relied for the financing of his various wars. Therefore, its persecution became part of his program of absolutism.

The wealth and spirit of Ghent at this time are illustrated by the famous incident of the "chastisement" of that city in 1539, which was the shadow of coming events of a far sterner nature. Charles had demanded from the province a subsidy of twelve hundred thousand florins, of which



BELGIUM AS THE AUSTRIAN NETHERLANDS (1713-1794)—FROM 1794 TO 1814 IT FORMED PART OF FRANCE; FROM 1814 TO 1830 IT WAS UNITED WITH HOLLAND AS THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS



THE BATTLE-FIELDS OF BELGIUM, SHOWING WHERE FRENCH, BRITISH, AUSTRIAN, GERMAN, AND SPANISH ARMIES HAVE MET IN HISTORIC ENCOUNTERS

sum one-third was expected to come out of Ghent—which, by the way, was Charles's birthplace. The burghers refused the contribution, openly rebelled, and offered their allegiance to Francis I. of France, with whom Charles was at war. But Francis betrayed them to Charles, who thereupon resolved upon a dramatic punishment of the city.

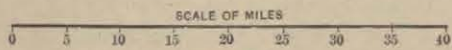
Entering it, unopposed, with a large force of Spanish soldiery and melodramatic pomp of retinue, with glittering lords, lay and ecclesiastical, and the like, he kept the burghers overawed for a month, and then solemnly pronounced his judgment, which took effect in numerous executions, the annulment of all the city's charters, privileges, and laws, and the exaction of an enormous fine. The more spectacularly to humble

the great city's pride, he forced hundreds of its chief citizens to sue for pardon, kneeling before him with halters around their necks. As a symbolic humiliation which they resented even more, he forced them to take down and destroy the great bell of the city, known as Roland, which had come to have something like a religious value from its having for generations been the rallying tocsin of their assemblies, calling them to council or to arms in times of danger. Having thus abased them to his satisfaction, he "very sweetly" forgave them—because Ghent was his native city.

But this was a comparatively mild prelude of persecution. Fifteen years later, when Charles had enacted that other melodramatic farce of his abdication, the Netherlands were to fall under the rule of

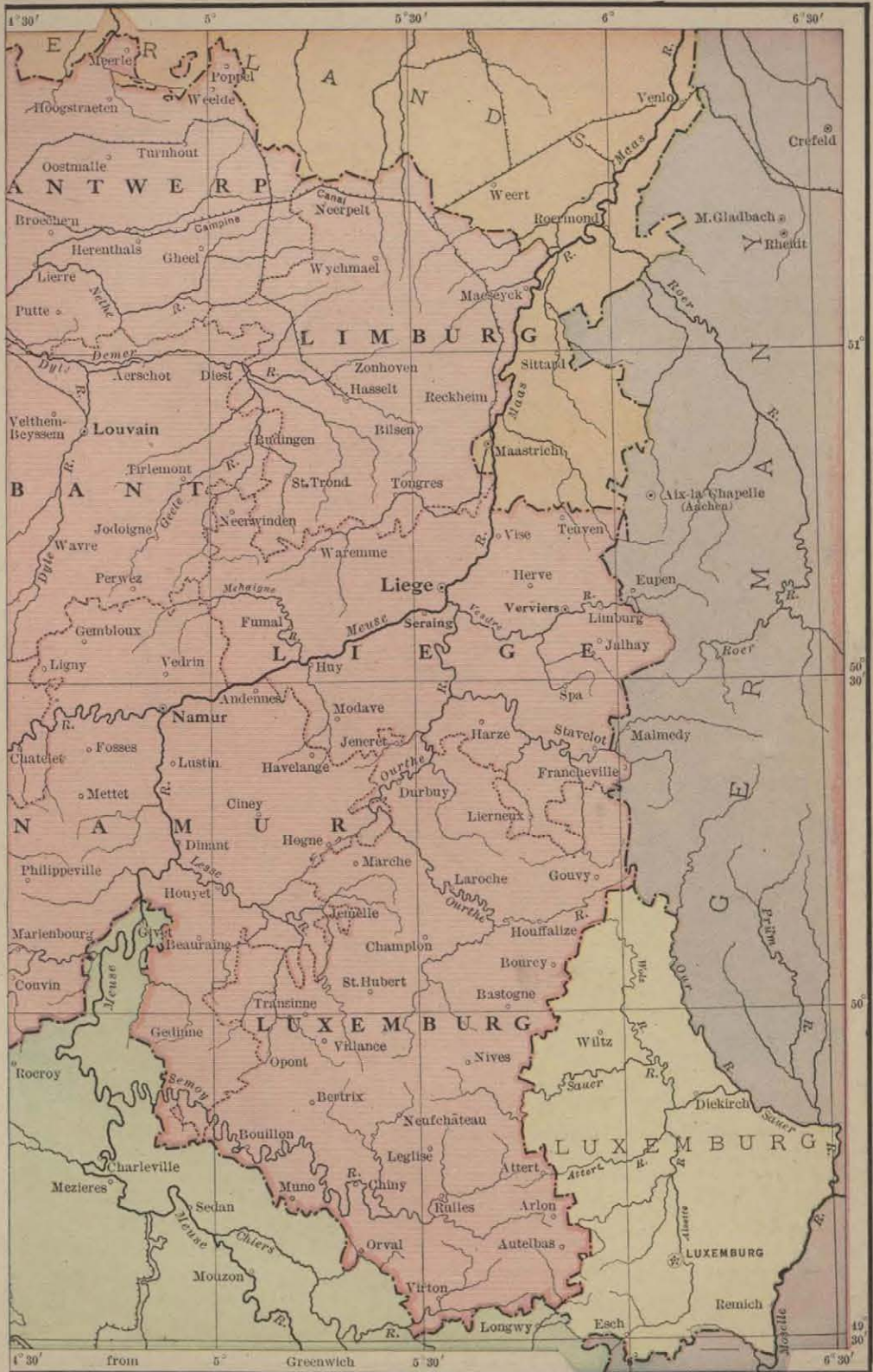


THE MODERN KINGDOM OF BELGIUM, ESTABLISHED BY THE TREATY OF LONDON IN 1831—ITS RULERS HAVE BEEN LEOPOLD I (1831-1865), LEOPOLD II (1865-1909), AND ALBERT I, THE PRESENT KING—AREA, 11,373 SQUARE MILES; POPULATION IN 1910, 7,423,784



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Longitude East 4°30'





PHYSICAL AND COMMERCIAL MAP OF BELGIUM, SHOWING HEIGHTS ABOVE THE SEA AND THE CHIEF AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS OF THE COUNTRY

a still more inhuman tyrant, the stupid, narrow-brained bigot of the Inquisition and the Spanish Armada, Philip II.

Philip, like his father, relied upon the Netherlands for the larger part of his revenue, but he was more concerned than his father to persecute heresy for its own sake. Moreover, he was obstinately bent on the impossible task of making the Netherlands another Spain, overawing the cities with Spanish garrisons, and employing Spanish ministers in the government, though races more incapable of fusion than the Spaniards and the people of the Netherlands cannot well be conceived.

Finding it impossible to break the burghers' spirit by usual methods, he called in the aid of the Inquisition, backed by the arms of perhaps the most bloodthirsty monster that ever disgraced the name of soldier, the Duke of Alva. The persecution that ensued is one of the most familiar horrors of history. Humanity still shudders at the atrocities perpetrated in the name of religion; but, appalled as is the imagination by that spectacle of unrealizable cruelty, even still more unrealizable are the courage that could support such tortures and the human idealism that could remain steadfast through all.

Repression, as ever, failed of its object. Alva's cruelties only resulted in the formation of the Dutch Republic, and the decline of Spain as a world-power dates from his persecution of a little people whose national spirit it fanned into a fiercer and a purer flame. To Philip's Alva the Netherlands made answer with Counts Egmont and Hoorn, and William of Orange.

But, alas, the victory of the patriotic reformers was far from being as great as it

might have been had all the states and cities forgotten their rivalries in the common cause. Their dissensions laid them open to the intriguing of ecclesiastical diplomacy, as well as to the subjection of military force, and only the seven northern provinces were to escape the thralldom of Spain. The remaining provinces, though still continuing to fight desperately for their liberties, were to become more and more irrevocably "the Spanish Nether-



THE CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS, GHENT, A ROMANESQUE AND EARLY GOTHIC STRUCTURE OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

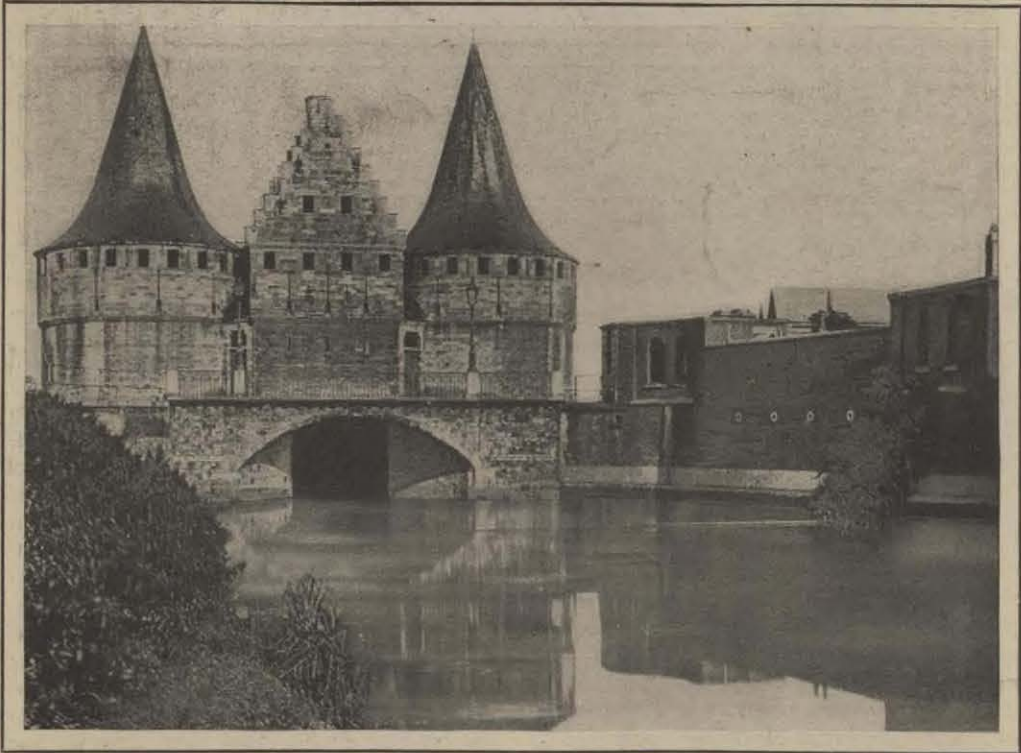
lands," to grow away from their northern kinsmen, and, strangely enough, to become a stronghold of the church which they had so long and so courageously fought.

In 1598 these "Spanish Netherlands"—now Belgium—were ceded by Philip II to his daughter Isabel on her marriage with Albert, Archduke of Austria. For a few years the harried land tasted the unaccustomed luxuries of peace and a beneficent rule, for Isabel and Albert were kindly despots, and, strangely enough, had the welfare of the conquered country at heart. They encouraged commerce and reorganized the administration of justice. Their religious zeal, which, creative instead of



destructive, expressed itself in the foundation of new monasteries and colleges and the building of churches, directly fostered the national art of painting; and by his appointment as court painter, they associated with their rule the fame of Rubens.

The peaceful interregnum was of brief duration, for, with Albert's death in 1621, without heirs, the Belgic Netherlands once more reverted to Spain, and for close on a century became the battle-ground on which that country fought out its differences with Holland and France. In these wars Belgium, as one may now for convenience call her, entered on her bitter experience as a "buffer state," and



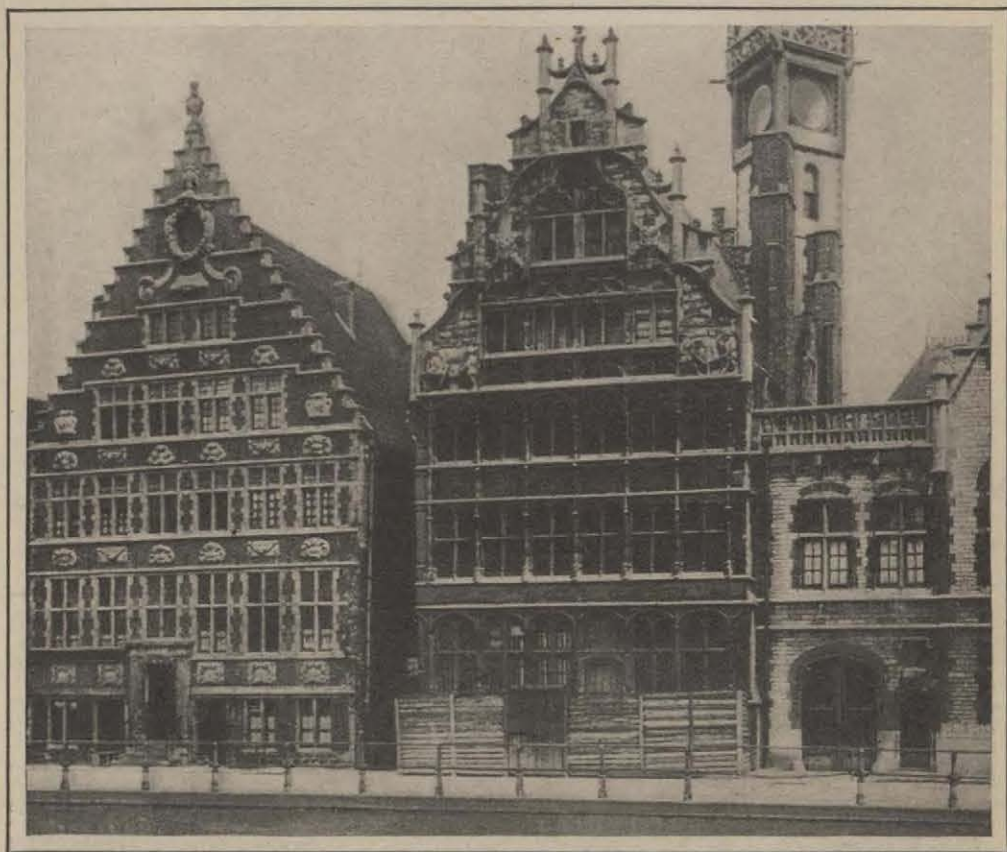
THE UPPER ENGRAVING SHOWS THE STATUE OF JACOB VAN ARTEVELDE IN THE MARCHÉ DU VENDREDI, GHENT—THE LOWER SHOWS THE RABOT, A FORT BUILT IN 1489-1491 TO DEFEND A GATEWAY OF GHENT

reaped the harvest of her failure to cohere with the Dutch Republic in its victorious stand for independence.

From now on, indeed, the Dutch, though kinsmen, were to prove her most uncompromising foes, closing the navigation of the Scheldt against her, and garrisoning certain fortresses on the French frontier.

the French, to be restored, however, to Austria by the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748.

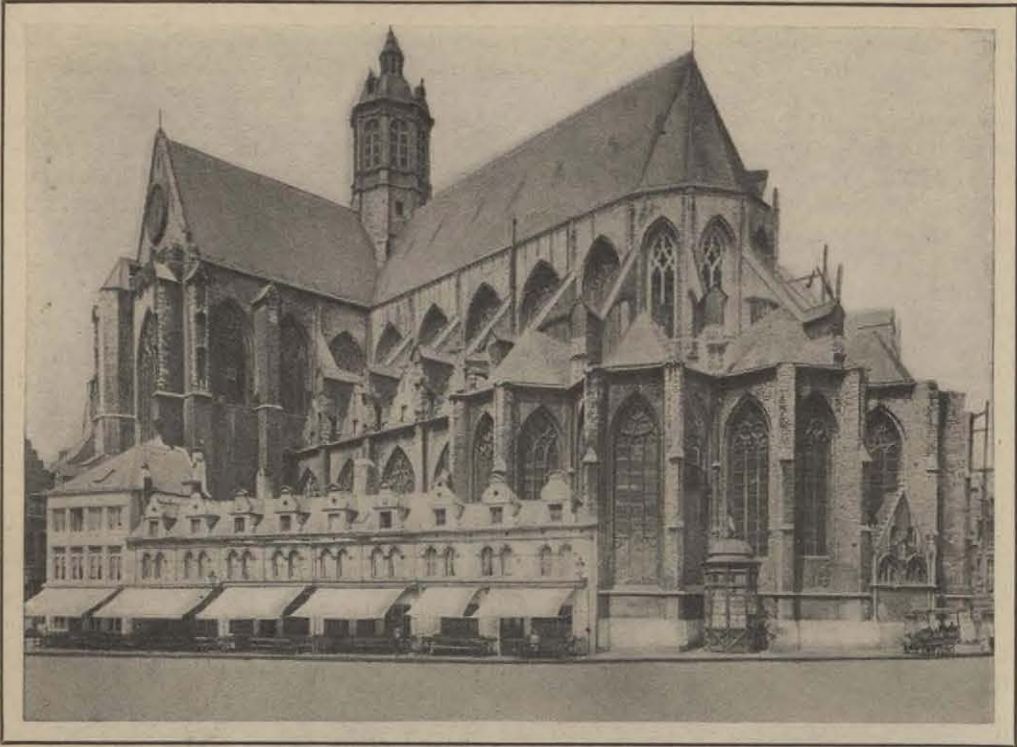
Frederick the Great's Seven Years' War (1756-1763) was one great European conflict which Belgium escaped, and under the liberal government of Prince Charles of Lorraine (1744-1780), viceroy for Maria



GILD-HOUSES OF THE GRAIN-MEASURERS AND THE SKIPPERS, ON THE QUAI AUX HERBES, GHENT—THE LATTER (ON THE RIGHT) IS CONSIDERED THE FINEST GOTHIC GILD-HOUSE IN BELGIUM

Even when the peace of Utrecht, in 1713, brought to an end the War of the Spanish Succession, Holland still insisted on retaining these unjust advantages; and certain provinces which Belgium had lost to France—Artois, Thionville, and others—were ceded to Austria, who now became her new overlord, the country from now on being known as "the Austrian Netherlands." Austria did well by its new possessions, but the jealousy of the Dutch defeated the attempts of Charles VI to make a commercial center of Ostend, and during the War of the Austrian Succession, the whole country fell under the domination of

Theresa, and the Archduchess Maria Christina (1781-1792), it enjoyed the unaccustomed luxury of nearly half a century of recuperative peace. Maria Theresa did much to encourage education, founding the Belgian Academy of Sciences, and it was her policy to check the growing domination of the church. This was a policy, however, which her successor, Joseph II, carried too far for the tastes of his Belgian subjects, and it is strange to realize that the same people who had agonized under the persecution of Alva were now to find a motive for their independence in loyalty to Alva's church.



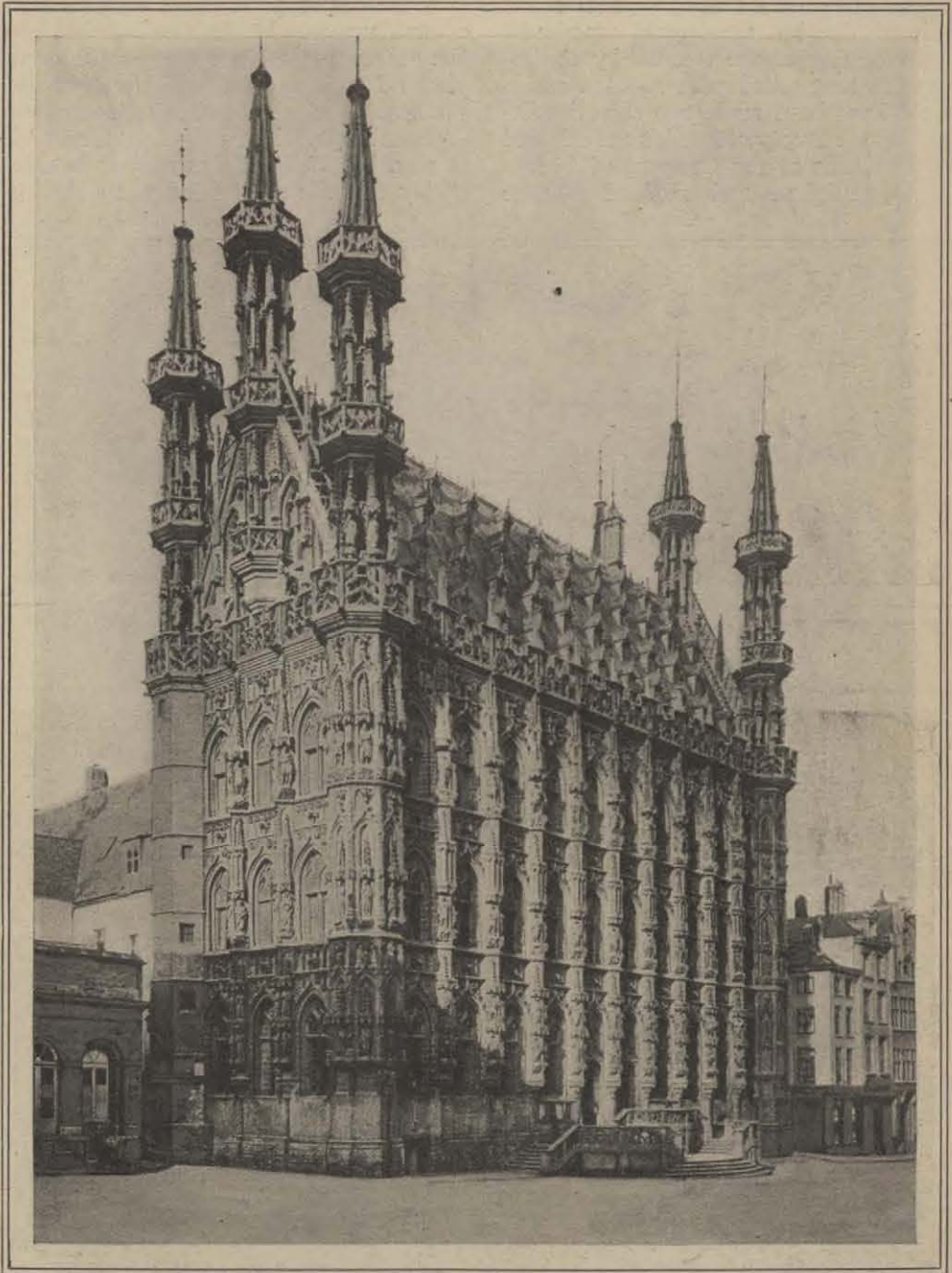
THE CHURCH OF ST. PIERRE, LOUVAIN, A LATE GOTHIC STRUCTURE BEGUN IN 1425 AND FINISHED ABOUT A HUNDRED YEARS LATER



THE LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUVAIN, FOUNDED IN 1724, AND ONE OF THE MOST VALUABLE IN BELGIUM—IT WAS DESTROYED BY FIRE ON AUGUST 27 LAST

Joseph's interferences in the secular government being a further cause of discontent, the people took up arms, and, after

be followed presently by the other provinces. Thus, on January 11, 1790, was formed the state of United Belgium. It



THE HÔTEL DE VILLE, OR CITY HALL, LOUVAIN, BUILT IN 1448-1459. ONE OF THE RICHEST AND MOST BEAUTIFUL EXAMPLES OF LATE GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE

defeating the Austrians at Turnhout and subduing the Austrian garrison at Brussels, Brabant declared its independence, to

was destined, however, to but a short existence, for in 1792 the French Revolutionary armies were in the field against

Austria, and by the battles of Jemappes and Fleurus (1794) Belgium became a part of France, to remain so till 1814.

The downfall of Napoleon in his final Belgian campaign of 1815 brought about an interesting but foredoomed experiment in the destiny of the country by the attempt at that union with Holland which should have been made two centuries before. By the Treaty of London (1814), and the provisions of the Congress of Vienna (1815), Belgium and Holland became

united under the kingship of Prince William Frederick of Nassau, taking the name of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The union lasted only sixteen years, and from the beginning gave but little promise of continuance. In the two hundred and forty-seven years since the establishment of the Dutch Republic the northern and southern Netherlands had gone widely separate ways. Not only had they been at war, but Belgium was now as irreconcilably Catholic as Holland was stubborn-



THE HÔTEL DE VILLE, OR CITY HALL, BRUGES, A FINE GOTHIC BUILDING BEGUN IN 1376—THE COUNTS OF FLANDERS USED TO APPEAR AT ONE OF ITS WINDOWS ON THEIR ACCESSION, AND SWEAR TO MAINTAIN THE POPULAR LIBERTIES

From a copyrighted photograph by the H. C. White Company, New York



A TYPICAL SCENE ON THE BELGIAN WATERWAYS—CANAL AND WINDMILLS NEAR THE PORTE STE. CROIX, GHENT

ly Protestant. Moreover, as we have already seen, a considerable proportion of the Belgic population, the Walloons, were largely French in blood and tongue, and French was the language of public affairs.

Possibly a *modus vivendi* might have been found even among these differences had the new Dutch king proceeded with even elementary tact. Unfortunately, his policy was one least favorable to cohesion. In every way he followed a Dutch bias, giving Dutchmen preference over Belgians in the government, attempting to supplant the French language by the Dutch, and even aiming to impose the Protestant religion.

Such a policy had its natural conclusion in 1830, when, inspired by the success of

the revolution in Paris, the Belgian patriots rose in revolt. The spark which is said to have exploded their long accumulating discontent was a performance in Brussels on August 25, 1830, of the opera of "La Muette de Portici." With the singing of *Masaniello's* well-known words:

*À mon pays je dois la vie,
Il me devra sa liberté—*

the audience rose to its feet and rushed into the streets, the whole city presently joining in the cry:

"Imitons les Parisiens!"

On the morrow the whole of Belgium was aflame, and by November 10 a provisional government had summoned a national congress, inviting the Duc de



A SCENE IN BRUGES, PERHAPS THE MOST PICTURESQUE OF ALL THE CITIES OF BELGIUM—ON THE LEFT IS THE BELFRY, THE SUBJECT OF LONGFELLOW'S WELL-KNOWN POEM

Nemours, son of Louis Philippe, to occupy the throne. A French king, however, would not have been acceptable to the powers, so the Duc de Nemours wisely declined the proffered honor, and a more satisfactory solution of the situation was found by the selection of Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, who was proclaimed King of the Belgians on June 4, 1831.

This arrangement had been come to by

agreement between the five great powers, and was duly ratified by them in a treaty signed at London on November 15, 1831. In spite of this decision of the powers, the Dutch king, William of Nassau, continued to hold out, with characteristic Dutch obstinacy, till it was found necessary to send a French army, backed by an English fleet in the Scheldt, to dislodge his garrison at Antwerp. After a spirited siege of three

weeks, the city capitulated; but it was not till 1839 that difficulties between Holland and Belgium were entirely dispersed.

Thus, in the words of Louis Philippe, "Belgium owes her independence and the recovery of her territory to the union of France and England in her cause," and what we might call her charter among the nations is the Treaty of London of 1831. It is hardly necessary to say that recent events have given this treaty a supreme importance in the history of Belgium. It may be interesting to recall the exact dates of its ratification by the various powers concerned—by Belgium, on November 20, 1831; by France, on the 24th; by Great Britain, on December 6; by Austria and Prussia, on April 18, 1832; and by Russia, on May 4, 1832.

Its chief international significance lay in the clause providing that Belgium "shall form an independent and perfectly neutral state." This neutrality carried with it such a heavy burden of responsibility that it is a little difficult for the lay mind to realize wherein it was such an amazing boon, and what difference there is between being a neutral nation on such terms and any other kind of nation. For, waiving the right to make offensive war on her own account, Belgium gained guarantees no more stable than those of an ordinary alliance, while she was bound to defend herself, if necessary, to maintain her *raison d'être*.

As a well-known publicist has expressed it, "the important point to be remembered is that while Belgium is a state whose neutrality is guaranteed by the chief powers, she retains in undiminished force the responsibility of making her neutrality respected, and, in the extreme case of invasion, of affording effective cooperation to those who intervene for her protection."

That neutrality, however, served to pro-

tect her during the perilous crises of 1840, when England and France seemed on the brink of war, and again in 1870, the year of Sedan—when England and France and Prussia signed a supplementary agreement engaging themselves to declare war upon any power who violated it. The more recent history of that presumably sacrosanct word does not enter into this brief sketch of Belgium's vicissitudinous past, of which little more remains to tell.

The choice of Leopold of Saxe-Coburg as the first king of the new state proved an unusually fortunate one. Not only was he a devoted servant of his people, but his noble personality, his great wisdom and just judgment in public affairs, gave him a unique position of influence among contemporary rulers, by whom his advice in international difficulties was often sought—by none more often than by Queen Victoria. One of the earliest industrial triumphs of his reign was the opening of railroads, quite or nearly the first in continental Europe.

The general commercial prosperity which once more flourished in Belgium during his reign was no less encouraged by his able son, Leopold II, who succeeded him in 1865, and whose most notable achievement was the establishment of the immensely valuable Congo Free State.

Leopold II died on December 17, 1909, and was succeeded by his nephew, the present King Albert. This gallant prince has already proved himself worthy of his illustrious traditions as the captain of a people whose noble profession through the centuries, perhaps more than any other European race, has been to fight the never-ending fight for freedom. Surely it may be said of the Belgians, as of their Frisian ancestors, that they "shall be free, as long as the wind blows out of the clouds, and the world stands!"

WHEN I AM DEAD

THE wind will roar above when I am dead,
The sun take dusk and the great dawn flare red;
The trees will sway above when I am dead,
And Time's mad chariot whirl forever sped;
While I drop back to that from which I came,
Men will be seared with the brief whip and flame
Of pitiless life. But let two lovers pass—
I shall forget, and sing beneath the grass.

Harry Kemp

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

BY GARRARD HARRIS

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN H. CASSEL



HE boy gazed at the three-room shack which was his home, and a wave of disgust surged over him.

Really the house was no worse than the one they had lived in last year, or year before last, each time on a different plantation, except that this one had larger cracks in it and the two main rooms were rough-ceiled with planks—therefore there were more rats.

However, the last misguided tenant had foolishly rived out sufficient white-oak pickets to go around a good-sized garden spot. Those pickets saved a lot of work and compensated for some of the disadvantages. Each one made four good pieces of stove-wood and, being brittle and dry, only two licks with the ax were necessary.

The door to the empty corn-crib creaked dismally on rusty hinges. From his seat on the rail-fence a bit down the road, where he had been picking the half-dried persimmons from the top rail, they having fallen from the tree above at the first frost, the boy eyed his father in the field beyond, searching in a half-hearted manner among the luxuriance of cockle-burs for any overlooked bolls of cotton.

"You, Hen-ner-y! Aw, Hen-ner-ree-e! Hen-ner-y Dodds, if you don't come 'ere an' chop me some stove-wood, I'll bust yore haid!"

Henry never turned to look at the slattern figure of his mother standing with hands on the straight lines where her hips ought to have been. Her face was diamond-shaped—widest at the wide cheek-bones, sloping downward to practically no chin—then, from the same point upward, to a narrow skull, at the apex of which, in a wad about the size of a walnut, was fastened her mouse-colored hair.

Henry knew he was too far for her to come after him. He had spent most of his fourteen and a half years calculating the chances of sudden onslaughts from her and endeavoring to do as little work as possible. His father had spent forty-five years calculating the same way on how he could exist on the least effort. Henry meditatively stuck another mealy, sugary persimmon in his mouth.

Mrs. Dodds, in disgust, stalked to the garden fence, yanked off two of the pickets, and with four blows of the ax had enough wood to start the pot of collard greens boiling for dinner. Then she took her snuff-stick from her mouth, gave it a careful swab in the can, and wiped her fingers on the faded calico dress which was above her shoe-tops in front and draggled on the ground behind.

A high-stepping team of bays hitched to a surrey came around the bend of the road. There were three men in it. The equipage stopped opposite Henry.

"You live here?" asked one of the men. Henry nodded.

"Where's your father?"

"Down yander in that cockle-bur patch a huntin' cotton-bolls."

"Call him, won't you? I want to talk to him."

Henry gave a shrill yell and the flat face of Mr. Dodds rose above the frost-seared leaves. Henry motioned for him to approach. Laboriously he climbed the fence, hanging a half-filled cotton sack across the top.

"I am the agent of the United States Department of Agriculture, Mr. Dodds—this is Mr. Brown, of the State Department, and, of course, you know your county superintendent of education?" said the first speaker.

Dodds stared blankly and scratched his head.

"Naw, suh—can't say's I do," he mumbled finally.

"Well, we want you to come to town Friday to the farmers' meeting. We are trying to get all the farmers interested, and we'll show you all how to more than treble your crops. You own this place?"

"Nope—jes' rentin'. Powerful pore place, too."

"What did you make this year?"

"'Bout three bales."

"Any corn, hogs, stock, sweet potatoes, molasses, peanuts?"

Dodds shook his head dejectedly as each article was enumerated.

"'Tain't no use foolin' 'ith them things a rentin'. Landlord do' want nothin' but

cotton—won't furnish grub fer nothin' but the cotton."

"But if you had made twelve bales of cotton instead of three, you'd have money—at that rate you could soon buy a place and give that boy of yours a chance—give him an education—have some money laid up for your old age."

Mr. Dodds gazed in goggle-eyed vacuity from one to the other of the party. His colorless orbs showed no spark of interest. His mind groped and scrambled for a reply.

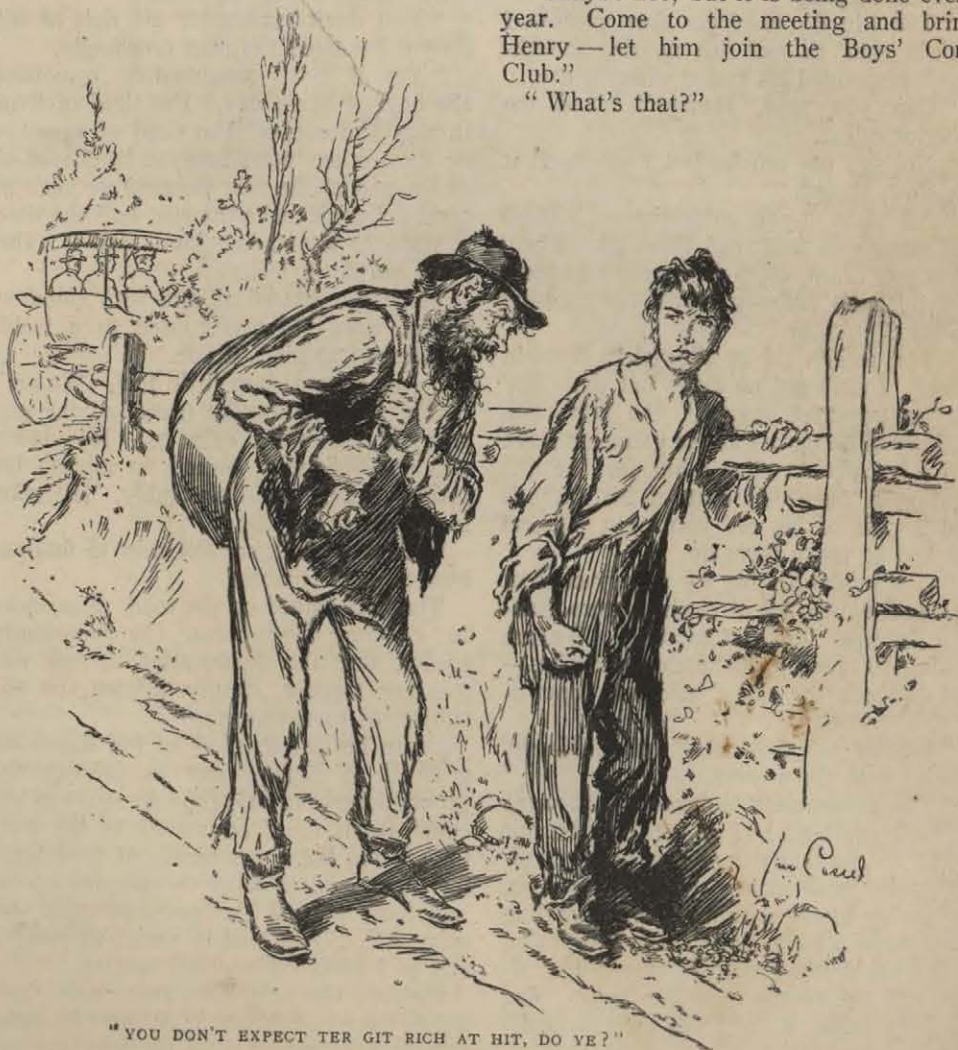
"You mean this hyar 'book farmin'?" he asked.

"Some people call it that," smiled the superintendent.

"Naw—that's foolishness. I ain't never seen nobody doin' like that."

"Maybe not; but it is being done every year. Come to the meeting and bring Henry—let him join the Boys' Corn Club."

"What's that?"



"YOU DON'T EXPECT TER GIT RICH AT HIT, DO YE?"

"Why, there's prizes offered aggregating two hundred dollars for the boys making, by their own efforts, the greatest crop of corn on one acre at the least expense. What is the most corn you ever made on an acre?"

"Twenty-five bushels, on bottom land."

"Well, there's a boy in South Carolina who made two hundred and fifty-four bushels on sandy land."

"I don't believe that."

"But it's so, man! Why, right here in your own State boys have made as high as a hundred and fifty."

"I don't believe that, neither. It can't be did."

"It has been done!"

"Well, I'm a goin' to try it, anyhow!" said Henry, who had come closer and was listening intently.

"You kin do what yer dern please—I ain't a goin' to fool 'ith no sich foolishness," responded his father with dignity.

"Can you read, Henry?" asked the superintendent.

"No, sir; not much—but I can spell it out slow, though."

"All right—you take these circulars and pamphlets and read them all. Then, when you finish, come to my office in town and join the club—come to the meeting Friday if you can."

"You reckon I'd be allowed in there in these? I ain't got no clo'es but these, an' they're powerful ragged," the boy said, flushing as he looked at the garments more fit for a scarecrow than a human. He was wearing a discarded coat of his father's and a pair of his old pants cut off and patched to make them do.

"If we were looking for merely clothes, we could have a lot of clothing-store dummies brought into the meeting. We are looking for the boy beneath the clothes—and beneath the skin," said the superintendent earnestly.

"What's all this fer?" asked Henry, pleased with the answer.

"The government and your State want to teach you boys how to get the most out of the soil, so that you will be better farmers, make more money, own your homes, and better homes, with more comforts than your parents have ever had. Everything in the world has improved except agriculture and the people who live by it. We will help them, if they will meet us half-way."

"I'll be there," said Henry with decision.

"Good—we'll look for you. See you later!" The whip flicked the backs of the bays, and with a wave of the hands the party whirled up the road.

"That's all foolishness," stubbornly announced Mr. Dodds. There was a far-away look on the face of the boy.

"Maybe 'tis, dad, but I'm plumb sick of livin' like a passel of niggers, movin' from one place to another an' doin' no good on none of 'em. We jes' range round like cattle, an' all we get out of it is a livin'—an' a mighty poor one at that."

"Ther hain't no money in farmin' no-how," said his father in a whining tone.

"Not the way we do it—I know that—but there is folks that gets rich at it—some right in this settlemint."

"You don't expect ter git rich at hit, do ye?" sneered the man crushingly.

"Yes, I do!" passionately responded the boy. "Some day. I'm tired of livin' in rags and cabins; I'm tired of squattin' on some other man's land, to be chased off at the end of the year because we ain't no good an' don't make the rent half the time. I want to own some land—an' if other folks can do it, I can!"

His father stared at him with colorless, bovine eyes and was roused to a feeble resentment at his attitude.

"Aw, ye're a durn little fool. We ain't nothin' but 'pore wite trash,' as the niggers an' rich folks calls us. My daddy was one—he never owned no niggers before the war, ner did his daddy. Hit takes money ter make money."

"It takes work, an' I'm goin' to find out how to do that work."

The boy walked up the road. Ensnconced in a sunny fence-corner, he laboriously spelled out the information in an elementary treatise, simply written, on the subject of corn-growing.

When he had finished he felt dazed—it was all so simple, just to prepare the ground loosely so that the ravenous rootlets could reach the food stored in the soil; then to see there was plenty of food there for them, and to keep the ground stirred and loose so that the moisture could not evaporate. With seed of sufficient vitality and of a good variety that was all.

He read the pamphlets twice before going to the meeting, and once there he hung eagerly upon every word the speakers ut-

tered. He found that there was a great agricultural school maintained by the State for boys who wanted to learn, and that an opportunity was offered for those who had no money to work their way through.

Full of a consuming ambition, he returned and marked off an exact acre on the sterile farm—they were to keep it another

under to rot until spring. The Doddses had no stock, consequently there was no barn-yard fertilizer. He ranged the fields and meadows with a gunny-sack, collecting the dried droppings, and piled them on a corner of his acre with layers of leaves between to rot and form a compost heap to be used in the furrows at planting-time.



A GREAT TERROR GRIPPED HIM, AND HE SLIPPED OUT OF THE DOOR NEAR WHERE HE SAT

year, as the owner could not find another tenant for the unproductive place.

He packed dead wood and brush upon his acre and burned it for the ashes, to add the needed potash and lime to the soil. He worked ceaselessly for two weeks gathering dead leaves and spreading them upon the land thickly, to be turned under to form humus and lighten the earth.

He pledged himself to a neighbor to cut two cords of stove-wood in return for that neighbor deep-plowing the acre with a three-mule team and turning the leaves

A wind-storm unroofed a corn-crib in which a neighbor had stored four wagon-loads of cottonseed, and a week's rain had soured and heated them. Henry bought the damaged cottonseed and the privilege of a wagon to haul it over to his compost pile by promising to deliver another cord of wood.

He saw little of his parents these days—he was up with the dawn, planning, scheming, working on his acre, or in the woods cutting stove-wood with which to fill his contracts. His mind was full—

surging and teeming with thoughts and ambitions.

He would win one of those prizes—he would do it if human endeavor could accomplish it. On bitter days, when other people hugged the fire, he swung his ax in the woods. On his fifteenth birthday he measured up two cords of his own—he had paid his debts, now he was accumulating working capital. There would be the spring rebreaking and bedding of the land to pay for, a sack or two of commercial fertilizer, and a hundred pounds or so of nitrate of soda for the final stimulant for his corn. He could settle for all these with his wood.

He dreamed at night of buying decent garments and going to the agricultural school on the prize-money he would win by selling his corn. The thought spurred him through days of blistered hands and aching back; he saw the broad, well-tilled acres of his own as he sat upon a log and munched his cold pone of corn bread and bit of soggy salt pork at noon in the woods. Time was too valuable to waste in going to dinner.

The winds of early March dried the land sufficiently for working: it was re-broken and bedded. The first of April the crumbly, mellow beds were opened into furrows, the now rich and rotted compost distributed in them. Selected seed had been got for all the club boys, and it was planted and covered.

Then the boy was called upon to help his father in the fields, but the scanty crop planted by the elder Dodds required little except perfunctory attention. He paid no heed to Henry's work, and took no interest in what the boy was doing. He gruffly silenced him when he tried to interest his father or explain the new methods.

The corn came on apace, and wonderful corn it was—such great, wide, glossy leaves, such sturdy stalks. Passers-by marveled—only Henry's father and mother seemed apathetic. Under his daily care it grew like some enchanted crop.

The pageant of summer gave way to the glories of autumn. One odorous day of golden sunshine and azure sky the committee came out and measured his yield—a hundred and sixty bushels! Even they were astonished.

That night the boy lay awake and figured—at seventy cents a bushel the corn would come to one hundred and twelve dol-

lars; that in itself would insure a year's schooling and decent clothes. Sleep would not come to his eyes; in the darkness broken by the squeaking and scuffling of the rats above, and the snores of his father in the next room, he saw visions.

Fearful and abashed, he hung on the outskirts of the crowd at the court-house the day the prizes were to be awarded. Mr. Dodds had walked to town with him, and Henry watched him furtively talking with Colonel Simmons, the lawyer.

A hush fell over the meeting—the prize-winners were about to be announced. The county superintendent rose and read from a list he held.

"The committee has awarded the first prize, one hundred dollars in gold, to Master Henry Dodds—the second prize of fifty in gold to—"

The rest of it did not matter to Henry. A surging pæan, as of many trumpets, was ringing in his ears.

"I can go! I can go!" was his first exultant thought.

When his name was called to come up and receive his prize a great terror gripped him—a shame for his ragged clothes and unkempt hair, his gaping shoes—and he slipped out of the door near where he sat and fled like some shy, wild thing.

"Is there no one here to receive the money for Henry?" inquired the superintendent.

"I'm his daddy—I'll take hit," announced the elder Dodds, shambling eagerly forward. The money was counted out into his trembling hand—five bright, heavy double eagles. He slouched down the aisle, half afraid to look again lest it would not be true that he had a hundred dollars in his hand. He had never held that magnificent amount of cash before. He gripped it fiercely, a half snarl upon his lips—the same expression one sees upon a dog making away with a bone to devour in secret.

Henry had gone home; he felt that he must get out of town. He must have room and free air in which to expand. Moreover, he did not want that crowd to see him. But to-morrow—ah, to-morrow he would return, sell the corn, too, buy some decent clothes, a trunk, and a ticket to the goal of his hopes—the agricultural college two hundred miles away.

Dusk had fallen as he walked into the cabin.



KNEELING BEFORE THE CHEERLESS FIREPLACE, SHE GROPED UNTIL HER SKINNY FINGERS CLAWED UP A LOOSE STONE

"Ma, I won first prize—a hundred dollars!" he cried joyously.

"I'm powerful glad, son, but I'm afeerd there's some trick in it."

"Oh, it's all right. And I want to leave for school to-morrow."

"Well, I don't see nothin' to hender ye. Where's yer pa?"

"I left him in town."

It was ten o'clock at night before a maudlin medley of song, curses, and loud, thick-tongued talk rose above the clatter of a wagon which came to a stop in the big road opposite the shanty.

In the moonlight Henry and his mother watched from the front door two figures assist a third to the ground. As the man lurched up the path the wagon drove on. He strode in the door and surveyed his wife and son with bibulous gravity; they eyed him in wonderment.

A brand-new slouch hat adorned his bulbous head; a shoddy suit of bizarre make and cloth, new shoes, a flaming red and green tie, and a shirt with large pink stripes on it completed a startling ensemble. His vest-pockets bulged with

cheap cigars, one of which he was licking preparatory to lighting. It smelled like a gasoline torch. In one coat-pocket was a bottle of liquor, from the other protruded five long plugs of tobacco.

In the light of the smoking lamp which had no chimney he stood eying his wife and son defiantly, albeit his gaze was not steady, and he leaned heavily against the mantel with feet wide apart.

Henry's heart sank. He surmised the source of such splendor.

"I don' puppose to go roun' lookin' like er dawg no more," truculently announced Mr. Dodds. "By gosh, I got money—plenty of it—see?"

He brought forth a handful of gold pieces, silver, bills, and slammed it on the table—another handful, still another. Mrs. Dodds forgot her seething wrath in wonder.

"Where'd ye git hit?" she demanded.

"I sole my cawn—got a hunnerd dollars fer't."

A cry escaped the boy.

"Why, dad, that corn ought to 'a' brought a hundred an' twelve!" Each cent had been conned and its purchasing

power figured over and over again. Twelve dollars would pay his expenses at the school for almost two months.

His father swayed, and, straightening up, glared at him.

"'S none o' yer business what I sell my cawn fer, Mr. Smart Aleck—*my* cawn, yer hear?"

"It's my corn!" exclaimed the lad—"corn I made, worked for, cut wood for, have gone hungry for, worked my fingers to the bone for—*my* corn, do you hear?" His voice rose shrill and passionate and his hands were clenched.

"Aw, you shet up! 'Tain't yore cawn—I ast Cunnel Bill Simmons an' he said by law, bein' yer daddy, I was entitled to all you made. By gum! Thet's *my* cawn, an' that's *my* money!"

Henry's senses reeled; he could hardly see, and he extended his hands blindly.

"Daddy—daddy, you ain't gone an' took my prize-money, too?" he wailed.

The grotesque figure bobbed its head mandarinlike, an expression of sly, satisfied power upon his face.

"Yeh—suttinly—that's mine, too. I got hit—an' I'm a goin' ter keep it, too."

"Well, all I got ter say is ye're a low-down dawg ter take ther child's money!" announced Mrs. Dodds shrilly.

Her husband was tasting for the first time the joys of power and the feeling of affluent drink.

"Don' keer what you think—an' what's more, he's got ter plant *two* acres more like that next year, an' th' nex', an' th' nex', till he's twenty-one. What he makes b'longs ter me."

"Do you mean," faltered the boy in a low, dazed tone, as if half afraid to ask the question, "that you're going to keep all my money and not let me go to school?"

His father nodded emphatically and took a pull at the bottle. "That's per-cizely what I mean, by gum," he announced with finality.

"Oh, my Heavens!" The boy shrank gropingly toward the door to the next room, and in the dark there threw himself across the ragged quilts and corn-shuck mattress that formed his bed. A torrent of bitter tears burst from his eyes. His castles were all down about his ears.

The sounds of a quarrel long and loud came from the room he left. By degrees it subsided, to break out at fitful intervals, marked by the heavy thump of the bottle

being set back upon the bare table. At last followed stertorous snores.

The boy was sobbing quiveringly in the dark. His sentence to the galleys was not an inviting prospect for him, in lieu of what he had dreamed.

The cocks were crowing for midnight when his mother softly opened the door and, tiptoeing to the bed, sat down beside him. He felt her rough, toil-worn hand caress his brow. There had been little tenderness between the two—somehow the fight for existence had routed all such sentiments on the surface, yet in his hour of loss and sorrow the boy instinctively pillowed his head upon the shrunken bosom and threw his arms about her neck as he had done in his baby woes.

She sat rocking slightly, her arm about him and her free hand patting the tear-drenched cheeks. At last his racking sobs ceased and he merely quivered with each breath.

"Honey child," she said softly, "I'm so sorry—hit *ain't* right—hit ain't right!"

He snuggled closer.

"I love ye, son, an' ye sha'n't grow up ter live like we've lived. An' I'm proud of ye, son—an' ye've been a good boy."

He patted a withered cheek tenderly.

"Yer paw's asleep in thar, with his head on that pile o' yore money—an' I c'd git some of hit fer ye."

"No'm," he replied dully, "it's his'n now—he's done took it, let him keep it. I wouldn't touch a cent of it. It's the price of my freedom. I'm goin' away."

"Where to, son?"

"I'm a goin' to leave this very night, 'ithout a cent, an' walk to that school—it's two hundred miles, but I'm a goin', if I live. I can work through."

Without a word the woman brought the smoking lamp from the other room and tied up a few ragged clothes in a bundle—the best he had. She combed the boy's hair—ah, how often had she done that when he was no higher than her knees! With her apron she wiped away the traces of his tears and got his hat from the other room and placed it on his head.

Then, kneeling before the cheerless fireplace, she groped until her skinny fingers clawed up a loose stone; she blew the covering of ashes off, and there lay four five-dollar gold pieces!

She rose and thrust them eagerly into his hand.

"Take 'em, sonny — they're mine — I airned 'em. I've picked cotton for 'em an' saved 'em cent by cent and year by year 'gainst th' time when you'd be sick, since you was a little chap, so's there'd be money fer th' doctor an' fer med'cine. An' then, ef—ef you died, I couldn't bear to think o' my baby boy a lyin' all ragged in an old, plain pine coffin, bought by charity, an' buried the same way.

"I've gone hungry, sonny, rather'n touch that money—I've gone 'most naked, an' cold, an' stented myself, to keep it. Take 'em, my baby child, it's all I c'n give except my love.

"Go away an' make a man of yourself, Henry—an' oh, sonny—sonny, I want you to have yore chanst — but please don't

never quite forget yore pore old mammy — will you, son?"

She threw her arms about his neck and wept, for he was all of love she had.

As he turned at the bend of the road for a last look, in the door of the cabin a gaunt, time-scarred woman stood holding the spluttering light high above her head. She shaded her streaming eyes with the other hand.

Then he put his face to the north, and as he passed over the crest of the hill and faced the pole star gleaming with a light as high as his own resolve, his own eyes welled again, and a great hunger for the gaunt woman in the doorway gripped his heart.

ON FIFTH AVENUE

FAR wandered from his wonted deck
My sailor stood, with lips austere,
And clean, cool eyes and rounded neck
That comes of hauling at the gear.

Clad in his smartest stood he there,
Aloof, alert, before the crowd,
With yellow, close-curled Saxon hair,
Good shoulders, and a torso proud.

"What thinks he of the throng?" I mused,
And watched him stare with steady gaze
Of eyes to star and beacon used,
To northern mists and tropic blaze.

For he was fresh from hostile seas,
And straits where baffled currents swirled,
From waves that crush and winds that freeze
Before the headlands of the world.

And he on drunken decks had trod,
Lost in the storm's black universe,
When the stark spirit knows her God,
Yet greets Him with a mindless curse;

When, man among unshaken men,
He served the wills that stood to foil
The hurricane's compulsion—then
Turned at its close to meaner toil.

"What are his thoughts?" I mused again,
As briskly on the sunlit pave
Passed folly's clan, the weak, the vain,
The fop, the parasite, the slave—

Thousands by thousands through the hours,
Withdrawn from life's realities,
And blinded to the wholesome powers
That walk the mountains and the seas.

I gazed, and there was none to warn;
I gazed incredulous, and saw
Those eyes that held the seas in scorn
Filled now with envy and with awe!

WOMEN AND CHILDREN LAST

BY SAMUEL J. LEWIS



IT came as suddenly as the flashing sword of death.

In the morning Big Lenz—surname Struegman, but Big Lenz to all the countryside—was a rather phlegmatic and wholly unromantic gardener, laying aside his long-stemmed, after-breakfast pipe to worry and scabble every square inch of his pocket-size farm; literally to force and jerk and wrest from it the necessaries of life.

If occasionally he wrung from the reluctant soil a few skimpy comforts for Marie and Little Lenz, that was only because Big Lenz was stolid and untiring, and knew not much but how to work and smoke and love. Also occasionally he kissed Marie and Little Lenz—whenever he had time, and thought of it.

In the morning Marie was a broad-backed, deep-lunged, fat-fisted girl-wife who flat-footed about the house and yard, punctuating her toil with shrill yelps at Little Lenz to keep that head of his out of the rain-barrel and those meddling hands and feet out of the butter-pail. Marie, too, found time to lavish her kisses with a profuse abandon. They were moist, voluminous kisses, as became her style and size, but they were the kisses of true love, and Big Lenz and Little Lenz appreciated them at their full worth in spite of their explosive qualities.

At noon Big Lenz was a soldier, in capacious bagging trousers and ill-fitting coat with ridiculous, flapping skirts. A flat cap was on his head; beneath it a colored handkerchief was tucked to curtain his neck against the August sun. He was already several miles from home, whistling and humming as he ambled along with a thousand others. He was going into battle. He was going to ride on the train. He might, perchance, also ride on the wings of death, but Big Lenz was not afraid. It was all in a man's work.

At noon Marie, brown hair flying, red cheeks still redder, if possible, skirt tucked around her knees, and bare feet stamping an emphasis to her rage, was bitterly and raucously reviling a regiment of invading cavalymen—"great, hulking, lazy swine," she dubbed them—who trampled the garden truck into the ground from whence it had sprung, stampeded the two cows, burned the sheds to give their approaching field-guns a free range of the garrisoned town in the distance, and created a most astounding havoc. All of which was to the intense delight of eighteen-months-old Little Lenz and the boiling, choking, smothering exasperation of buxom Marie, who for the first time in her twenty-one years fell back for relief upon the profanity of her fathers.

At night Big Lenz, hung with cartridges, tin cup, blanket, and smaller accouterment, as a Christmas-tree is strung with baubles, detrained in the open country some sixty miles from his dismantled farm. He washed in a shallow creek, ate what was handed to him from a perambulating army kitchen, heard the locomotive whistle shriek, and watched the train back away.

He noted that the camp lay between the stream and a woodland, that sentries were thrown out on every side, and precautions taken against sudden attack. Off in the distance heavy guns barked and coughed dully, but no shells came his way. At another point a great red reflection on the dark sky showed where a village was in flames. Smaller illuminations in the same general direction told of individual farm-houses going up in flames.

All the reflections, big and little, were in the path of the enemy, persistently advancing, but still too far away to attack, leaving Big Lenz no cause for immediate worry. He was lucky, escaping sentry detail, and having nothing to do but smoke and talk, and then, when the excitement had died down, to roll in his blanket and

sleep with his head pillowed on his rifle-butt.

Here was genuine novelty; a man's pastime; something to remember when he had grown old. So he continued to whistle and hum by turns. Why not? Had he known "This Is the Life," he would have added the tune his repertoire. For Big Lenz, manlike, was happy on a full stomach and a full pipe.

He did give a fleeting thought to Marie and the boy. What were they doing? Having a fine time, probably, with plenty to eat and little to do. But why speculate? Surely they were being cared for as the wards of a watchful and paternal government. Then he dismissed them, to listen to a comrade's funny story.

At night Marie slept, with a score of other refugees, on the floor of a neighbor's house. Little Lenz cuddled in the crook of her arm, and in his baby dreams he pummeled the mother's hard flesh with his tiny fists, just as he had heard her threaten to pummel the despoilers of the Struegman acre.

The Struegman house had been taken—only temporarily, Marie had been informed by a fiercely mustached colonel, who bristled with hair and side-arms—as a sort of combined mess-hall and headquarters for the officers of a cavalry outpost. Every fence, shed, growing plant, and vine had been leveled with the ground. Only the house remained, and that merely through the enemy's temporary necessity. Doubtless it, too, would be razed when the great guns began to boom.

Some of Marie's oxlike stoicism fell away, and she wept in a shaking, mumbling, heaving manner. Her woman's heart was great in proportion to her body and strength. She had not often cried in her life, and her sobs were almost cataclysmal as she held Little Lenz to her and found comfort in his sleepy blows.

She thought of Big Lenz and how he fared. She knew his danger was great. She had heard her elders speculate on this war, and speak of the million lives it would surely cost when it came. Pondering the possible death of Big Lenz was terrible, not because she questioned her ability to provide for Little Lenz—she had strength to make a living for a dozen such—but because she loved her man, and their two and a half years of married life had been very happy.

Lenz and Marie were still reckoned as honeymooners by the neighbors. Their home had been built with their own strong arms. Wedded when they were both children in years, they had already come up from little or nothing to a fair degree of prosperity, and certainly to much contentment. But in a moment this meager fortune had utterly vanished—and Lenz, too, might be gone forever, just like the crops and the cows.

Then, because there were others crying, and it became monotonous and unsatisfying to weep where none had time to sympathize, Marie finally ceased and fell into a sleep disturbed by visions of battle, of heaps of dead and wounded men, each with the face of her Big Lenz, and of Death, caparisoned like a gigantic, ruthless soldier, riding his coal-black steed through smoke and flame and withering, hopeless catastrophe.

II

THREE days later Big Lenz had his first smell of battle. Being a sturdy, virile patriot to whom fighting came almost as naturally as work, he sniffed of it long and deep.

When the sun was only two hours high, the bullets began to pepper and sing around the army machine in which Lenz was a very small and apparently inconsequential cog. A mile away, on either side of a grove of trees, little brown spots rose and fell. With each rising there were tiny jets of smoke, white in the clear air, and soon disappearing on the breeze.

The enemy was pushing forward in force, coming on relentlessly, as he had been doing for days. Those bobbing spots, now visible, now hidden, were his skirmishers, sent out to reconnoiter, to feel out the opposition, to pick out and lay bare any weak spots, then to draw aside, so that the field-guns could mow and harrow a path for the vanguard.

Already, high over the heads of the advancing skirmishers, the shells from the big guns in the rear described their swift parabolas. There was a rumbling roar, constant and tremendous, as the monster war engines belched shot after shot. Looking far off, Lenz could see them mounted on hillocks, and for a time he unconsciously became oblivious to other things in noting the interval between the appearance of the puff of smoke at the cannon's muzzle and

the instant when the dull boom reached his ears.

He heard two officers, stop-watches in hand, figuring in split seconds the precise difference between sight of smoke and sound of shot, to determine the actual distance of the batteries. But this was carrying things too far afield for Lenz. The technical discussion appealed to him much less than the more immediate and vital fact that a comrade ten feet away had sunk to the ground with a bullet through his chest, just as the man he had slept next to the night before was being carried away bleeding from a ghastly open shrapnel wound in his neck.

Now, with the onrush of the skirmishers, part of the enemy's plan became apparent. From the shelter of the grove and its underbrush a masked battery of machine guns opened viciously on the brigade of which Big Lenz was a unit. While attention had been diverted to skirmishers and distant field cannon, these small and spindling slayers, little larger than a photographer's tripod and camera, had been slipped among the trees under cover of a hill just behind. It was impossible to locate them exactly, but from their concealment beyond leaves and vines the accuracy of their aim and the effectiveness of their leaden storm were soon evident.

Men, dead and wounded, began to reel and drop, singly, in pairs, by the half-dozen. Surely it was time to do something to stop those invisible engines, to silence the demon mechanism that mingled horrid death with its infernal racket. Even the slow mind of Big Lenz realized the need of action, and with his tardy realization came the sharp order to advance.

It was in this danger-fraught instant that Fame, singling out Big Lenz for her smile, touched his shoulder and signaled him on. He followed as she beckoned. Really, there is nothing else to do when Fame takes charge of things.

With two thousand other men, forming a great human flying wedge, he started over the uneven field toward the grove, crouching and running a few yards, then going down on one knee to fire haphazard at the unseen foe among the trees, then rushing on again.

As an immense pepper-box might shake out its hot flakes in a fiery stream, so that deadly grove emptied its scorching, searing shots. The point of the wedge was crum-

pled and bent back; the middle faltered, wavered, but was pushed on by the base. Men gasped, cried out, leaped into the air, and fell on their backs. Some gave no sound, but toppled face downward into the turf. In the midst of it all Lenz's mind recalled something he had once heard—that there is hope for a wounded man who falls on his back, none for the one who sprawls on his face.

The man to the right of Lenz staggered and went to his knees. In the fall the bayonet on his rifle ripped the sleeve of Lenz's coat and pricked the flesh of his arm. A soldier just in front screamed, spun around, and groveled on hands and knees. Lenz tripped, was pushed from behind, and pitched over him, cursing and scrambling.

He sprawled flat for a moment over the fallen one—an officer—and in doing so his hand came in contact with a revolver-butt. Bewildered, his eyes blinded with dirt and dust, Lenz sprang to his feet. His left hand clutched the revolver, his right still grasped the rifle by its middle. He was pushed on, forced on for another hundred yards, and finally, with fifty other dirty, panting, sweating comrades, catapulted into the edge of the wood.

Just ahead, and at last in plain sight, were the rattling, popping machine guns. Their fire was directed over his head, and Lenz watched them for one brief, impressive moment.

On a trip to the big city, a year before, he had seen a tall building rearing its framework toward the sky. Air-driven riveters pounded and pecked at the structure's steel ribs. Yes, that was it! Those terrible things, hidden away in the wood, sounded exactly like the automatic riveters—indeed, like a thousand of those riveters.

But in the city the work had been constructive, upbuilding. Here it was destructive, down-tearing. Each of these pecks, each hammer-blow—eight hundred a minute from each machine—meant a half-ounce of lead sent to search out a human billet. And each gun, so Lenz had been told, although the figures were too large for his comprehension, was capable of discharging eighty thousand shots without reloading.

Something just beyond the vomiting machines attracted his attention. There, on a horse, pointing this way and that with a saber, was a strapping young officer. The

gold braid on breast and sleeves, the heavy epaulets, the trappings of the animal he bestrode, all proved him a man of considerable rank.

Then Fame, still beckoning, urged Lenz to a daring deed!

Once, when a boy on his father's farm, far up a wooded hillside, a wolf had slain half a dozen calves, and had worried and torn to death the dogs sent against it. Young Lenz, in his anger, had planned a peculiar vengeance. He baited a trap with a rabbit, and then, when the wary marauder refused to be captured by gripping steel, had lain in wait and caught it with his bare hands. He held it prisoner in a wooden cage in the barn-yard until his father insisted that it must be killed, because of the terror its howls and yappings created among the farm animals.

Something akin to that old anger surged over Lenz as he watched the officer and saw him directing the murderous work of the guns. Here, then, was the man-wolf, the executioner, who had sent into eternity so many of the comrades, the countrymen, beside whom Lenz had slept and ate and smoked!

He would capture this man—would put him in a cage, for all the world to see and mock and revile; yes, just as he had caged that other bloodthirsty wolf. And he would make the punishment all the more humiliating by bringing it about through a contest of bodily strength—he, a peasant, against this scion of nobility, this upstart of rank!

Lenz saw his fifty fellow soldiers throw themselves at the guns. They closed upon them in a hand-to-hand struggle with pistol and bayonet. The gun-crews fell in heaps; one by one the deadly weapons were silenced, overturned.

In this Big Lenz took no part. His was to be a flank movement for a greater victory. He nosed through the grass and bushes around to the right of the officer; and at the moment when the latter, seeing his command overwhelmed and his guns put out of action, turned to flee, Lenz sprang at him.

He whirled his rifle-butt aloft and struck at the officer's helmet—a blow that would have crashed through steel and hair and bone, had it landed. But it did not land. It slipped over the helmet's side, grazed the man's shoulder, and fell on the neck of the horse.

The animal reared, squealing, on its hind legs, and the officer slashed furiously at Lenz with his saber. In mid air Lenz caught the wrist of the saber hand, clutching it and stopping the blow so it merely knocked off his cap.

But the plunging horse, descending to all fours, struck Lenz with its hoof and ripped him from hip to knee, tearing through clothing and flesh and muscle almost to the bone. Still holding the officer's right hand, even though the left fist rained blow on blow straight in his upturned face, Lenz, with his free hand, jerked from his belt, where he had stuck it, the revolver he had taken from the fallen man outside the grove. Then, realizing that he was no match for maddened animal and desperate man, he shot the horse, and with one mighty heave pulled his struggling prisoner clear of its falling body.

His revolver held to the man's back, he ordered a forward march, keeping the pace himself in spite of his dragging leg and the excruciating pain of the wound. Reaching the open, the stolid Lenz, who probably had never laughed heartily at a joke in his life, felt moved to indulge in a brief bit of pleasantry.

"So! You lose me my cap, did you?" he grumbled. "All right, then—I take yours. That's fair!"

He seized the disarmed officer's glittering helmet and planted it above his own ears. Zip! S-s-s! Pst! Half a dozen bullets sang around his head. Big Lenz was beginning to think more quickly now, and he understood instantly that the enemy's head-gear made him a target for his own companions.

"Take back your fool's cap," he cried. "The wearing costs too much!"

He hastily clapped it back upon the head of the man with whom he was performing a fair imitation of the lock-step. This peculiar action, viewed from afar, evidently brought pause to the marksmanship, for no more bullets came the way of the pair. Big Lenz marched his captive straight into the presence of his colonel and staff.

Would the officer, with his arms aloft and a pistol-muzzle in his ribs, please give his name and rank? He would. Indeed, he was rather proud of that name. He was Count Franz Diesendorff, captain of artillery. There they had it; they could make the most of it.

So ho! Big Lenz Struegman, a simple peasant, unskilled in battle—a soldier of the second rank, and only four days from home—had taken with his own hands the son of the enemy's minister of state!

War might be wearisome, brutal, inhuman; but, after all it was not so bad. When fortune smiled, there was glorious opportunity for even the most obscure and insignificant.

So ho! Marie and you, Little Lenz! There at home, with nothing to do but sit and eat yourselves gross and fat! If you could only see the husband and father now!

So thought Big Lenz. Then, from loss of blood and the blinding, grinding agony of his leg wound, he crumpled to the ground.

III

TENDERLY they laid Big Lenz on the white hospital cot next to that of the Croaker. His feat had won him such renown that his life was a precious thing to be closely guarded. He would be an inspiration for others; he was to be treated in a way to urge others to do likewise. The unread gardener, with the mold of his farm still upon him, must receive the care, the medical attention, and the gentle nursing that might have been accorded a wounded general.

But the Croaker—he of the next white cot—feared neither prince nor pauper when it came to voicing his croaks. He had been an itinerant preacher before the war. He had not sought, because of his calling, to avoid what he regarded as a duty to his country, and thus he was flat on his back.

He had fought hard and well; his wounds proved that. Three bayonet gashes told that he had done his share in hand-to-hand strife. The Croaker's tongue might safely wag, though the rest of his body must remain quiet, and he still possessed ideas that required occasional airing. Hence his sobriquet.

"Famine and pestilence—they make up the ultimate price of war," he argued to those on the beds around him, Big Lenz among them. "And it is not the soldier who foots the bill. The man goes into action—it is all in a lifetime—so why not? A bullet, or maybe sharp steel, seeks him out, and he drops to a quick and painless death, or to a few hours of suffering on the

field and then to a clean, soft cot, with softer hands to anticipate his every need. If he is killed, his troubles and his fighting are at an end—it is the long rest. No more forced marches; no more wearisome nights in the trenches; no more of the battle's panting thirst or the torturing monotony of the siege. If merely wounded, he is cared for, made well, and sent home, carrying endless, tedious tales of heroism to pester his descendants and brighten his own toothless old age.

"But what of the ones at home? What of a land laid waste—of cities ruined, fields trampled, uncultivated, unproductive? What of the acres that are plowed with cannon-balls and sown with the dead bodies of the strong men who might have tilled the soil and raised a better crop than smoke and flame and disaster? What of a harvest of stacked guns instead of the good stacked corn? What of the breeding disease that creeps and crawls upon its victims? What of the homes dismantled and the roofless, shelterless millions? What of the weeping of the lonesome years, and the grief that grips and numbs and crushes? What of the awful waiting for the footfall that is never heard? What of a manless country and those growing up without a father's guiding hand?

"There, brothers, is the real cost of war," continued the Croaker, warming to his peroration. "And that cost must be met by the second, the third, and even the fourth generation. I have fought—I did not shirk—I will fight again, perhaps—and I have a right to speak. We men are the privates in the ranks; we are the playthings of kings; the cheap pawns on the monarchs' chess-board. But we are at least fed—and well, too. Napoleon said that an army traveled and fought on its stomach, and his words are still recognized as truth. Our stomachs are full that we may fight, be wounded, and fight again—so that kings may continue to rule and move their chessmen. But do you think of those who are neither privates nor playthings, who are not even pawns, whose stomachs are never filled, and whose anemic bodies run veinfull with the waters of the sickness that stalks in the army's wake?

"Remember, brothers—famine and pestilence!"

Big Lenz heard in a stupid, subconscious way, but he did not heed. He was getting

well, coming back to his old strength and vitality.

War a hell? The idea was absurd! Why, hadn't the king's messenger come only the day before and left the gay decoration which even then hung from the bedpost over his head? Wasn't the news of his own tremendous deed going from one end of the kingdom to the other? Wasn't he—Big Lenz Struegman—an honored member of a royal order? Hadn't it come in a single moment, a thing for which others toiled a lifetime—and failed? There was the decoration in ribbon and gold to prove it. And didn't he still recall every word that the messenger had said?

"His majesty wishes to be remembered to you, Lenz Struegman, and congratulates you upon your manly courage and great service to your country."

Could such things come except out of war? Certainly not! Therefore war was good.

And Marie and Little Lenz—with their warm house, two cows, half a hundred hens, and garden-stuff enough to feed half that hospital! Why, Marie and Little Lenz were at that very moment feeding and stuffing and fattening and laughing, so that they might the more contentedly bask in the glory that would be reflected from the mighty, the heroic Big Lenz.

And if that had been his experience, wasn't it also the experience of a thousand—yes, a million others? The Croaker was jealous; he was being gnawed by envy. He had simply failed to perform any heroic feat. The Croaker was a pessimist—that was plain!

Of course, Big Lenz had never heard the truism that a pessimist is a man who is compelled to live among optimists. Even if he had heard it, he would have lacked the intelligence to apply it to the case in point. He knew that the Croaker was an envious pessimist, who had come honestly by his evil name.

Famine and pestilence! What rot!

IV

BIG LENZ stepped from the rear of the army ambulance at the crossroads, a short hundred yards from his homestead.

He might have ridden in state to his own door, for he had become sufficiently famous to issue orders to any mere ambulance-driver—and to have them obeyed, too. But he did not wish to frighten Marie.

She knew nothing of his coming. He did not know how to write, and had sent no word.

Besides, he still limped badly from his stiffened leg, although the doctors said that that would pass away in time—probably in a couple of years—and he would be the same strong, active man as before. His limping, coupled with dismounting from an army ambulance, might cause Marie a needless scare.

So he hobbled up the road as best he could, feeling his way on the two sticks he had fashioned and carved during his convalescence. He had refused the cane and crutch offered at the hospital. Such polished, varnished things looked too permanent. He wanted to trudge home on his own legs, or at least on the work of his own hands.

Big Lenz wore his decoration on his coat-front, and that in itself brought a temporary, though perhaps false, strength.

When he came at last within full sight of his once flourishing garden-patch, its desolation brought as great a shock as his natural stolidity was capable of feeling. Sheds, pens, and crop were gone, had disappeared entirely. Only a few boards of the fence, scattered at random, remained. Two or three windows of the house, their glass shattered, were stuffed with old clothing and papers.

He missed the berry-bushes, the young trees he had set out two years before, and which probably would have borne the next season. The well-house and a portion of a lean-to shed were overturned and riddled almost to splinters. A dormer was torn from the house roof, and the whole structure seemed to reel drunkenly.

The disheartening sight took him, appalled and wondering, from the road into a field, that he might the better observe the unspeakable, inexplicable domestic tragedy. And so, stupefied and mouth agape, he came finally to his own doorway, where Marie, thinner, paler, and pathetically haggard, found him when she felt her way outside, by wall and door-jamb, to ascertain who this stranger might be.

"Oh, Lenz, good Lenz, my man! Is it really you, come back to help me and the Little Lenz?" she cried, as she reached for him with shaking hands and clung around his neck, kissing him with a feebleness that brought a strange sense of mixed anger

and futility to the husband. "Oh, Lenz, Lenz! Such an awful day—such a time—such a ruin, Lenz! Everything gone—all your work, my work—gone! Sickness, death, starvation—an awful day, Lenz, my man!"

Marie threw out her arms with a wild gesture, to indicate the vastness of the calamity. Lenz had a fleeting moment in which to note the sorrowful changes that six weeks had wrought. The woman who had been robust and muscular had turned gaunt and worn. Her cheek-bones protruded through yellowing skin, which had once been rosy over the fullest cheeks. Her arms showed a smooth, pallid leanness instead of a rough, healthful cuticle like brown sandpaper.

"Everything gone—starving—death! How you talk, Marie!" exclaimed Big Lenz, his self-inflated scheme for a glad surprise badly punctured. "Look, girl! Here you see something to make up for a good deal of what you call awful times!"

The husband proudly tapped his breast, where hung the tricolored badge of valor and fame.

"Ah, the decoration—it is good. I knew it, Lenz, when you marched away. You are my great man, Lenz—my brave man; and I knew you would come bringing the badges of the high-ups. Yes, I did, Lenz—so many times already I have said it. You are one, Lenz, my man, with old, rich Liebstein on the hill. He, too, has the decoration—but not for bravery. It was given to him for helping the women and children."

Misery long pent-up turns to volubility when released, and Marie's speech continued like a verbal deluge.

"But, man, how you walk—and on two poor sticks, too! You are hurt, Lenz, and here I keep you standing. Come in the house. Could they give you only a bit of ribbon, and no crutch, no cane? The stingies! Do they think you can hobble home on their decoration? Come, Lenz; we will hold each other up as we go, for I am tired and sick, I tell you. And did you bring any money—did they give you money also, Lenz? Money we must have. The sickness, the hunger—they are everywhere!"

"Money—money? No, Marie; I got none," assured Big Lenz dully, as he gazed around the room, trying to reconcile his hopes of the past few weeks with the

household wreck he saw. "I have service money coming—some day—not a cent now. Where would I have got money, Marie?" Then, pointing to the cradle: "But Little Lenz? How is he?"

"Oh, my man! How shall I tell you?" sobbed the woman, to whom tears had of late become part of the daily routine. "Sick, Lenz, with the big sickness, and like to die. Oh, so many have died—thirty, fifty, a hundred, maybe. They count no more—it is too sad to know how many, so they forget to count. I got it, my man; Little Lenz, too. It is everywhere. First the soldiers who ruin us all; then the hunger; now the big sickness. But the decoration, my brave Lenz! I knew it. How grand it is—the ribbons and the gold pin with your name on it, is it—Lenz Struegman! And the crossed pen and sword—are they gold, too, Lenz? See, we pin it to the cover on our baby boy's cradle. Little Lenz will see it as soon as he wakes.

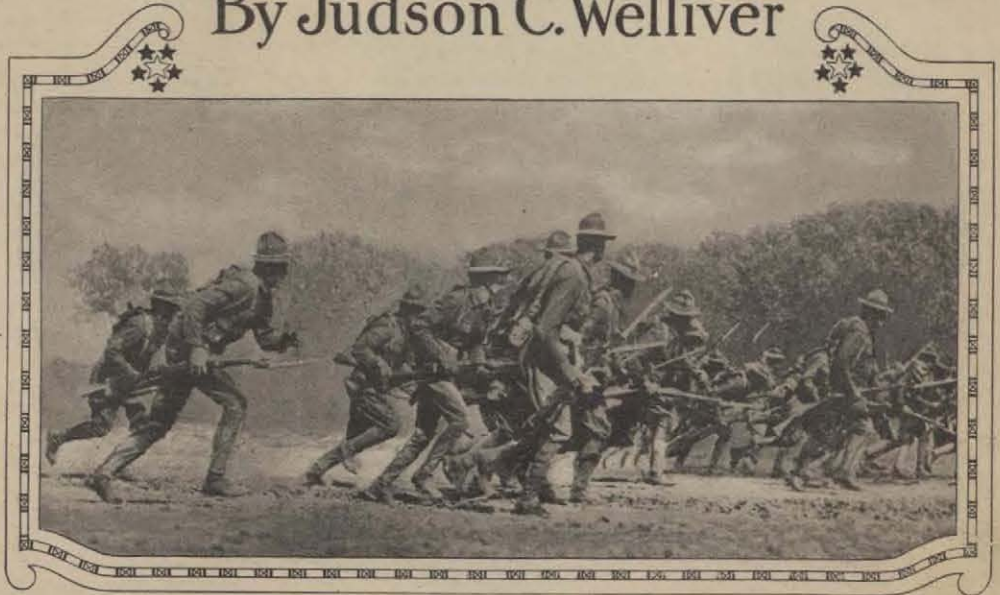
"Food he must have, Lenz—food, or he dies. They all say that—he must have food, when there is no food, nothing—not a loaf, not a crust—in the house for three days. You go, Lenz, my good, brave man—if you can walk so far—to Liebstein on the hill. You show him your decoration. You tell him you are one with him and the other high-ups. And you tell him, order him—no, you beg him, Lenz—to lend you food. If not, the boy dies—and then I die, too. And you bring back the beautiful decoration, Lenz. Then we put it where Little Lenz will find it when he wakes. He must grow to know that his father was a brave high-up. But, oh, how sick I am—and the baby! Such an awful time it has been for us!"

From a point far up the hill, on his way to the rich man's house, Lenz looked back at his desolate home. As he paused to rest his aching leg, he watched Marie still holding to the door and waving. Long he gazed; and when he turned to resume his slow journey, he muttered, wiping the sweat-beads from his forehead with a calloused palm:

"Hungry—starving! Sick—dying! That's it—the famine, the pestilence! The ones left behind—the wife, the baby—women and children—they are the ones. Famine—pestilence! That Croaker told the truth. He knew!"

THE AMERICAN ARMY

By Judson C. Welliver



TWENTY millions of fighting men are now under arms in Europe, according to widely disseminated and adopted esti-

mates. The law of the United States provides that our army shall not exceed one hundred thousand, and it is comfortably within that maximum.

Half the population of the earth is numbered by the nations and empires now at war. The sovereignty over rather more than half the landed area of the world is involved in the struggle.

These big, bald facts suggest the immensity of the crisis that grips the world to-day.

Great nations and small are exerting every energy to establish themselves on the firmest possible basis of military security. Those at war are putting every possible regiment of trained soldiers into the field, and training more. Those not



at war are mobilizing and strengthening their forces, in preparation for whatever emergency may arise. All of them, that is, except the United States!

At the time of writing the war is only four months old, yet in that short space the belligerent countries have demonstrated the wonderful possibilities of military power in a people prepared.

Almost without exception, they have already put into service forces that actually exceed the maximum estimates of their war strength, as made before the war; and they are holding out the confident assurance that they can go vastly farther than they have thus far gone in this direction.

It is fairly dizzying to contemplate the display of military capacity put forward by the fighting nations since the war opened.

A year ago estimates of potential military strength, made by the best authorities and credited to the



AMERICAN SOLDIERS IN THE FIELD DURING ARMY MANEUVERS

countries now at war, read like the fantasies of disordered imagination. Such myriad armaments might be speculatively

calculable; they could not be humanly possible. So, at least, thought the average man. Even if they could be raised,



A RECRUITING SERGEANT IN MADISON SQUARE, NEW YORK, WITH POSTERS ADVERTISING THE ADVANTAGES OF ARMY SERVICE



THE MAKING OF THE AMERICAN SOLDIER—DRILLING RECRUITS AT FORT SLOCUM, NEAR NEW YORK

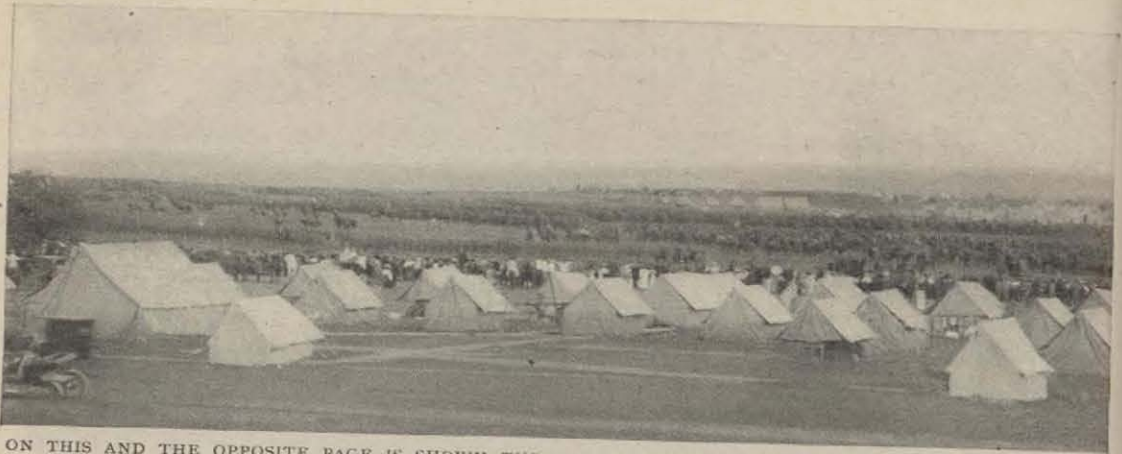
the skeptical argued, they could not be uniformed, equipped, mobilized, transported, maneuvered.

The answer is that they have been raised, uniformed, equipped, mobilized, transported, maneuvered.



WHEN THE UNITED STATES TOOK POSSESSION OF VERA CRUZ—SOLDIERS OF BRIGADIER-GENERAL FUNSTON'S BRIGADE MARCHING INTO THE MEXICAN CITY

From a copyrighted photograph by Underwood & Underwood, New York



ON THIS AND THE OPPOSITE PAGE IS SHOWN THE LARGEST MOBILIZATION OF UNITED STATES TROOPS THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE SINCE THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR OF 1898—

Yet more; they have been found necessary, and have been employed effectively.

A year ago the accepted estimate of Great Britain's war strength was seven hundred and thirty thousand soldiers. Today that country is said to have nearly two million men under arms—on the battle-line or in training. It is asserted that a third million can be put into the field before the end of the present year.

Here is one nation actually in the business of raising and putting forward a force

four times as large as its estimated maximum army power of a few months ago.

Yet more striking is the showing of potential military capacity on behalf of Germany. The latest estimates, before the war, indicated that the Kaiser's empire could put forward, as its "total war strength," a little more than five million men. That seemed like a theoretical rather than a practical calculation, yet a short time ago, with most of this force already in the field, a German authority put out a computation to prove that the Fatherland could raise and handle twelve million soldiers! Russia, before the war, was credited with five millions and a half as her "total war strength."

Now it is believed that pretty nearly this force is already in service, while the country is



A FIELD-GUN IN ACTION DURING MANEUVERS NEAR NEW YORK



—THE ENCAMPMENT NEAR SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS, IN WHICH ABOUT FIFTEEN THOUSAND MEN WERE HELD IN READINESS FOR SERVICE IN MEXICO, HAD INTERVENTION PROVED NECESSARY

represented as being able to put into the field as many more without difficulty, and a third five millions in case of pressing necessity.

The military resources of other countries involved in this greatest of wars are being stretched in corresponding fashion. Little Portugal, for instance, with less population and less area than Ohio possesses, is counted upon for one hundred and twenty thousand trained soldiers, ready for duty, mobilized and fit for transport to the fighting area, whenever she may be involved; while behind these is a reserve capable of sending as many more. The little countries of Balkania, during their recent wars, demonstrated their ability to put into the field, and to maintain, fighting forces whose numbers were about identical with the count of their adult male populations.

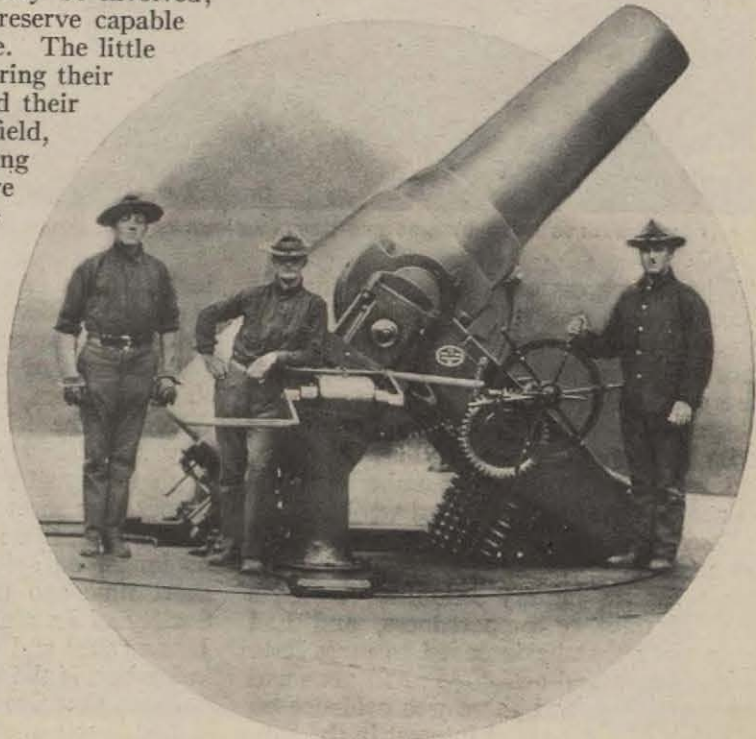
It is useless to go into a detailed exposition of the possible military capacity of the nations. In a general way, it is well understood that the United States is, among important countries, the most notable exception to the rule of high military organization.

Europe has almost the same area as the United States, including Alaska. It has

just about four times as much population. Yet Europe has now something like two hundred soldiers in service to our one.

The whole world is at war or in fear of war. The last half-year has demonstrated that no nation, no people, no race, no continent, dare feel secure that its peace will be preserved, even for weeks at a time.

In the past, people who believed that the United States did not need a considerable army argued that our separation from possible antagonists by the Atlantic on one



FOR COAST DEFENSE—A TWELVE-INCH MORTAR IN FIRING POSITION

side and the Pacific on the other reasonably insured against such danger as would justify a large standing army. The last century and a quarter of our history has supported this reasoning. But do the conditions of to-day sustain it?

That question is looming larger every month in the minds of men who are observing the mighty currents now running in world affairs.

of course, on a new conception of the possible military needs of the nation.

Opponents of a larger army commonly justify their position on the ground that we have a highly respectable navy, and a naval policy which designs to keep us among the leading sea powers. They urge that our navy is strong enough, and will always be kept strong enough, reasonably to insure our safety against attack. They



COAST-DEFENSE GUNS UNDERGOING TESTS AT ONE OF THE GOVERNMENT PROVING-GROUNDS

When Congress met at the beginning of December, it was with the issue already largely made up—should the United States have a new military policy that would insure a dignified and secure posture among the nations? Or should it go on confiding in its isolation, its general policy of peace, and its reserve force in numbers of untrained men and unorganized wealth?

Congressman Augustus P. Gardner, of Massachusetts, had already pending a resolution for an inquiry into the country's state of military preparedness, and had made clear that he intended to press it to consideration and action. It had attracted wide attention, and there was evidence on all hands of a revival of interest in the subject with which it dealt; a revival based,

insist that a large army would be a constant temptation to assuming an offensive that otherwise would not be attempted.

Advocates of a larger army retort that this is, in fact, a confession of the whole case. If there is no real danger of war, why maintain either an army or a navy? If there is real danger, why not be really prepared to meet it by having both?

Isolation, these army advocates say, can no longer be safely relied upon. Only a short time ago the founder of the Japan Society of London made a statement that Japan could and would place a large army in Europe, if the Allies should need it. He declared that five hundred thousand troops, skilled, veteran, fully equipped, could be transported to Europe within two months.



A FIELD TELEGRAPH-STATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY SIGNAL CORPS—THE MEN ON THE GROUND HAVE ESTABLISHED TELEPHONIC COMMUNICATION WITH ANOTHER STATION

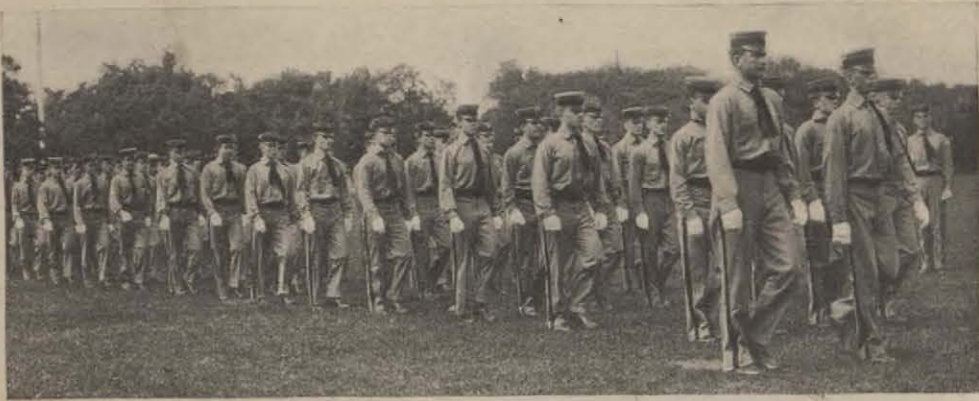
That is vastly farther than any European country would have to move an army to land it on American soil. It is farther than Japan would have to transport troops to get them to this country. If that tremen-

dous movement of ready-to-fight soldiers is possible, why is it inconceivable that a similar movement might one day be made against the United States?

The layman's answer to such questions



A DETACHMENT OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY SIGNAL CORPS LAYING A FIELD TELEGRAPH-WIRE DURING MANEUVERS

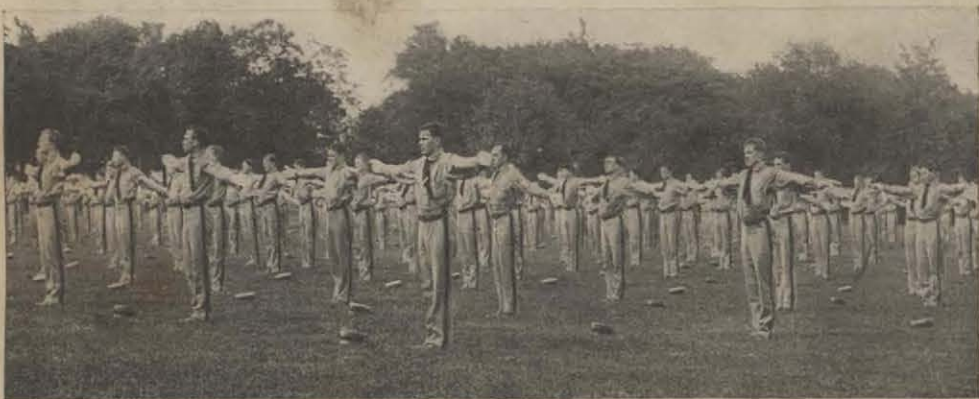


might not be conclusive. But both the military and naval experts, who would be entrusted with the actual business of defending the country in case of attack, believe that there is real and actual need for a larger army, as well as a larger and better proportioned navy. Our present army is admittedly only a skeleton organization. It has been developed with the idea that in case of need it could



rapidly be expanded to whatever numbers might be needed. Could it?

No doubt that it could, so far as concerns available resources in men to fill the ranks. It is fairly awe-inspiring to consider the military possibilities of the country in merely human material. At the time of the Civil War there were in the United States, North and South, about thirty-two million people from whom to recruit the



SCENES AT THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY, WEST POINT, THE FAMOUS TRAINING-SCHOOL FOR THE OFFICERS OF THE AMERICAN ARMY—THE UPPER ENGRAVING SHOWS THE CADETS MARCHING; IN THE CENTER IS A GUN SQUAD; BELOW, THE "SETTING-UP DRILL" OF THE CADETS



SCENES AT THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY, WEST POINT—ABOVE, MOUNTED CADETS;
BELOW, TWO FIGURES OF CADETS IN FULL-DRESS UNIFORM

armies of both sections. In the four years of the war nearly four million men were called to the colors. Not only did the country raise this vast force, but it sustained the four-year struggle.

To-day we have three times as many people as then, and more than a correspondingly larger wealth. If the nation should be subjected to a like stress, and should respond as well, it could within a four-year period raise at least ten million soldiers, and support their operations in the field.

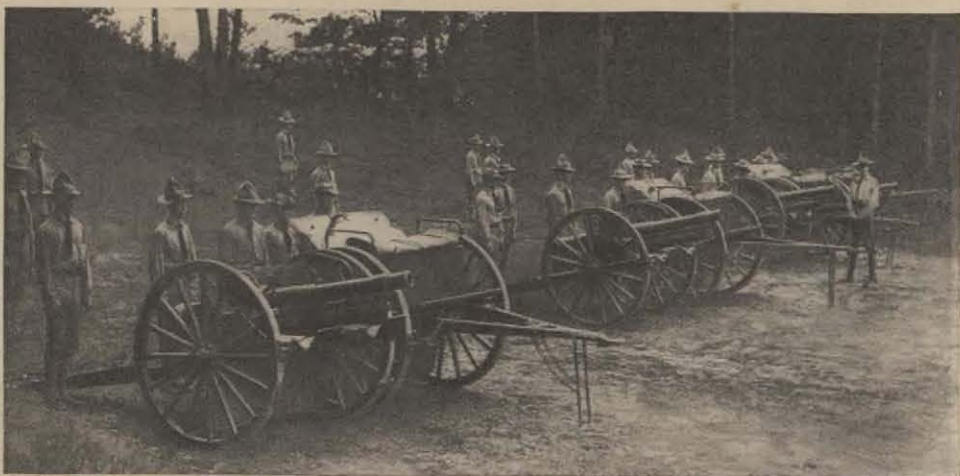
The mere ability to count and to enlist men fit for military service, however, is very far from crystallizing them into military power. Lord Kitchener has more than a million British recruits in training-camps, drilling and educating them to be soldiers; and he has assured his country that in six months they will be ready to take their places on the fighting-line. But what might have happened to Great Britain during those six months, if she had been exposed to invasion, and had not had allies capable of putting ready-to-fight soldiers into the field by millions?

What might happen to us, in some perfectly conceivable war of the future, if a single country can put half a million men on transports and send them across the world in two months?

Is it safe to say that such a war is impossible? Is it harder to conceive than the present world-war would have been a year ago?

These questions have lately been forced





FIELD ARTILLERY PRACTISE AT THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY, WEST POINT

upon public attention, not only by events in the Old World, but by the demand of Congressman Gardner for a thorough inquiry into our preparedness to defend ourselves. Mr. Gardner wants a National Security Commission, to consist of three Senators, three Representatives, and three other persons to be named by the President, with full powers of inquisition into present military and naval conditions and needs, including authority to travel wherever it might be desirable to study foreign military systems.

Mr. Gardner, in presenting his resolution, made a speech which attracted attention throughout the country. Without equivocation or qualification, he declared

that this country is not prepared for war, either offensive or defensive; that our Monroe Doctrine and our policy of excluding Asiatic immigrants have imposed burdens of responsibility which cannot be maintained without the backing of effective power; that neither our army nor our navy—especially the former—is capable of discharging the duties that would be imposed by insistence on these policies; and that, as a nation, we have deluded ourselves with the pleasant notion that we shall never have a foreign war, or, if we have one, that we could somehow improvise the means with which to carry it on.

Mr. Gardner's demand for attention to this problem started a discussion which has forced the issue sharply upon the community. It would by no means be fair to say that opinion is unanimous as to the justification of his



A FIELD RADIO SECTION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY SIGNAL CORPS WITH A WIRELESS OUTFIT—



PARADE OF AN INFANTRY BRIGADE IN THE STREETS OF EL PASO, TEXAS, ON OCTOBER 8, 1914

From a photograph by Harris & Ewing, Washington

charges. There are "little army" people, in and out of public life in the United States, just as there have always been "little navy" people to oppose building battle-ships. These antimilitarists reflect the traditional opinion, inherited from colonial days and from the early generations of independent government, that a great standing army and a powerful navy are menaces to free institutions, temptations to aggres-

sion abroad, and supports for a truculent diplomacy. Which side is correct?

An intelligent answer is only to be made with a fair knowledge of the establishment we possess for maintaining the national defense. A recent article in this magazine directed attention to the strength of our navy, in comparison with those of other powers. It is proposed now to consider briefly the facts as to our military status.

For these facts, of course, we must go to the working heads of our army—men who are not concerned with such political questions as that of the real or alleged dangers of militarism. "Useless, in my view," said Secretary Garrison in his recent annual report, "is the discussion as to whether military preparation tends or does not tend to avoid war. I term such discussion useless because, so far as we are concerned, whatever conclusion might be reached thereon would not affect our duty."

The latest data on the condition of the army are contained in the report of General W. W. Wotherspoon, lately retired as chief of staff. That document is of date November 15, 1914. It shows that the army, exclusive of Philippine scouts, is composed of 4,572 officers and 88,444 men.



—PACKED ON MULES, READY FOR SERVICE WITH CAVALRY OR WITH AN ADVANCED GUARD



CADETS OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY, WEST POINT, BUILDING A PONTOON BRIDGE

Its total authorized strength is 4,726 officers and 95,977 men; therefore it is to-day short 154 officers and 7,533 men of its authorized strength; and that authorized strength is almost infinitesimal, compared to any country with which comparison is possible or a serious clash thinkable.

Of the enlisted strength of the army, 22.5 per cent, including recruits and recruiting parties, is of the non-combatant and non-effective class, such as the non-commissioned staff, musicians, cooks, scouts, and the like. Then 19.45 per cent is in the coast defense, manning the forti-



A MOTOR-WAGON OF THE QUARTERMASTER CORPS, UNITED STATES ARMY, USED FOR SUPPLY SERVICE AT AN ARMY CAMP



THE ARMY WAR COLLEGE, WASHINGTON, AN INSTITUTION FOR THE HIGHER TRAINING OF AMERICAN OFFICERS IN SPECIAL BRANCHES OF THEIR PROFESSION

From a copyrighted photograph by Harris & Ewing, Washington

fications along the extended coast-lines, and not available for field operations. Only 58.05 per cent belongs to the mobile forces of infantry, cavalry, field artillery, and engineers. The coast defenses require 746 officers and 17,201 men, leaving in the

mobile army 2,738 officers and 51,344 men. This is the army of the United States, on a peace footing. How it compares with the armies of other countries, not on their present war basis, but at peace strength, is suggested by presenting the following



THE EVACUATION OF VERA CRUZ, MEXICO, BY THE AMERICAN FORCE WHICH HELD THE CITY FROM MAY TO NOVEMBER, 1914



DRIVERS OF BATTERY C, SIXTH FIELD ARTILLERY, TAKING THEIR GUN OVER A THREE-FOOT RAMP AT THE MILITARY TOURNAMENT HELD AT EL PASO, TEXAS, IN OCTOBER LAST

From a photograph by Harris & Ewing, Washington

figures on the peace strength of a few countries of different ranks:

COUNTRY	ARMY AT PEACE STRENGTH
Russia	1,290,000
Germany	830,000
France	720,000
Italy	250,000
Great Britain (including British troops in India).....	254,500
Japan	250,000
Bulgaria	60,000
Roumania	95,000
Turkey	400,000

These "peace strength" figures, when compared to the army of the United States,

do not give a full idea of the disparity, for practically all the European countries have systems of military service under which vast numbers of men are constantly trained for the army. As fast as they finish their required service with the colors these pass into the reserve, where they are available to be called to the field if wanted. They are trained, equipment is ready for them, and every disposition is made for their quick utilization in case of need. In short, they constitute the second line of military force, three to five times as numerous as the "peace strength" of the regular armies given above. We have practically no corresponding force at all.

While we have so small a standing army, its wide distribution makes it still less an effective force. Thus there are at this time 7,000 regulars in the Philippines, almost as many in the Hawaiian Islands, 1,600 in the Canal Zone, 690 in China, 431 in Alaska; there were, at the time when these facts were secured, 3,434 in Mexico, and about



THE NEW AND IMPROVED GUN-CARRIAGE OF THE UNITED STATES FIELD ARTILLERY—IT IS THE INVENTION OF A FRENCH ARTILLERIST, AND IS PRACTICALLY THE SAME AS THAT USED BY THE FRENCH ARMY

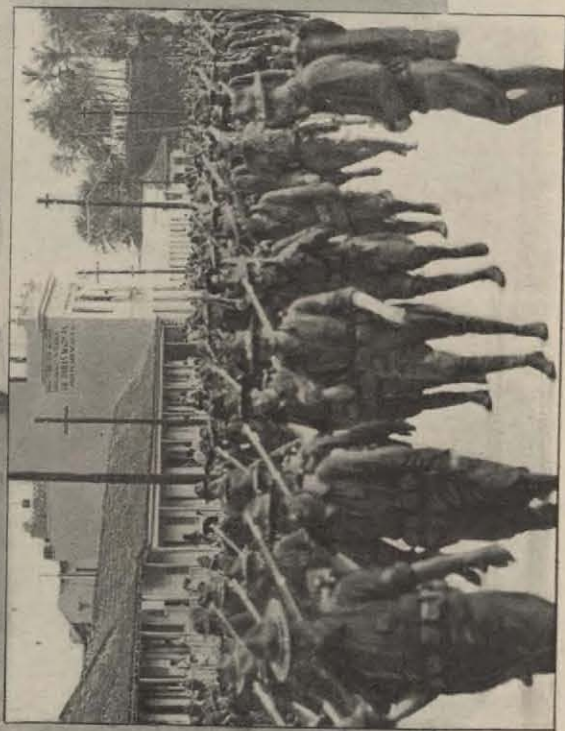
600 in Porto Rico. The figures are for enlisted men, not including officers; and making these deductions, there were left 30,481 in the United States proper.

The coast-artillery corps of the regular army is additional to the

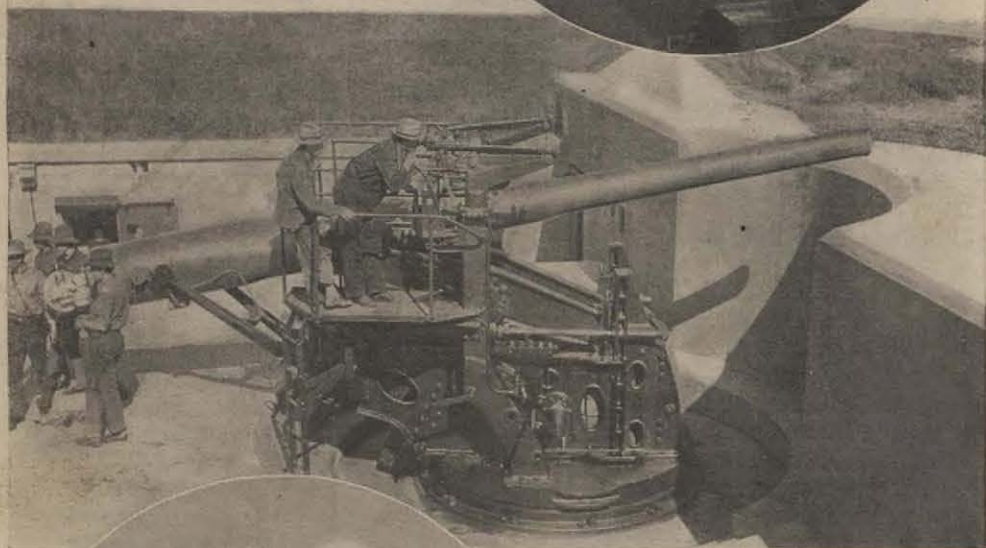
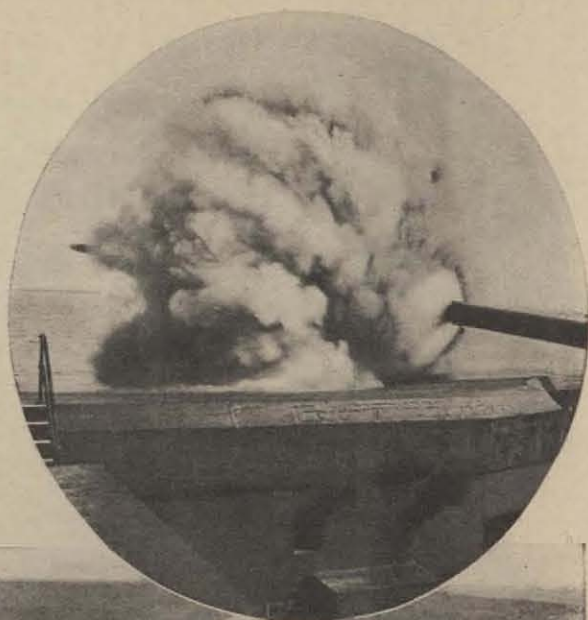


UNITED STATES INFANTRY LANDING AT VERA CRUZ, MEXICO, AND MARCHING THROUGH THE STREETS TO OCCUPY DEFENSIVE POSITIONS IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY

The larger engraving is from a copyrighted photograph by Underwood & Underwood, New York



forces just enumerated. The coast artillery is not counted as part of the mobile army, for the obvious reason that it is not mobile; it must be kept where the defenses are. This corps is returned as containing 746 officers and 17,201 men. This is far below the necessary strength to man the sea-coast defenses at home and in the colonies; the chief of coast artillery states that after counting the full present strength of the coast-artillery corps of the regular army, and the coast-artillery corps of the militia, there is still a deficiency of 856 officers and 24,489 men. So much would the War De-



THE UPPER ENGRAVING SHOWS THE FIRING OF A TWELVE-INCH GUN AT FORT MONROE, VIRGINIA; THE TIP OF THE PROJECTILE IS SEEN EMERGING FROM THE SMOKE—IN THE CENTER AN ARTILLERYMAN IS SIGHTING A SIX-INCH DISAPPEARING GUN AT FORT HAMILTON, NEW YORK—THE LOWER ENGRAVING SHOWS THE FIRING OF A COAST-DEFENSE MORTAR AT FORT MONROE

The upper and lower engravings are from copyrighted photographs by J. A. Wilson, Coast Artillery School, Fort Monroe, Virginia

partment be short of the numbers needed merely to man our coast defenses.

So much for our regular army of less than one hundred thousand men. In popular estimate, the regular establishment is presumed to be supplemented by the Na-

tional Guard, available in case of national emergency. What is the nominal strength, and what the effective force, of the National Guard?

By the most recent reports, the organized militia comprises 8,323 officers and 119,087 enlisted men. Of these 7,600 belong to the coast artillery; the rest to the mobile forces of militia. But the military authorities decline to regard the organized militia, or National Guard, as an even reasonably effective military resource.

While this militia force nominally consists of 127,410 officers and men, the most recent report shows that only 81 per cent of these attended the annual inspections; only 73.8 per cent attended the camps of instruction; only 52 per cent had any practise with the rifle during the target season; and only 33.4 per cent qualified as first-class or second-class marksmen!

Not only this. The regulations require militia units to have at least twenty-four drills of one hour each per annum—certainly a most moderate requirement; yet a very large proportion failed to get even this small amount of drill.

If it were required to place the militia in the field, the government would be found very deficient in equipment. Thus there are 4,940 officers and men enlisted in the cavalry; but there are only 550 horses available! Cavalry without horses seems a misnomer; but they are called cavalry.

And when it comes to the field-artillery branch of the militia, the proportionate shortage of horses is still greater. Take the item of wagons for transport; General Wotherspoon finds that if assembled in divisions and brigades, the militia would be 5,836 short of the necessary wagons for transport.

If the field-artillery branch of the organized militia were called into service, it would need 316 more field-guns than are now available, and 1,322,000 rounds of ammunition for this class of artillery. In other words, besides horseless cavalry, we have a fine provision of gunless artillery!

These deficiencies cannot be remedied out of the patriotic fervor of earnest national purpose. They must be supplied by factories and arsenals. Patriotic fervor will not conjure horses and cannon and ammunition-trains out of the atmosphere. The body of men who make up our militia is equal to any in the world as material

for the making of soldiers. Probably it is superior to any enlisted body of like numbers. The men are not to blame for the inadequacies of their organization. The law and the system are.

The law and the system—or lack of system—provide us with horseless cavalry, gunless artillery, ammunitionless guns, and defenderless coast defenses.

Going to war, we should be like a man setting out to joy-ride in a fine limousine from which he had merely omitted the engine and the gasoline supply.

There is no doubt that this nation has the human material for creating all the military force it will ever need. But it took two full years from the beginning of the Civil War to get armies into the field and in training; on the other hand, Great Britain, which has only a little more population than North and South together had at the beginning of the Civil War, has perhaps a million effective soldiers in the field now, and promises another million in a very few months. Why is Great Britain able to turn out the best soldiers in so much shorter time than our country could do it?

This inquiry brings forward instantly the difference between the British military system and the American. Britain maintains a small standing army, and is unlikely ever to depart for any considerable time from that policy, because democracies hate great military establishments. But in recent years—that is, since the Boer War—Britain has organized her reserves so that they can be made effective in the shortest possible time when need is presented.

The United States has no such plan. If we expect to maintain our place as a power, it would seem that the smallness of the regular army ought to be the more pressing argument for a greater and more effective reserve system.

Our organized militia, or National Guard, is not to be confounded with the reserves of other countries. The reserve in a European country is as it were the alumpal association of the regular army; it comprises the vast body of those who have taken the regular army course and graduated. It is organized, indexed, listed, reported, instructed as to places of mobilization, and the like.

On the other hand, our National Guard might be compared to a body of students

in a preparatory school, getting some of the training to fit it for admission to the collegiate course—the army. The militia-men, however, take only the preparatory course, as a rule; they do not expect to go from the militia to the regular army, and seldom do so. There is no contemplation of such promotion under our system.

Following out this comparison of a military establishment with an educational system, it might be said that our National Guard is a small body of grade-school boys, learning a little about the "three R's" of war, and never expecting to take more than this elementary course. The reserve of a great military country is the body of citizenship that has taken the grade, high school, and college courses in military affairs, has graduated, and is organized in readiness to return, with this ripeness of equipment, and to serve whenever it is called upon.

It is not so much the smallness of our regular army as this utter lack of a reserve that constitutes the telling weakness of our military system. There is no other country without some scientific and systematized organization of its reserve forces, so that they may be drawn upon to fill the gaps in the regular force caused by the losses of war, or to expand the establishment under the necessities of war.

It has always been the military tradition of this country to have a very small regular army, and to rely on the possibility of enlisting, training, and using the manhood of the nation when time of need should come. This plan has made our wars long and expensive. In the Civil War, both sections were on an equal footing, in that neither had any proper organization for putting into the field trained, effective armies. It was necessary to build and train armies after the war had begun; and therefore it was not till 1863 that North and South faced each other with really effective armies competent to achieve the best results.

It is not the purpose of this article to discuss the political policy of maintaining or not maintaining a large standing army. Its design is simply to give a general view of what we have and what we have not, and to suggest some of the proposals that have been advanced for bettering the situation if it be desired to maintain a force more nearly adequate to our needs if war should come.

The Boer War sharply reminded Great Britain of the defects of her military establishment; our Spanish-American War brought home to this country a like lesson; but this country has not taken the lesson to heart, and acted upon its teachings, as the British did. So we see Britain able to place a million troops in the field within a very short time, despite the fact that it has a very small standing army, while another million are promised for the near future.

Perhaps we shall never need the great force that could be brought into the field under a proper system. There were people in Great Britain, before the Boer War, who did not believe that country would need a large army again.

There were people here, before the Spanish-American War, who felt similarly secure.

There were people, again, in Great Britain, who did not believe, a year ago, that it was possible for their country ever to be called upon to arm and fight two millions of men. But all those things have happened.

The possibility of an attempt to invade this country, despite its geographic advantages, has appeared much less remote by reason of recent happenings. Japan hurled immense armies across the Sea of Japan, into the mainland of Asia, a few years ago, and with them won a great war.

Britain is sending large expeditionary forces oversea with wonderful celerity in the present war. She has brought considerable contingents from India, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. In the calculation of modern strategists, who are secure in their control of the sea, half the circuit of the globe is no insuperable obstacle to moving great armies.

How, then, shall this country, without departing from its policy of maintaining only a small standing army, equip itself with a reserve force available as the reserves of European nations have proved themselves available in the present war? Out of long study of the problem, General Wotherspoon replies:

"By using the standing army as a school for the training of men who, on graduation from that school, pass into the reserve and constitute the real national military strength."

He would have men enlisted in the regular army for two or three years' active

service, within which they would be made into trained soldiers. Then he would release them from active service with the colors and pass them into the reserve for periods of five years or more. As reservists, they would return to the ordinary vocations of civil life, but would be under obligation to resume active service if a national need should arise.

General Wotherspoon calculates that the national necessities of reasonable security require that a standing army, plus an available reserve of this character, should be at hand, amounting to half a million troops. How many men would have to be kept in the standing army, in order that the reserve could be sufficient, when added to the standing army, to equal half a million?

Assuming that a period of three years actually with the colors is necessary to make a thoroughly trained soldier, and assuming further that the men after this service should be held in the reserve for five years, the general calculates that a standing army of about 205,000 would be necessary. Allowing for deaths and other losses, he finds that in the first year after this scheme came into full operation, we should have a reserve of 58,700; a year later, a reserve of 117,400; in the third year, a reserve of 176,100; in the fourth year, a reserve of 234,800; and in the fifth year, a reserve of 293,500. Adding the regular army of 205,000 to this last, a total of 498,500 available troops is produced.

General Wotherspoon's plan could be modified by shortening the period of service with the colors, or lengthening the period during which men should be under obligation as reservists, or both, so as to expand the total available force. He does not propose to abolish the militia as now established, but to make this regular army reserve independent of it.

He does not, however, place much reliance in the militia, observing that "unless there be a material change in the laws governing it, which will bring about an increased control by the general government, that branch of our military establishment cannot be regarded and depended upon as a reliable force." He suggests, however, that changes could be made in the militia system, placing it under pay of the Federal government and under obligation to serve it in case of war.

To produce the desired efficiency, it would be necessary to detach numbers of officers from the regular army to help train the militia. Once organized on some such lines, and brought up to a proper efficiency, the militia might then have applied to it the same general rule for establishing a reserve as has been suggested for the regular army.

One of the grave problems confronted in considering any program for increasing our potential military strength is that of supplying officers. All the authorities insist that our military academy at West Point is the finest institution of its kind in the world; but it does not educate a sufficient number of officers to handle an enlarged army. In Great Britain, since the present war began, the heavy loss of officers in actual service has constituted one of the most difficult problems. A soldier may be trained to reasonable efficiency in a comparatively short time, especially under conditions of actual service; not so an officer.

Various plans have been proposed for remedying this very serious defect. An obvious one, but still insufficient, is to increase the number of cadets at West Point, which, of course, would be necessary if the regular army were to be raised to about two hundred thousand men. In addition, it is probable that picked men from the line, rising through the non-commissioned grades, would be promoted to commissions as fast as possible.

Further, it has been proposed to make use of the military training establishments of schools and colleges to equip a great number of young officers to such an extent that they could later be given a "finishing course" in the regular army. Great Britain has a system of this sort, known as the Officers' Training Corps, which has done her good service in time of need by supplying several thousand officers for the army she is now forming. Various similar schemes have been worked out in more or less detail for use in the United States, but none has yet been approved by ultimate military authority.

It is observable that the military authorities of this country and of Great Britain have in recent years turned often to the example of the Swiss military system. Switzerland has a completely democratic army—that is, every man in the Alpine republic is required to give military

service if he is physically fit; and rank in the army is solely a matter of merit. The son of a peasant may command the son of the richest banker in the canton, and nothing is thought of it. Where every man must give his required stint of service to the army there is an instant end to any notions that the army is a refuge for men who have failed elsewhere. The uniform commands the respect that is due to it, because it is every man's uniform.

It is a curious commentary on the democracy of America and Britain that in both there is apparent an attitude of snobishness which makes the men in their country's uniform feel that they are looked upon as inferiors. Tommy Atkins complains bitterly that—

It's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Tommy, stand aside";
But it's "Special train for Atkins," when the
troop-ship's on the tide!

In our own country there are constant complaints of the snobbery that assumes to pull its skirts aloof when the wearer of the khaki appears.

That sort of thing doesn't happen in Switzerland. There they begin preparing lads for their expected military service, when they are ten years of age, with gymnastic drills in the public schools. This physical preparation is continued when the men reach the age for enlistment, which is twenty. Those with the keenest eyesight are made artillerymen; the smallest men are sent to the cycling corps.

From twenty to thirty-two years of age the soldier belongs to the *Auszug*, or Elite; from thirty-two to forty, to the first division of the *Landwehr*; from forty to forty-four, to the second division of the *Landwehr*; after that he goes to the last line of reserves, the *Landsturm*. Here he is liable for service, if called upon, until the age of fifty. All youths of seventeen to twenty are also liable for service in the *Landsturm*, and volunteers of over fifty may be accepted for it.

In short, the Swiss system contemplates making a trained soldier of every man, save a few excepted classes, in the republic. The young man who is rejected on the severe physical examination invariably feels bitterly disappointed, if not disgraced. He has to pay a special tax on account of his immunity from army duty, proportioned to his income.

As soon as they reach the military age, the young men are sent to recruit schools for their first training. The school continues for only a brief period, but the companies in each locality have drills periodically, after the manner of our National Guard companies. The cavalry are called out for ten days' service in each year; the other arms for from fourteen to eighteen days a year.

Under this system the Swiss have developed a wonderfully efficient military force. Their general-staff system, their plans for mobilization, and all other details of preparedness, are the marvel of military experts. Rifle clubs exist everywhere, and by common consent the Swiss are regarded as the best body of military marksmen in Europe.

The cavalrymen are required to own their own horses. No man may be admitted to this branch of the Swiss army unless he gives proof that he can afford to own and keep a horse. When he makes this showing, and is accepted for the cavalry, the government sells him a horse at half its appraised value, and thereafter, for ten years, it pays him back one-tenth of that amount; so that at the end of ten years the cavalryman owns his horse, and it has cost him nothing.

When not in service, the Swiss trooper takes his horse home with him, and may drive, ride, or work it; always, however, with the distinct obligation that the animal is to be kept in the best condition for cavalry service. This method enables man and horse to be acquainted, and has produced some of the finest horsemanship in any cavalry in the world.

After they pass into the *Landwehr* the men are not required to render service in camp every year, but every fourth year, for from eight to eleven days. No time and effort are wasted on careful drill in those maneuvers which make for mere smartness and trimness of bearing and appearance. The men are trained in marching, shooting, and essential evolutions.

Under this system Switzerland—which has only about the same population that our American colonies had when they achieved their independence—can turn out a real, working, shooting, marching, fighting army of about six hundred thousand men.

The Swiss have always been a military people. Julius Cæsar had some experiences

with them, and a good many other conquerors and would-be conquerors have learned how well they could fight. Their independence in no small degree depends on the fact that they are prepared to defend it.

During the war of 1870-1871 between Germany and France, Switzerland was asked officially what it would do if a force of one of the belligerents should attempt to march through Swiss territory. The answer of little Switzerland was the same as the answer of little Belgium forty-four years later:

"Fight!"

Late in the war a French army of about eighty thousand men was pressed toward the frontier. The Swiss authorities notified its commander that they were prepared to protect their soil, and that if he entered it, he must lay down arms and have his force interned. And he did just that. The entire force—men, guns, horses, munitions—was taken in charge by the Swiss nation and held until the end of the war.

Switzerland has succeeded in devising a military plan that seems perfectly adapted to the needs of a democracy. There is in it no menace of the domination of a military caste, such as many antimilitarists have feared in this country. Its experience proves that a democracy may train its whole manhood for the duties of war so that it can be practically exempt from all fear of foreign aggression, and yet be in no danger of militarism.

To establish for the United States some system akin to this of Switzerland; to provide a popular and democratic army; to make this nation a military power without making it militaristic, is the earnest desire of many of the students of our present problems. It may be taken for granted that we shall never have a great standing army. That we may have some such organization of regular army and adequate reserve, supplemented by a militia system based on the Swiss model, is the hope of many men prominent in making our national policies. They propose to press the issue until it shall have adequate attention.

THE PRISONER

THE hills call and the roads call, and the sea
 With voices of remembered deeds and days,
 Of winds that roam the world forever free,
 Tempting the rover to the wander-ways.

Yet, though these voices hold their spell for me,
 Still do I linger in the city's maze,
 Thrall'd by the loud conglomerate minstrelsy
 Of rumbling whistles and of hurrying feet,
 Of roaring traffic and the clamant beat
 Of hammers on the ringing ribs of steel;
 This is the city's summons, this the call
 Drowning the gentler voices, one and all,
 In rolling music of its vast appeal!

And if I seek the road, the sea, the hills,
 A little space their ancient glamour fills
 My utmost need; but presently I know
 A longing for the tumult and the press,
 The fret and haste, the glitter and the show,
 The vast and never-sated restlessness,
 And all the sounds of avenue and slum
 Which make the city. When I hear her voice,
 I turn my footsteps homeward and rejoice;
 The city calls—I come!

Berton Braley

THE LESSER FLEAS

BY FREEMAN TILDEN

Great fleas have little fleas upon their backs to bite 'em;

And little fleas have lesser fleas, and so *ad infinitum*.—*Old Stuff*.



DICK BURNELL, otherwise known as Foxy Burnell, came to the fair-grounds early in the morning and set up his stand. The Mad River Valley Fair, at Dillonvale, is not a big State fair; it is not even a county fair; it is just a sort of neighborhood fair. Consequently it has fewer visitors who come to see the gentleman in pink tights go up in a balloon and come down, if lucky, in a parachute; and more people who come to see the cattle, the horses, the hogs, and the giant pumpkins.

Dick Burnell had discovered that business in his line was always better at one of these little fairs. There were fewer Coney Island attractions to compete with Dick's little attraction.

With a borrowed hammer and nails Mr. Burnell created a small table, of which the top slightly inclined. He covered this table with a piece of green baize, which he took from a businesslike black bag. From the same black bag he took three octagonal wooden blocks, each face of which bore a number. Also he had with him a number of cheap watches, articles of gaudy, plated jewelry, and a revolver that looked suspiciously second-hand. Each article was attached to a card, and each card bore a number.

You get the idea, probably. You paid Mr. Burnell a small sum of money for the privilege of setting the three octagonal blocks rolling down the inclined table. The sum of the three numbers uppermost when the blocks ceased rolling was your total. If it corresponded with a number that indicated a watch, you got the watch. Simple!

Mr. Burnell, the proprietor of this mushroom establishment, was a young man of medium height, thick-set, and passably well dressed. His black derby hat was tilted back a little, displaying a high forehead and a fringe of black, curly hair. His eyes were deep-set, with projecting lids that gave them something of the almond shape that we associate with Orientals. His cheeks were full and clean shaven.

What was most noticeable about the young man, besides his strictly businesslike air, was a certain sophistication, a look of quiet, passive cynicism. He seemed like a person who had lost all illusions. Probably he had. He had been following circuses and fairs for seven years.

Among the early comers on the fair-grounds was a tall man with a broad-brimmed hat, who wore an official badge. He spotted the stranger at once, and came over to him.

"What you doing here?"

"Looking for business."

"Who told you to come?"

"Nobody. I thought you'd probably like another attraction. It's a straight game. Try a roll. Go on, try it! It won't cost you anything."

The tall man looked perplexed. He had an official duty, but he also had a human curiosity. He lifted up one end of the box that held the blocks and set them rolling. They rolled half-way down the plane and stopped.

"Five—three—four," counted the operator. "That's twelve. Twelve is a—sure enough, twelve is a watch. Here, take it! Go on, take it! Guaranteed for one year. See, it's a standard brand. Absolutely no fake about this. Of course, the chances are in my favor, or I wouldn't be here. Is it all right?"

"Why, I guess so," replied the official, taking the proffered watch with a sheepish grin.

A few minutes afterward another man came over and stared at the outfit. He threw back his outside coat, displaying a constable's shield.

"What's the game, young man?"

The young man explained briefly. At the same time he pulled out a couple of obviously good cigars.

"Smoke?" he suggested.

"Don't use them," replied the constable.

"Have a watch?"

The other man shook his head.

"No use for it."

Dick Burnell bent over with a slightly sardonic smile.

"Ever have any use for this stuff?" he whispered, placing his hand upon the other man's.

The officer looked at something that stuck in his palm and coughed, looking around furtively. Then he said, gruffly:

"All right. No cheating, though—see?"

"Straight game, absolutely," replied the young man.

After the constable had walked away Dick put the blocks back in their box, replaced the captured watch with another, and muttered grimly:

"Grafters! All grafters!"

II

PEOPLE had begun to swarm into the grounds. A few gathered, like a flock of roosters, cocking their heads questioningly, around Burnell's establishment.

"Try your luck!" he suggested, speaking to nobody in particular. "You can't lose! Every roll is a win, and the high numbers get the big prizes! Where's your sporting blood, gentlemen? Be game, boys! What good is your money after you're dead?"

About noon somebody won a watch from Dick. Dick let him, rather grudgingly. The winner, a farmer, was very happy about it. No doubt he remained happy about it until he remembered, while doing his chores that night, that it had cost him four dollars and a half to win a one-dollar watch.

About four o'clock in the afternoon another man won the revolver. Dick let him. This man was in ecstasy about his high fortune, and displayed it to an admiring crowd. This was the sort of advertising that Mr. Burnell liked. It created business. The man had paid over more than three dollars before he won the pistol; and

besides, there was something the matter with the trigger and it couldn't be fired.

A little while later the village blacksmith, a French Canadian, tried his luck. He parted silently and hastily with the money in his pocket, amounting to seventy-five cents. Then he drew back and eyed the operator of the rolling blocks with an expression of betrayed confidence.

"By t'under, meester, dere is someding crook about dose number!" he cried out of an anguished heart.

"Back up now, boy!" said Mr. Burnell, without looking at his victim. "Don't stand in the way of these real sports here. Beat it!"

"Eet ees crook!" shouted the blacksmith, clenching his fists.

"Fade, lad, fade!" commanded Mr. Burnell. "Go get some more coin, and then I'll talk with you. Step up, gents, and roll the little blocks. No blanks!"

The smith looked at the little fake bits of "jewelry" that had been thrust upon him as a consolation prize. For a minute his face seemed to bode danger, but the supreme self-confidence of the fakir was too much for him, and he walked away, muttering strange, harsh sentiments in the language of Quebec.

As soon as the September sun got low behind the fringe of trees on the western edge of the fair-grounds, Dick Burnell put his little blocks and his watches and his cheap jewelry in the black bag, together with the green baize cloth. It was one of his rules to leave the scene of his operations a little earlier than too late. In every crowd there are hard losers who may be thoughtless and ungenerous enough to start trouble.

Dick had had a big day; but if it had been a bad day the expression on his face would probably have been the same. Good days and bad days—he took them all with perfect equanimity.

He stopped a moment at the merry-go-round to hail the proprietor.

"Had a good day, Joe?"

"Pretty fair."

"See you at East Durham?"

"Sure!"

"Going South after fair-time?"

"Don't know yet."

The rolling-block man hired an automobile to take him back to the hotel in the village. When he arrived there, he went up to his room and threw himself wearily

on the bed. He had been on his feet all day. Only a policeman or a department-store clerk can really understand how he felt.

There was a knock at the door. A head came into the room and announced:

"Somebody down-stairs to see you."

"Tell 'em to come up," replied Dick Burnell drowsily.

A few minutes later there was another rap—a feeble one this time. In response to a bid from the bed an overgrown, freckled youth, about seventeen years old, edged his way into the room.

"Mister!" he said.

"My name's Burnell," said the fakir, without looking up. "What d'ye want?"

A sniff and a choking sound brought Dick sitting upright. The face of the youth indicated that he was on the verge of tears.

"It—it wasn't my own money," he stammered.

"What wasn't your own money? What the—oh, I see! You're the wise young man that rolled for a watch to-day; and now you want your money back, eh? I've seen lots of 'em like you, kid. They all want it back. The world is full of pikers like that."

"Honest, mister," said the overgrown boy, "I ain't like that! Some of it was my own, and I don't care about that; but the rest wasn't mine. I got excited—I thought—"

"Whose was it?" asked Dick suddenly.

"I been selling tickets to the church sale, and it—was that."

The lad was trying to restrain the tears.

"How much was it altogether? How much did you spend with me, I mean?"

"Two dollars and seventy-five cents."

Dick went into his pocket and counted out the amount. He flung it on the foot of the bed.

"Listen to me, you young embezzler," he said, lying down again. "You quit gambling. Anybody that gambles on anything is a fool. If you got to gamble, wait till you can afford to gamble big. By that time you'll probably be too wise to take any chances, anyway. And listen—whatever you do, don't gamble with other people's money. Now get out!"

"Oh, thank you—" began the boy.

"Get out and leave me alone," replied the man on the bed. "I'm tired."

There was no answer, and no sound of

a retreat. A few moments passed, and then Dick Burnell popped up his head.

"You here yet?" he cried. "What do you want?"

The youth's face was cleared of its troubles. He grinned.

"I thought maybe you might take a couple of tickets to the church sale," he ventured.

"Well, of all the cast-iron nerve!" exclaimed the fakir, bursting into a laugh. "Say, kid, you'd make a good ballyhoo with a medicine show. You get your money back, and then you soak me with—how much are those tickets?"

"Twenty-five cents each."

Dick pulled out a half-dollar from his vest-pocket and tossed it on the bed.

"Give me a couple. Leave 'em there on the bed. And say, when you get rich, kid, with that nerve of yours, and I come round on crutches asking for a piece of bread, don't set the dog on me!"

"You're all right," murmured the boy admiringly.

"I'm an easy mark, you mean," said Dick, lying down again. "Now get out, will you?"

A few minutes afterward Mr. Burnell got up, yawned, took the two tickets from the bed, threw them into the top drawer of the bureau, and went down to supper.

III

It was bad business instinct on the part of the managers of the church sale that they permitted the event to take place in the same week as the Mad River Valley Fair. The result was that the people of Dillonvale were short of money. The sale found itself in that predicament which so exasperates the managers of any commercial enterprise—a big crowd and no business.

It was about half past eight. A few of the young women behind the booths, having made timid efforts to arouse interest in their wares, and having failed, had arrived at the giggling stage. The face of the thin, pale young minister and the faces of the committee wore expressions that testified to their disappointment. There was the subdued hum of low talk, such as might be heard at funerals. A cloud was upon the scene, and the best efforts of the lightest-hearted could not blow it away.

It was just at this point that Dick Burnell, otherwise known as Foxy Burnell,

entered the Odd-Fellows' Hall, where the sale was in progress.

The church sale had not been Dick's first choice of diversion. He had asked the hotel clerk whether there was a moving-picture show in town.

"Only Wednesdays and Saturdays," was the answer.

"Nothing going on at all?"

"Only the church sale."

"The church sale? Oh, that's what the kid sold me tickets for," said Dick. "Isn't there anything else? Isn't there a game a fellow could sit into?"

"A game of what—dominoes?" was the sarcastic answer of the clerk, who came from a larger town than Dillonvale, and never lost a chance to sneer at his present surroundings. "Why don't you drop over to the sale? I tell you one thing—you'll see some pretty girls there."

"With their mothers," Dick added.

"Yes, most of them. But you can look at them, anyway. That's something."

"I suppose it's better than going to bed," assented the fakir. "I'll drop in there, I guess, and see what's going on."

Dick put on his best necktie, flicked up his boots, and waved his front curly hair to his satisfaction, and then went over to Odd-Fellows' Hall.

The moment the fakir passed through the door a feeling swept over him that he was somewhere he ought not to be. The smell of popcorn assailed his nostrils instead of the sawdust-and-beer odor with which he was more familiar. There was the delicate, modest scent of white dresses just taken out of bureau drawers, far different from the choking, musky perfume which he associated with the region of Thirty-Sixth Street and Sixth Avenue, where he went into winter quarters.

"This is no place for anybody but a minister's son," he murmured to himself as he went in.

Still he had a curiosity to see what this world was like. It was certainly different from his—that is, the world of his mature years. He could faintly remember being dragged by his elder sister, years ago, to a place just like this in a town just like Dillonvale.

Dick's keen eye took in the business situation at once.

"All broke!" he said to himself. "Nobody spending money, and a very frosty temperature."

A hand-shaking young man with a collar that was nearly severing his jugular vein strode over to Dick and thrust out his hand.

"I don't believe I remember your name?" he asked perfunctorily.

"Burnell," replied the fakir; "I'm a stranger."

"Oh, yes! My name is Perkins—Perkins & Son, shoe-store, you know. Very nice of you to come! Please enjoy yourself. This is the place to have a good time."

"Thanks," replied Dick. And he added, under his breath: "This is about as jolly as a police-station!"

Dick walked once around the hall, hoping that the young hand-shaker would introduce him to somebody, even if only to another hand-shaker; but nothing of the sort happened. A few of the younger people, gathered in groups, whispered, and Dick knew that he was the object of their conversation. It made him feel uncomfortable. He almost decided to make a dash for the door; but a stubborn feeling detained him.

"I'm just as good as they are, most of them," he thought. "They've got nothing on me. If there's anybody here that rolled for watches they wouldn't dare to open their mouths about it. Stick it out, old man; stick it out! Something interesting might turn up."

Being an old hand at the arts of stimulating business, Dick saw what was needed to set the sale on its feet. Somebody must begin to spend money. Somebody must set the example, and others would follow. So he began to buy.

He bought popcorn and gave it to small boys and girls, who took it with scared but thankful faces. He bought light fruit-cake and dark fruit-cake and ice-cream and home-made fudge and passed those around. Soon he had a timid following of young fry at a respectful yet watchful distance from his heels.

He bought a dozen handkerchiefs, two pairs of woolen mittens, and a knit sweater-vest. He tried his luck at the fish-pond and the grab-bag, and fished forth and grabbed forth a quantity of rubbishy things which he dropped in places where they might be found by somebody who wanted them.

From booth to booth Dick traveled, spending money impartially and carelessly

at each one. One or two shy, grateful smiles, and some pleasant words from the young women behind the booths, made the color come into his hardened cheeks.

Dick's ruse proved effective for a while. Those of the other men who had money began to loosen their grip on it. Those who hadn't apparently borrowed some. The sale began to liven up. The hum of voices became more confident. The set faces of the committee relaxed. As Dick passed the minister, the minister actually smiled at him and nodded.

But the rush of business was short-lived. The Mad River Valley Fair had really taken too much money out of the pockets of the townsfolk. Something had to be done. There was a hurried consultation in an anteroom, which resulted in an addition to the program.

A tall man, with a stick of fire-wood in his hand, knocked for order.

"Sh-h-h-h!" said every one to every one else. "Mr. Osgood's going to speak. S-s-s-s!"

"Ladies and gentlemen!" announced the orator. "Attention!"

"Sh-h-h-h! Can't you keep that boy quiet, Annie?"

"Keep him quiet yourself, James. I told him to hush."

"Stand over there a little, will you, please? I can't see him."

"That's right, thanks!"

"Ladies and gentlemen! I am instructed by the committee in charge to announce that, as an added attraction, and to make things more interesting, Mr. Parmenter, one of our most generous workers, has offered his roan horse and high-seated carriage to be sold for the benefit of the church. There will be one hundred numbered tickets—Mr. Perkins is now kindly making them. Each ticket will have a duplicate. Each ticket will be sold at one dollar—one dollar! The duplicate tickets will be placed in a—er—receptacle, and one of the children will draw one out. The number drawn will win the horse and carriage. I am instructed to announce that the horse alone is worth the entire sum. I am sure we all thank Mr. Parmenter again and again. All those who do not clearly understand the conditions will please come forward."

"Now that's something like!" said Dick Burnell, turning to his neighbor, a watery-eyed young man. "They ought to have

advertised it in advance; then they'd have had a real crowd."

"They won't sell anywhere near all the tickets," replied the young man. "You wait and see if they do. A dollar is too much."

There was another series of raps.

"I should have said," continued the announcer, "that there will be no blanks. Everybody will get something. That will make it seem—er—more proper, as well. Mr. Darling, the popular druggist, has kindly offered ninety-nine boxes of confectionery at cost, to be given to the less fortunate ones who do not—er—obtain the horse and—er—carriage. Come now, every gentleman should buy at least one chance!"

There arose a bustle and stir at one side of the hall. Then there was a measured tramping of feet, and a column of five men, composed of Dillonvale's most solid citizens, marched up to the platform. Each deposited a dollar and received a ticket. It was done with the precision and speed of a bread-line; and it was so evidently planned—that is, the planning was so evident to Dick Burnell—that he gasped with appreciative delight.

"Gee, they know the game!" he said to himself. "Those fellers are shillabers! But they did it rotten. They ought to have straggled up, kind of slow, from different parts of the hall."

A few other men came forward with their precious dollars and got tickets. There was an uneasy stirring throughout the room. Low whispers were audible to Dick:

"A dollar's too much!"

"Sh-h-h! Maybe Parmenter 'll draw the horse himself."

"If the price was lower they could sell more."

Thump! Thump! Thump! The announcer proclaimed:

"Please don't be backward, gentlemen! Remember, it's in a good cause, and there are no blanks. Step forward, gentlemen!"

But the gentlemen showed little inclination to step forward. Indeed, they showed much more of a disposition to step backward, out of the range of seduction.

IV

DICK BURNELL elbowed his way up to the front and bought two tickets. One lone imitator followed suit, though buying but one ticket.

Then there was a long, dull, painful pause. The announcer rapped and rapped again; but enthusiasm was dead.

"Don't let it be a failure!" pleaded the announcer. "Remember Mr. Parmenter's generosity—and Mr. Darling's. We need the money terribly!"

There was no reply to the appeal. The sale had come to one of those *impasses* so well known to Dick. Many a time, on the fair-grounds, he had felt the chill breath of the same evil spirit.

Dick shifted uneasily back and forth. He itched to jump to the front, seize that stick of fire-wood, rap for attention, and sell those tickets. He had a wild idea of offering his services; but he didn't dare to do it.

"Must it be a failure?" pleaded the announcer. "Don't you think you could afford one chance, gentlemen—and ladies? I must not forget the ladies."

It was too much for Dick Burnell. He was clenching his fists in excitement.

"Pikers!" he was snarling under his breath. "Pikers! Tightwads! Loosen up, you yokels!"

He had made up his mind suddenly. The horse and carriage—they would not be so bad. He could drive across country to the remaining fairs, save mileage, and have some fun. He could sell them at the last fair of the season and get something out of them, anyway.

"How many tickets have you sold?" cried Dick in a loud voice that turned every head toward him.

"Sixteen," replied Perkins, the young hand-shaker.

"I'll take the rest of them," said Dick. "Here's your money."

The crowd parted as he sprang forward.

With an air of conscious superiority Dick took a roll of bills from his pocket and skinned off the necessary eighty-four dollars. It left the roll sadly emaciated, to be sure, but the effect on the spectators was galvanic. Mr. Perkins, of Perkins & Son, took the money gingerly, as if he felt that there was something wrong about it. He swept up the remaining tickets and passed them over.

Dick glanced around. Every pair of eyes was fixed on him. Over at the right he saw the freckled-faced youth to whom he had returned the embezzled funds pointing a finger at him and talking volubly to his neighbor.

"Don't you know who that feller is?" the boy was saying, gurgling with excitement at being able to impart sensational information. "That's the feller that stuck a lot of people out on the fair-grounds today. Didn't I see him raking in money just as fast as folks could hand it over? Yes, sirree, he's a regular gambler, that feller is! No wonder he's got money to chuck away!"

"The way you talk, I guess he trimmed you," suggested somebody.

"Me?" snorted the virtuous lad with the freckles. "Huh, I got more sense than to play them games!"

"I don't think I remember your name," said Mr. Perkins, poisoning a pencil over a long sheet of paper.

"Burnell—Richard Burnell," replied Dick.

"Ah, yes, I recall now. A stranger, you said. I guess you've saved the day, Mr. Burnell. You fairly took our breath away, though."

"When I plunge, I plunge," replied Dick. "These little piking bets make me tired."

A quick flush overspread Mr. Perkins's cheeks. The word "bet" was rather ill-chosen; but Dick, with the perfectly honest spirit of the gambler, never suspected that he had said anything inept. He stuck his hands nonchalantly into his trouser-pockets and fed himself liberally upon his new popularity. He had shown 'em! There was one sport in the room, anyway! Now let others come to the front!

It couldn't be said that the holders of the other sixteen numbers were pleased, however. They had evidently hoped that many of the tickets would remain unsold, thus increasing their own chances of drawing the prize. One or two of them glared at Dick as if he had committed some strange crime. But against this Mr. Burnell had the pleasant consciousness that a number of young women were looking at him with the curious admiration justly due to a man who can show eighty-four dollars and spend it like a prince.

There was a wait of about five minutes before the drawing of the important ticket could be effected. The crowd hung around the platform, though Dick retreated to the rear. One or two of the younger men came up to him and offered congratulations.

"You're a sport, all right! Hope you win!"

"I guess that took the wind out of the shellbacks, all right!"

"Say, got any more where that came from?"

"What are you going to do—start a livery-stable?"

The announcer came out and rapped for order.

"The winning ticket," he called, "is No. 21. Who has No. 21?"

Dick had so many tickets that he hadn't even looked at them. He took them out of his pocket and put them in his hat, throwing out one after another. Suddenly he smiled, held up a card, and said:

"I've got it!"

A murmur of relief ran through the crowd.

"Please to step forward," called the announcer. When Dick approached the platform he leaned over and asked: "Your name?"

"Burnell," replied Dick rather savagely. He had given his name so many times that it sounded more or less idiotic when he uttered it.

"Mr. Burchell?"

"Yes," replied Dick peevishly.

"Mr. Burchell wins the horse and carriage!" came the announcement. "Mr. Burchell holds ticket No. 21, and is the fortunate man. I am glad to present him with this slip of paper, which is an order for the prize. The horse has been left with Peter Dubois, the blacksmith. Any one will point out his shop to you, sir. I am sure we all congratulate you."

"Thanks," replied Dick, taking the paper.

"You are also entitled to eighty-four boxes of confectionery, I believe, Mr. Burchell. Here they are, on the edge of the platform."

Dick looked at the boxes and grinned broadly. They were the sample boxes which generally retail at ten cents, and probably cost the storekeeper five or six cents apiece.

"Just like my jewelry!" thought Dick, remembering his own consolation stick-pins that cost him two dollars a gross, and permitted him truthfully to say that he had no blanks in *his* little game.

"I never use candy," said Dick. "Pass it round to the kids. The horse and carriage is all I need. Much obliged! Where's Peter Dubois, anyway?"

"You'll find him in the rear of the shoe-

store. He'll deliver on receipt of the order you have."

"Well, I've got it," said Dick to himself. "I guess I can make some use of it."

Dick went over to the side of the hall, found a chair, and sat down. He looked contentedly around at the people.

"Good people," he thought, "but they've got no nerve. When they've spent a dollar and a quarter they want to go home. That's the reason they never get anywhere—never do anything big. They just pike along, pike along."

"Excuse me," said a hollow, uncertain voice beside him.

Dick turned quickly. It was the minister, standing there with a red face and nervous, excited manner.

"Mr. Bur—"

"—nell," supplied Dick grimly.

"Mr. Burnell, may I ask what your business is?"

Dick's studied poise did not prevent him, thus suddenly accosted, from showing a slight agitation.

"Why?" he asked. "What difference does it make?"

"I am informed," went on the minister, with the air of a man who has a painful task to perform, "that you were at the fair-grounds to-day with a kind of business which—if I may say so—is not very nice. Er—illegal, I might say. I didn't see you myself. I am so informed, that's all."

"I run a little game," replied Dick uncomfortably. "It's no worse—"

"Really, we don't discuss that point," was the reply. "To tell you the truth, this is a very hard position for me—very. If I consulted my own feelings, I should say nothing about it, I believe; but there are a number of very fine ladies present who wish me to say—*that if you remain here, they will leave the hall.* May I trust to your discretion, Mr. Bur—er—"

The grim smile was gone from Dick Burnell's lips. His face was as crimson as that of the minister's. A hundred angry retorts came into his mind, and he had to shut his teeth hard to keep them back. He looked around at the people. He could see plainly that every one understood what was going on—that it had been talked over in advance.

"In regard to the money you have just spent with us," continued the minister, "it is my wish that it should be returned to you—"

"Not on your life!" said Dick, breathing hard. "What do you take me for—a squealer? Good night!"

He felt a hand laid on his shoulder, as if the other man had something further to say. He paid no attention.

"What do you know about that?" he said, aloud, when he reached the street. "Now what do you know about that?"

V

IN the morning Dick felt better. He reasoned it out pretty well for a young man whose pride had been so wounded.

"You can't blame them," he said to himself. "My game does look pretty rotten to them, I suppose. Anyway, I've got the horse and outfit. If I can get started by ten o'clock, I can get into East Durham to-night, in time for the fair to-morrow."

He lost no time getting to the shop of Peter Dubois. The big, muscular figure of the blacksmith loomed up before him in the doorway.

"Here's an order for the horse and carriage they raffled at the sale last night," said Dick. "Got 'em ready? Hurry up, and I'll buy you a nice spreading chestnut-tree."

Peter didn't move. He leaned against the forge and began to send forth peals of laughter, holding both sides with his hands.

"Is this a fit, or has something funny been said?" exclaimed Dick impatiently.

"I ver' sorry for you," replied Peter, with a throb in his chest that belied his words. "I ver' sorry. You in ver' hard luck, meester."

"Embalm the sorrow and produce the horse," said Dick.

"Ho, ho!" shouted Peter. "You take my money, my seventy-five cents, yesterday—*just like that*," he said, snapping his fingers. "But now I laugh two dollar worth. Ho, ho! Dat hoss, *she die las' night!*"

Dick winced. He grasped at a rack of horseshoes for support. Then, as he recovered his balance, he asked with a cynical smile, repeating Peter's words as he had heard them:

"Dat hoss she die las' night, did she?"

Peter nodded.

"An' 'nudder t'ing is," he added, "I shoe her yeste'y—bran'-new shoes. I have to ask you to take de carcass away and pay me one dollar and quarter for shoes. Ver' sorry! You come out in de yard and I show you de hoss."

"Never mind about that, Pete," said Mr. Burnell, still smiling grimly. "She was probably a good horse in her day. Tell Mr. Parmenter for me that he is one very fly gentleman. Tell him he ought to be running a shell-game. You can keep the carriage to pay you for the shoes. Have a cigar, Pete? Have two cigars? I got to be going now, to catch that next train down-country."

WOULD YOU BELIEVE?

WOULD you believe, because the mocking-birds
Pour out their song in sweet, melodious notes,
That other birds should strain their little throats
To put their glad hearts into liquid words?

Would you believe, because the spring sunshine
First in the woods a blue-eyed violet found,
That all the other flowers below the ground
Should hide their heads in sadness to repine?

Would you believe, because the petals fell
From the red rose and left it standing bare,
That all the other flowers growing there
Should bow their heads and shed their bloom as well?

Would you believe, because the daisy's heart
Captured the setting sun's most glorious ray,
That other flowers should miss the light of day,
Because the little daisy held a part?

Lloyd Danner

WOMEN I HAVE LOVED

A REPLY TO THE ARTICLE "MEN I HAVE LOVED," PUBLISHED
IN MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE FOR NOVEMBER



MY dear girl, I have read your confession. Am I to feel honored by the fact that of the seven men you have loved I am the seventh, and hence the latest? I do not feel honored; I merely feel enumerated.

You say you find yourself an engrossing subject for contemplation. I, too, am egotistic. Perhaps that is one reason why your seventh affair is not destined to be your last. We are in that particular too much alike. Two self-contemplating people, side by side, be they ever so close, are much like parallel lines—they never meet. I am not one of the dry professors who assert that parallel lines meet in infinity; I am a lawyer, and demand witnesses.

You accuse me of being the most unenthusiastic man you ever knew, and suspect me of being emotionally as well as physically indolent. You say that you could not understand me, that I baffled you, that I was a jig-saw puzzle which defied putting together. You were fascinated in probing for something from which you could strike a spark, and you have a premonition that you will keep on hurling yourself against the opaque wall that I am until you are battered into a hopeless mass of spinsterhood—or until the wall yields.

Perhaps you fancy that while I may not quite forgive the accusation of indolence, I may yet relent because of the flattery in your inability to understand me. But if such is your fancy, you are sadly mistaken. The one thing unforgivable is that you should fail to understand me. That may be flattery before marriage, but afterward it would come to life in the form of little domestic scenes—in which, for example, the wife fails to understand why the husband has come home a bit late.

"But, my dear," the husband says, "if you will only allow me to explain myself—"

This he cannot do, because the wife is weeping. Now I refuse to be an inexplicable husband, and I have a natural antipathy to explanations—an antipathy which might render me too "indolent" to explain myself. Did it ever occur to you, my dear Nell, that the difference between not understanding and misunderstanding is perilously small? A wedding certificate would make them synonymous.

They say that all is fair in love and war, but the fact that all is fair does not necessarily mean that it is good strategy; so I should hate to have you continue to hurl yourself against my opaque wall. Have you read of the masterly retreats of the present war?

I like you for your evident belief that there is no reason why a woman should not court in much the same way as a man may; but, after all, it was a caveman who wrote that "faint heart ne'er won fair lady." Do you remember what Robert Louis Stevenson said about the "fine, solid sort of man, who goes on from snub to snub . . . amid the astonished consideration of men and angels, until he has a favorable answer"? He thought, you will recall, that "marriages in which one of the parties has been thus battered into consent scarcely form agreeable subjects for meditation."

Perhaps you answer that I never snubbed you. No, I was too chivalrous; I merely lapsed into "emotional indolence."

I fear that I shall appear cruel unless I become even more heartless. It can scarcely have dawned upon you that in the conclusion of your confession you gave yourself away; but you did. After declaring that you valued all your seven experiences, and were educated by them, you wrote the fatal words:

Have I not that much more finesse in loving?

You cannot escape those telltale words.

They fell too easily and too unconsciously from your pen. So love with you was a game, and the man was the opponent whose defense you tried to destroy by finesse!

I confess to retaining something of the old notion that love is a matter of choosing a partner, rather than a matter of finessing against an opponent. You see, I always suspected that you were playing a game, and as I was not particularly fond of the game, I insisted on being the dummy—"emotionally as well as physically indolent."

Do you want to know the solution of the jig-saw puzzle that you found me to be? It is very simple. There are three girls who have taken the trouble to find the solution. A few others, perhaps, have fitted together two or three of the pieces into a fleeting caress, but they are forgotten.

The first of the three was Lillian. I was a sophomore in college. Lillian was nineteen and I was twenty. She was a rather frail girl, but very sweet and lovable. I gazed at her, I think, much as an owl would have gazed, and said very little. Our god of love was not blind, but he was a bit dumb. We understood each other perfectly—there was not much to understand—and, finding little to talk about, we used to read together the classics of English literature. She had very little sense of humor, I fear; and as I write this I am unable to see how I could have had any at all.

I have often recalled with a smile my occasional misgivings about our speechlessness. I used to jot down subjects for conversation in a note-book, at which I would give a parting glance when I was about to call. I found difficulty in leading up to the subjects, and rather envied the clergyman who could bluntly read a text and sail in; but the conclusion was easy. Lillian expressed a genuine but monosyllabic agreement with my sentiments, and the exhausted subject died. We preferred silence to commonplaces, and we seemed to have no other alternative—except our classics, to which we precipitately fled.

Though not a conversationalist, Lillian was far from stupid. She had a well-regulated mathematical mind. Nothing could be more even than the even tenor of her way. I fancy that, had we married, she would have invested her entire love

for me in a life-income policy, yielding a conservative and unvarying three per cent.

At the end of my senior year we became engaged, looking forward hopefully to the termination of a year of teaching and three years of graduate study which I had planned. My year of teaching was in a coeducational preparatory school in the far West.

The brightest girl in the school was a lass of fifteen named Evelyn. She was a beautiful youngster, with a spirit and vitality that manifested itself no less in her restless young mind than in her slender and girlishly athletic figure. Her eyes I have never forgotten. They sparkled with an intelligence that was always alert, with a sense of humor that seemed to be continually on the trail of something, and at the same time with a tenderness which I have always thought was very remarkable in so young a girl.

Like Lillian, she was capable at mathematics; but, unlike Lillian, I think she was fonder of misapplied than of applied mathematics. I took an affectionate interest in the girl, which I, being twenty-two, imagined was pedagogical.

The year was soon over, and I went to the Harvard Law School. Through my three years there I continued to write to Lillian, and I continued to think of Evelyn. I pictured her as I imagined she would have developed.

Finally, after an absence of three years, I wrote her a half-humorous, reminiscent letter. Her reply came, I think, by return mail. As I read her letter I could see her eyes, laughing and tender. She also understood me. She seemed to know intuitively that I had never forgotten her, and to my reminiscences she added others, and said:

You see, I remember every little thing.

I learned that a lass could be a rather knowing woman even at fifteen—if the lass was Evelyn.

I saw Lillian occasionally, and we conscientiously tried some sort of artificial respiration, but our love was past resuscitation; and eventually two boxes of returned presents passed each other on their mournful way.

I finished my legal studies and had established myself in New York when, some two years later, Evelyn came East to make a visit. She was all that I had pictured.

Frankly I wanted to tell her that I loved her, but I think my experience with Lillian had made me hypercritical and over-cautious. However, I loved her, and I have no doubt she knew it; and I confess that the belief that my love was not altogether unreturned has often given me moments of regretful sadness, but the fact remains that I met Frances—and that fact I cannot regret.

My affair with Lillian was a boy's love for a girl; my affair with Evelyn was a man's love for a girl; my affair with Frances was a man's love for a woman.

Not to mention the fact that they were all blondes, the three had this in common—they understood me, and knew intuitively that in the "jig-saw puzzle" of my affections there was a place into which they could fit; so they crept in, confident of their right of possession, and incidentally solved the jig-saw puzzle by themselves supplying the missing master-piece.

I have known but one man for whom I have felt a positive affection; and I think it was due to the charm of a boyish frankness and genuineness that were absolute and unvarying, and never lost for an instant, because they were a part of him. Frances had a boyish profile, and the same boyish charm of utter genuineness.

She had a sense of humor, almost too keen to seem feminine—forgive me!—and sometimes a touch of fire in her eyes which, I fancy, she inherited from Spanish skies. With her love of life, her hobby

for latest styles and latest dancing steps—she somehow adopted them without imitating them—and, with her occasional cigarette, you would probably at first call her a typical product of modern times; but you would be missing the fact that she was, through it all, a wonderfully simple, elemental woman, typical of all times.

There is a beautiful piece of sculpture called "Life," which represents a man and a woman holding in their arms a babe. The proud, stern lines of the man's face seem softened for the moment as he pauses in the struggle of life and looks down in humble awe at the babe. The woman's face is upturned, her head bends slightly toward the man's, her eyes seem almost closed, and on her face one reads the longing, the passion, and the mystery that lie in the birth of a child—her child. It is because I have seen that expression of a true woman's longing, made in the simplicity and beauty of an almost boyish frankness, that I am in love.

You see, it isn't so much a matter of finesse as the utter absence of finesse that solves the jig-saw puzzle. It is its very simplicity that baffled you. I think you will forgive me, Nell, for this letter, because, as a matter of fact, however little it may flatter me, you never really loved me, or you would not have resorted to finesse—you were merely curious. And will you let me come to see you some evening, and talk to you—probably about Frances—while you tell me about Number Eight?

EVENING SONG

Go, Day, thou restless rover;
 Forever vain thy quest
 To match my heart's sole guest;
 There's nothing to discover
 Till he returns—my lover!

And Night, thy starry skies,
 Mysterious and splendid,
 With dread and beauty blended,
 Affright me sore, who am not wise,
 Unless I dream of his dear eyes.

Soothe, Time, thy changing chime;
 When he is far—my heart!—
 How tedious thou art!
 When he is near, there is no rime
 To compass thy glad fleetness, Time!

K. R. Cain

THE STAGE

by Matthew White Jr.



JOSEPH CAWTHORN, JULIA SANDERSON, AND DONALD BRIAN IN "THE GIRL FROM UTAH"

*From a photograph by White.
New York*

WHAT'S the best thing in town?

You see all the plays, and ought to know all about it."

This question is frequently put to a dramatic editor, and a reply isn't the simple matter it might seem. The query is usually propounded by somebody who plans to go to the theater and wishes to make certain he won't waste his money. But what's one man's meat, you know, may be another's poison, and more than one piece that was praised extravagantly early in the season is already in the storehouse.

At this writing, the New York theater at which seats are most in demand is the Globe, where Montgomery and Stone are disporting themselves in "Chin-Chin," yet one would hesitate to proclaim this hodgepodge of tunes and nonsense as "the best thing in town." Suppose, then, one goes by the reputation of the author. In that case, undoubtedly, the playwright with the widest vogue is the man who wrote "Twelfth Night," in which Ellen Terry's niece, Phyllis Neilson-Terry, recently made her New York debut; but Shakespeare, nowadays, is caviar to most of the public. Thus the question propounded above usually calls for the counter query:

"Which way does your taste run—toward comedy, crime, or a cry-fest?"

It is into these three classes that the

Broadway offerings of the present winter would appear most readily to fall

—that is, excluding the musical productions, of which, at the outset, there was a decided paucity. But election-time saw a rush of new candidates for lyric favor, and November's third week brought grand opera once more to the Metropolitan, where, it had been feared, silence might reign owing to the caging of the song-birds on the other side by the war.

The strict neutrality enjoined by the President was observed in the selection of the first three operas of the New York season. That for the opening night was the Italian "Masked Ball" of Verdi, followed by the German "Lohengrin" of Wagner, this in turn by the French "Carmen" of Bizet, with Geraldine Farrar for the first time in the name-part. Caruso is here again, and all the indications point to a prosperous season in the buff-colored temple of fashion and song—the barometer, in a sense, of Manhattan's prosperity.

Andreas Dippel, who was for years a very useful tenor at the Metropolitan, and who has lately been devoting himself to opera management in Chicago and Philadelphia, has now founded the Dippel Opera Comique Company. He selected for the inaugural work Charles Cuvillier's "The Lilac Domino," which would have justified

its existence if it had done no more than bring forward Eleanor Painter and Wilfrid Douthitt.

Miss Painter has both a good voice and the temperament to wed it happily to impersonation. She is an Omaha girl, still in her early twenties. She was riding on horseback at Colorado Springs, at the same time exercising her voice, when two women with operatic connections chanced to overhear her. As a result, they put her in the path for an operatic training, which she obtained in Germany. Wilfrid Douthitt is an English barytone who, I am told, had the distinction of being the first man to fill the post of "principal boy" in a Drury Lane pantomime—a rôle that usually falls to a member of the fair sex. So well was he liked in the innovation that he was retained at the Lane for two seasons.

As to "The Lilac Domino" itself, the music is in large measure charming. It has form and color and tunefulness, and there is a second-act climax that really stirs one. The third act is laid in Nice at carnival-time, and kinemacolor motion pictures are happily requisitioned to lead up to its opening scene.

Another musical play in which people practically new to Broadway made decided hits is "The Only Girl," reviewed last month. Of course, it is much more difficult to cast a production with unknown performers than with players who have established a reputation in certain lines. Joe Weber claims to have spent four months in finding just the right impersonators for "The Only Girl."

Our portrait of Wilda Bennett shows the heroine, a composer, who lives on the floor above the hero, a librettist. Miss Bennett's first appearance was made as *Conscience* in "Everywoman." Later she was the *Queen Mab* in "The Good Little Devil." The differentiating characteristics of the three friends, "Kim," "Corksey," and "Fresh," are set forth with keen appreciation of their high lights by Messrs. Thurston Hall, Richard Bartlett, and Jed Prouty, while "Bunkie" is a real joy in the hands of Ernest Torrence.

In sharp contrast to productions put forward with "unknowns" as principals, we find others that make a specialty of combining big names. Where formerly you would have had to pay three prices of admission to see three Broadway favorites, you may now watch them all over the same

row of footlights for one price. Charles Frohman's revival of "Diplomacy," for example, features William Gillette, Blanche Bates, and Marie Doro.

It was Mr. Gillette, by the way, who gave Miss Doro her first chance at a big part just ten years ago, when she was brought back from London—where she had been appearing with Willie Collier in the farce, "The Dictator"—to enact the title-rôle with Gillette in his play, "Clarice." She won her way up *via* musical comedy. Her real name is Marie Stuart, and her home was in Kansas City, where she acquired such a reputation as a child actress that it was a natural drift that sent her into amateur theatricals and thence to the regular stage. The winter of 1908 saw her a star in the first W. J. Locke story to be dramatized, "The Morals of Marcus." She is petite, and her large, pathetic eyes help to make her an ideal *Dora* in the Sardou play. Among her accomplishments Miss Doro numbers the composing of popular songs. One of them, "Doggie in Our Yard," Hattie Williams sang with great success some years since in "The Little Cherub."

Like so many members of the profession who reach the top of the ladder, Blanche Bates hails from the Pacific side of the continent. To get away from there, where she was in the Frawley stock, she saved up a hundred and fifty dollars and headed for New York. She had determined to hunt for a job on Broadway, which at that time was not quite so white a way as enterprising tire and tooth-brush manufacturers have since combined to make it. She wrote for an appointment with Augustin Daly, the David Belasco of his period, but her savings dwindled as days went and mails came without bringing any reply from him. At length, in desperation, she took her courage in both hands and set out to beard the lion in his den.

To apply this metaphor to Mr. Daly is something more than a mere figure of speech. Tales of his formidable curtness were very little exaggerated. His reserve, the wall he built about himself, were more than a pose. For instance, I distinctly recall the chain that barred off one end of a sofa in Daly's lobby, where the manager liked to seat himself to watch the assembling of his audiences. He was determined to make sure that no one else should occupy that particular corner.



ELEANOR PAINTER AS GEORGINE IN "THE LILAC DOMINO"

From a photograph by Iva L. Hill, New York



MARIE DORO, WILLIAM GILLETTE, AND BLANCHE BATES IN THE REVIVAL OF SARDOU'S "DIPLOMACY"

From a photograph by White, New York—copyrighted by Charles Frohman

The determined girl from Oregon waited in the outer office from nine o'clock in the morning, without a bite of lunch, until three in the afternoon. Then Mr. Daly poked his head out of his den, surveyed the candidate, asked a few questions, and finally told her that if she thought she could live on thirty-five dollars a week, she might consider herself engaged.

"I was to report on the following Monday," said Miss Bates, in telling about her experiences. "When I did so, I discovered that I had been billed to appear as *Bianca* in 'The Taming of the Shrew' that very

night. And I had never seen the play, to say nothing of never having acted in it."

February 9, 1899, is doubtless marked with a white stone in Miss Bates's memory. It was on this date that she appeared as *Countess Mirtza Charkoff*, leader of the Diamond Gang, in "The Great Ruby," a Drury Lane melodrama which Mr. Daly had decided to put upon the stage hitherto dedicated to Shakespeare and light comedy, either with or without music. He found his justification for the revolutionary departure in the enormous success the piece achieved, and Miss Bates so far over-

shadowed Ada Rehan that next day her name was on every playgoer's lips.

When Marcia Van Dresser played the *Countess* on the second night, the rumor ran that Miss Rehan's jealousy of the newcomer's hit had caused Mr. Daly to drop her from the company. As a matter of fact, the split occurred over quite another matter—the question of gowns. Miss Bates wanted to wear her own, and Mr. Daly wished otherwise. And before Miss Bates went on in "The Great Ruby," it seems she had promised the Lieblers to create for them *Milady* in "The Three Musketeers," which she did soon after leaving Daly's.

The following year found her with Belasco in one of the very few failures that astute manager has registered. This was "Naughty Anthony," to which an afterpiece was soon added, and in the latter Miss Bates swept into another success—her *Cho-Cho San* in "Mme. Butterfly," the playlet by John Luther Long, afterward expanded into Puccini's famous opera. This paved the way for her *Yo-San* in "The Darling of the Gods," two years later, the intervening season being devoted to *Cigarette* in "Under Two Flags." Miss Bates is also widely known in the name-part of "The Girl of the Golden West."

In 1912 she married George Creel, a former dramatic critic, who was then police commissioner of Denver. She still retains her home in the vicinity of Ossining, New York.

As it was Gillette who, with his "Secret Service," in 1896, first broke away from asides and soliloquies, it seems odd to find him playing in "Diplomacy," a piece so old-fashioned that it had to be brought up to date with a ruthless hand. Mr. Gillette is a native of Hartford, Connecticut, and his greatest success in the double rôle of dramatist and actor was "Sherlock Holmes." This was first produced in 1899, the author having rewritten the piece after the original script was burned in the destruction of the Palace Hotel, San Francisco. His last previous appearance, preceding "Diplomacy," was in 1908, when he acted the strong man in Bernstein's weak specimen of a play, "Samson." The last work from his pen to see the footlights was "Electricity," written for Miss Doro in 1910. Unhappily, it proved to be less illuminating than its title.

It is fair to sum up "The Garden of Paradise" as a play of wonderful scenery and spindling story. It may possibly be that an expansion of



WILDA BENNETT AS RUTH WILSON, THE COMPOSER, IN THE VICTOR HERBERT SUCCESS, "THE ONLY GIRL"

From a photograph by White, New York

dialogue which constantly grate on the ears while the eyes are feasting on the color delights provided by Joseph Urban.

In a season of novelties, the first scene of "The Garden of Paradise" will surely go down as matchless in its outfitting. Imagine the whole vista from footlight-trough to flies giving the semblance of an ocean depth. The principals, including Emily Stevens as the *Princess Swanhild*, a mermaid and consequently legless, are suspended on wires, like the *Rhine Maidens* in Wagner's



DAVID C. MONTGOMERY AS CHIN HOP LO IN "CHIN-CHIN"



FRED A. STONE AS CHIN HOP HI IN "CHIN-CHIN"



DOUGLAS STEVENSON AS ALADDIN, AND HELEN FALCONER AS VIOLET BOND, WITH MONTGOMERY AND STONE IN "CHIN-CHIN"

From photographs by White, New York

Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale of "The Little Mermaid" would admit of no different treatment from that which Edward Sheldon has given it, but the author of "Romance" might surely have avoided certain jarring notes in the

"Rheingold." The turtle and the crab are permitted to walk over the ocean's floor, but the others all swim, and the shimmer of some unknown substance between the audience and them imparts a convincing effect of water as their habitat.



KATHLENE MACDONELL AS RUTH STUYVASANT, AND JOHN BOWERS AS BILL REID IN "LIFE,"
THE BRADY-BRAND MELODRAMA BY THOMPSON BUCHANAN

From a photograph by White, New York

But if the sea scenes are extraordinary in their faithfulness to nature, enchanting in their pure loveliness are some of the land aspects that follow later on. The great round window in the royal palace of the Blue Mountain king, and the mighty pillars in another view of the latter, are last words in the scene-builder's art.

Unfortunately, the scenery dwarfs the

playwright's efforts, and the actors have but little opportunity to do more than walk through their parts. Indeed, as has been explained, Miss Stevens is not permitted to do even this in the earlier episodes, but later on, through a deal with the *Sea*

Witch, she is provided with legs in place of a tail. It's a pity the same power could not have given her a voice less like



JULIA DEAN AND
MASTER MACOMBER IN
GEORGE BROADHURST'S
NEWEST PLAY,
"THE LAW OF THE LAND"

the toneless organ of her aunt, Mrs. Fiske, whom, I fear, she tries all too strenuously to imitate. Miss Stevens was the original *Mary Turner* in "Within the Law," when it was first produced in Chicago, before New York saw it with Jane Cowl.

Renée Kelly, *Queen of the Southland*, whom the king

loves and marries, registered her first hit with the Drama Players, who came here for a few performances from Chicago in the autumn of 1911. George Relph, who was the sworder of the bronzed body in "Kismet," makes a gallant figure of the king.

A fault apparent among the players in "The Garden of Paradise"—indistinctness of enunciation—is even more noticeable in "Twelfth Night," in spite of the fact that the star from England, Phyllis Neilson-Terry, sets such a noble example of clear speech with her bell-like tones. Many of her supporters swallow their words as soon as uttered. This may be preferable to a vociferousness that threatens to chew up the scenery, but muffled syllables are exasperating to a public that isn't as familiar with Shakespeare as perhaps it should be.

Whether New York will see another production of the bard this season is doubtful. There will certainly be none more elaborate than the Urban outfitting that the Lieblers provided for "Twelfth Night," which served to introduce the daughter of Fred Terry and Julia Neilson to American audiences. Miss Neilson-Terry is twenty-two years old, tall, and with a personality so winning that at an actors' garden-party in London I have seen her trailed by dozens of young girls eager for the mere pleasure of looking at her. She made her first appearance when but seventeen, and besides *Viola* her Shakespeare repertoire already includes *Rosalind* and *Juliet*. An old-time actor, in his heyday a Broadway matinée idol, Eben Plympton, played *Sir Toby*. He was *Sebastian* in this same "Twelfth Night" in 1876, in support of Adelaide Neilson. Another well-known figure in the cast of the present revival is Jessie Busley as *Maria*, a part she played as a



MR. AND MRS. VERNON CASTLE IN "WATCH YOUR STEP," THE NEW DANCING-SHOW HIT AT THE NEW AMSTERDAM THEATER, NEW YORK

From a photograph—copyrighted by Ira L. Hill, New York

member of the New Theater Company when Annie Russell was the *Viola*.

The latest *Malvolio* is Henry E. Dixey, last season in "A Thousand Years Ago," but still best remembered for his *Adonis* back in the eighties. He was with Mrs. Fiske as the *Marquis of Steyne* in "Becky Sharp," and as *Peter Swallow*, vendor of tombstones in "Mrs. Bumpstead - Leigh."



ANTOINETTE WALKER AS THE
MANDARIN'S DAUGHTER,
NANG PING, IN "MR. WU"

*From her latest photograph by the
Apeida Studio, New York*



WALKER WHITESIDE AS THE MANDARIN AND DEIDRE
DOYLE AS MRS. GREGORY, IN "MR. WU"

From a photograph by White, New York

A play put over with some very excellent acting is "Polygamy," frankly a brief against certain alleged practices of the Latter-Day Saints. The Mormons deny its truth, but it certainly makes an absorbing drama. It was written by Harvey O'Higgins and Harriet Ford, who last season scored success in an altogether different field with their comedy, "The Dummy."

All the scenes of the new play are laid in Salt Lake City, one of them in the conference room at the Temple, where the *Prophet* orders *Daniel Whitman* to take another wife. Both he and the present *Mrs. Whitman*, who have been happy together, rebel against the edict—a situation which gives Broadway a new sort of complications in matrimonial affairs.

Chrystal Herne makes an appealing figure of *Whitman's* first wife—the best part she has had since her *Mrs. Clayton* in "As a Man Thinks." She is a daughter of the late James A. Herne, whose best-known play, "Shore Acres," is now to be seen in motion pictures. The name "Chrystal" was taken from that of a child, impersonated by Maude Adams, in "Hearts of Oak," written in their early days by Mr. Herne and David Belasco.

Miss Herne has acted in a great many of the Bernard Shaw plays, notably as *Gloria* in "You Never Can Tell," and as *Vivie* in "Mrs. Warren's Profession," when the latter was stopped by the police after

the first performance. The fact that it was subsequently put on again, and suffered to proceed without interference, does not efface Miss Herne's memories of that unpleasant night. The *Mrs. Warren* of the occasion was Mary Shaw, who is also in the cast of "Polygamy" as *Bathsheba Tanner*, one of four women who are wives of one man, though not under one roof-tree, and who are all seen in this unusual play.

William B. Mack, as the rebellious brother of covers himself with glory, as he did not long "Within the

Mack, as the rebellious heroine, again with glory, as since in Law."



DESMOND KELLEY, ERNEST GLENDINNING, WILLIAM COURTLEIGH, AND RICHARD STERLING IN THE LAST ACT OF "THE BIG IDEA," WHERE MR. COURTLEIGH, AS THE MANAGER, IS HOLDING THE CHECK FOR THE PLAY JUST OUT OF REACH

From a photograph by White, New York

Howard Kyle, who once starred as *Mozart* in "The Greater Love," is highly effective in the rôle of the *Prophet*, otherwise the head of the Mormon church. Excellent work, too, is done by Ramsey Wallace in the trying part of the young husband. Mr. Wallace is new to Manhattan, having been picked from stock for his present post.



Sanderson and Mr. Brian. Mr. Cawthorn takes care of the comedy end with his accustomed success, and a newcomer from England, Renee Reel, plays opposite him literally with all her might, *plus* a marvelous agility of limb. There is a certain daintiness about the shows from the London Gaiety which causes one to reflect with sadness that there is only one more to

ROBERT EVETT AS STEPHAN AND JOSE COLLINS AS SUZI IN THE COMEDY OPERETTA "SUZI"

From a photograph by White, New York

The managers seem determined not to leave Broadway Mormonless, for "Polygamy" arrived there just when "The Girl from Utah" went on tour, after a prosperous three months' stay. The latter, a musical comedy of the familiar London Gaiety type, is another of the Charles Frohman offerings of three-ply stellar brand, for Julia Sanderson, Donald Brian, and Joseph Cawthorn share the electric sign among them.

The scene of "The Girl from Utah" is laid in London, and players at the Gaiety Theater itself are introduced as the leading characters. The music, by Paul Rubens and Sydney Jones, has the catchy lilt that one has come to expect from these collaborators, and lends itself easily to the dance. The favorite number is "Same Sort of Girl," sung and danced by Miss

come from that source—"All for a Girl." Since the production of this last piece the famous theater has been closed, and with the war's alarms and excursions buzzing so busily along the Strand there is no knowing when it will open again.

Five years ago, Julia Sanderson was *Eileen* in the long run of another English importation, "The Arcadians," and it is just ten years since she first sang herself into Broadway favor with "Fantana." She belongs to the stage by right of inheritance, as her father was Albert Sackett, the actor. Born at Springfield, Massachusetts, she went on first as a child with a stock company in Philadelphia.

Reversing the usual process, Donald Brian, who is a native of Newfoundland, was a plain, ordinary actor before he turned to song, the transition taking place

with "Three Little Lambs." It was, of course, his *Prince Danilo* in "The Merry Widow" that wrote his name on the scroll of musical comedy favorites. Two years later he participated in another long run as *Freddy Smythe* in "The Dollar Princess."

Joseph Cawthorn—whose wife is Queenie Vassar, the *Lady Amersham* in "The Girl from Utah"—hails from Cincinnati. One of the first rôles to endear him to the New York public was his *Mother*

Goose in the extravaganza of that name, done at the New Amsterdam in 1903. Last season he was with Miss Sanderson in "The Sunshine Girl."

Speaking of London theaters, the house with the longest run to its credit as I write is the Savoy, where "Mr. Wu" has been in the bill for more than a year. For the rest, revivals are everywhere the order of the day—literally of the day, rather than the night, in several cases, owing to the dimming of the street lights ordered by the



CHRystal HERNE, WHO IS ZINA, THE HEROINE, IN THE NEW PLAY "POLYGAMY"

From her latest photograph by Moffett, Chicago



RENÉE KELLY AS THE QUEEN OF THE SUN AND EMILY STEVENS AS THE PRINCESS SWANHILD
IN "THE GARDEN OF PARADISE"

From a photograph by White, New York

authorities as a defensive measure against possible attacks by German air-ships. It seems odd to read in the advertisement of His Majesty's, where Tree has revived the first part of "King Henry IV" because of its martial spirit:

Evening performances only on Thursdays and Saturdays.

The Paris theaters were closed for three months following the start of the war, but

in November some of them gave performances two or three times a week, and early in December both the Théâtre Français and the Opéra Comique reopened their doors. In the German cities the theaters are said to be open as usual, though there is much distress among musicians. In Austria, I understand, there has been a general shut-down.

On the New York stage, the big hits of the season are all American made. I include "The Law of the Land" in this list, for although its author, George Broadhurst, was born in England, he came to the United States when he was twenty, and all his plays have been written here. "The Law of the

Land" is remarkable in at least one respect. Utterly unpleasant in its subject-matter—the murder of a cruel husband by his wife, after she has confessed that their child is really the son of her lover—one's sympathies are with the woman through it all. How Mr. Broadhurst contrives to bring this about, I confess I do not know, nor will I detail the plot. I had read the story of the play before going to the thea-

ter, and felt no desire to see it; but in witnessing the dramatic succession of incidents on the stage, enacted by a cast of super-excellence, one is blinded to all else but the tenseness of the situations, and becomes eager to watch the unraveling of the knots which the playwright has so deftly tied.

Julia Dean, as the woman in the case, does marvelous work in a part that covers a wide range from sheer horror of her own deed to a simulation of nonchalance which the audience must know to be a pretense. Miss Dean is a native of St. Paul, Minnesota, and fifteen years ago, when she was playing with the Neill stock company through the West, her friends predicted a brilliant future for her. In 1909 she was the younger sister in "The Lily," at the Belasco, and when Mr. Broadhurst's other "punch" play, "Bought and Paid For," was produced, she brought her graphic powers to the depiction of the heroine, the wife of a drunkard. As the police inspector who is the means of giving the play its happy ending, George Fawcett ranks high in a generally efficient cast. One of this actor's most notable parts was *Big Bill* in "The Squaw Man," in which he scored heavily when the play was afterward done in London as "The White Man." He is a Virginian by birth, brought up with

the idea of managing the family estates, but reverses following the Civil War compelled him to get out and hustle. One of his early tasks in stageland was to guide

the bound body of Bob Hilliard toward the revolving saw in "Blue Jeans." Hilliard, by the way, is said to be interested just now in a play that is to have no intermissions.

The lover in "The Law of the Land," an exceedingly trying rôle, falls into the competent hands of Milton Sills, who came to New York from Chicago some seven years ago, and made good at once. Last season he was with Belasco in "The Man Inside," and later became *Gerard* with Petrova in "Panthea."

Another capable member of the "Law of the Land" cast is George Graham, the secretary of the murdered man, who arranges with

the wife how they shall discover the body the next morning. Mr. Graham is a young Englishman, who was *Alfred de Musset* with Bertha Kalisch in the short-lived "Rachel" last season. Some years previously he acted in the New York production of that strange war play, "An Englishman's Home," which dealt with a foreign—presumably German—invasion of Great Britain. Later he was one of the hero's friends, a dentist, in "Our Wives," before it became the musical piece, "The Only Girl."

The Macomber boy, the *Bennie*



MARY BOLAND, PLAYING THE LEAD IN "MY LADY'S DRESS"

From her latest photograph by White, New York

shown in the picture with Miss Dean, is one of three precocious brothers now before the public, a second Macomber being at the Princess Theater, and a third posing for the "movies." The one in "The Law of the Land" does remarkable work; yet, while watching it, one cannot but wonder if the boy realizes just why his alleged father threatens to switch him a second time in the same night. Probably not. Youngsters are usually so much absorbed in their own lines that they concern themselves little with the context.

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

One of the oddities in this strange theatrical season was the fate meted out to two plays put on at the Hudson Theater. Rose Stahl arrived there with a new vehicle, "A Perfect Lady," written for her by Channing Pollock and Rennold Wolf. The metropolitan critics tore it to pieces even more fiercely than they did "The Chorus Lady," when that well-remembered comedy introduced this clever actress to Broadway on September 1, 1906. "A Perfect Lady" played twenty-three times in New York, and then went on the road, where I understand it is doing well.

It permits Miss Stahl once more to impersonate an actress, this time of the burlesque order, but she mingles slang and moral precepts in about equal proportions, reforms the hard man of the town, teaches the minister how to fill his pews, and ends by marrying him. Of course, it is Miss Stahl's inimitable fashion of delivering both the precepts and the slang that will keep her new posters on the fences.

"A Perfect Lady" was followed at the Hudson by "The Big Idea." This time all the notices were good, and the people who saw the play seemed to like it; but nevertheless, the audiences were so slender that it was taken off after twenty-five performances; and as there was no star in the cast with a "road" draft, touring was not to be thought of. It is possible, however, that the piece will have another trial in Chicago during the spring.

THE GIRL WHO REALLY COMES FROM UTAH

The many friends she made in "The Pink Lady" have hastened to applaud Hazel Dawn as a star in "The Débutante," a new operetta with music by Victor Herbert. Miss Dawn, who is actually a girl from Utah, has lost none of her good looks

and witching ways, and I am sure there will be many in her audiences who will be quite ready to comply with her request to "Take Me Home with You"—her catchy number in the first act.

The piece is elaborately put on, and in her support Miss Dawn has such excellent material as Robert J. Pitkin for an Irish lieutenant in the British navy; Will West—who sang "Truly Rural" in "The Dollar Princess"—as a composer of cubist music; and Maude Odell, who was the "terribly temperamental" seeress in "Little Boy Blue." Playing opposite Miss Dawn we find the breezy Wilmuth Merkyl, last season with "Sari," a young man who seems to enter into his work with real enthusiasm.

THE CASTLES ON THE STAGE AGAIN

"Watch Your Step" promises to duplicate the knock-out hit of "Chin-Chin." Why shouldn't it, with the rag-time music of Irving Berlin, and a cast including the Castles, Frank Tinney, and Elizabeth Murray, to say nothing of Charles King and Elizabeth Brice? There are also Sallie Fisher and Harry Kelly, for good measure, and Harry Ellis with a really wonderful voice as the *Ghost of Verdi* to protest against the rag-timing of his tunes.

The slogan "made in America" appears under the classification of the piece which is set down as "a syncopated musical show." Charles Dillingham, the producer, may boast that not only is the offering made on this side of the Atlantic, but that the scenes are all laid here as well, and that the only Englishman in the cast is Vernon Castle.

Mr. Castle seems delighted to be back on the boards again, and works like a Trojan. Not only does he dance with much energy and make a multiplex drummer of himself to help out Elizabeth Murray in her "Minstrel Parade," but he takes a stage fall which recalls the fact that it was his acrobatics, and not his terpsichorean abilities, that first impressed the public when he made his advent in New York. This was in May, 1909, when he appeared as *Souseberry Lushmore* in the Lew Fields production of "The Midnight Sons" at the Broadway Theater. It was at that time Charles Darnton said of him in the *Evening World*:

That strange assortment of legs and arms, Vernon Castle, got badly tangled up with him-

self. The way he turns himself out of a door is quite the newest thing in "exits." He's a weird specimen, not exactly funny, but certainly grotesque. Has it ever occurred to you that he would be an extremely difficult person to bury?

Later in the same year young Castle was with Lew Fields at the Herald Square, as the *Hon. Algernon Clymber* in "Old Dutch." The following summer we find him still with Mr. Fields at the same theater as *Oxford Tighe* in "Summer Widowers." In 1912 he married an American bride, with whom he appeared in "The Sunshine Girl." About a year ago the Castles left the stage and founded a dancing-school, or "college of dance," as they prefer to call it.

In "Watch Your Step" Mr. Castle plays "*Joseph Lilyburn*, who invented the steps you watch," but he is very much himself, his wife being frankly herself on the house-bill. The same may be said of Charles King, who enacts a *matinée idol*.

Frank Tinney, whom the Winter Garden first made famous, not only impresses the orchestra-leader into service for his black-face fun-making, but utilizes Mr. Castle for a feeder as well. "Watch Your Step," by the way, is the first full evening's score by Irving Berlin, who was put on the syn-copated map by his "Alexander's Rag-time Band." He is also guilty of "When the Midnight Choo-Choo Leaves for Alabama," and countless others of their sort.

ALWAYS A GOOD SEASON FOR A GOOD PLAY

Although Mary Boland was John Drew's leading woman for four years, her three seasons in stock—at Cincinnati, Nashville, Los Angeles, and Providence, at various periods in her earlier days—probably did more to give her the versatility that she displays in "My Lady's Dress." The latter piece did not last the winter out in New York, but its managers promise a return to town in the spring.

Theatrical folk are making all kinds of complaints about the present season, but it is to be noticed that when they produce a play that the public wants to see, neither the war in Europe nor the business situation here puts the clasp on the pocketbooks of theatergoers.

The Brady-brand melodrama "Life" is an expensive production, and the top price for seats at the Manhattan Opera-House is a dollar and fifty cents, but New Yorkers realize that they get full value for money expended in going to see it, and the run

seems likely to continue until spring. I was chatting with the author, Thompson Buchanan, about this, the first melodrama he ever wrote.

"No," he said in answer to my question, "I did not try to fit my story around certain big effects. Mr. Brady and I thought of the story first, and the scenic stunts just naturally cropped up in the path of its development. As to the use of motion pictures to carry on the plot at certain points, this expedient had occurred to me previously, but in mulling it over I had promised myself to use them some time in farce."

SOME PEOPLE IN "CHIN-CHIN"

It was failure to pass her third-year examination at a Chicago high school that sent Helen Falconer on the stage. You can see her in the picture with Douglas Stevenson on page 86 of this number. He is the *Aladdin* in "Chin-Chin," and she the *Violet Bond* with whom he falls in love.

Miss Falconer was fortunate enough to know somebody connected with the theater—none other than George Lederer, who introduced her to Charles B. Dillingham. This manager was then casting "The Old Town," an early Montgomery and Stone vehicle, and gave the schoolgirl a part in it. She made good, and got a better one in "The Lady of the Slipper"; and when Elsie Janis suddenly deserted the show to go to London, Miss Falconer was promoted to her place as *Cinderella*. Mr. Stevenson was also in this piece as *Crown Prince Maximilian*.

Fred Stone's bareback riding in "Chin-Chin" must remind him of his first essay in the amusement business, when he did a "brother act" with Eddie Stone, his younger brother, in a small wagon show which went by the name of Burr Robbin's Circus. He fell in with Dave Montgomery in St. Joseph, Missouri, where they formed a partnership for song and dance work, starting out with Haverly's Minstrels, a bonanza in black face.

They were in vaudeville at Keith's Theater, Boston, when Charles Frohman engaged them to go with Edna May in "The Girl from Up There." The play failed, but Montgomery and Stone were Broadway favorites from that time. They were first starred in "The Wizard of Oz," with Stone as the *Scarecrow* and Montgomery as the *Tin Woodman*. Later they passed under the Dillingham management in "The Red

Mill." As a team they may be regarded as the surest bet in stageland.

BY GRACE OF STAR AND COMEDIAN

In the wake of last season's "Sari" comes "Suzi," a comedy operetta of Hungarian source; but name and origin are about the only points of similarity. Interest in the story of "Suzi" is a negligible quantity, and beyond some charming melodies by Aladar Renyi, the personal appeal of the star, Jose Collins, and the quaint humor of the comedian, Tom McNaughton, there is little to say for the new piece.

Miss Collins, who began with the Winter Garden forces and suddenly blossomed into full flower with a Casino show, is the daughter of a well-known mother, the Lottie Collins of the English music-halls, who used to sing "Tarara-boom-de-ay" in the early nineties. Jose Collins has inherited her mother's temperament, *plus* a higher degree of vocal ability. A year ago she was with the Ziegfeld Follies of 1913.

Robert Evett, the leading man in "Suzi," has been singing tenor rôles in London musical shows for about ten years. Tom McNaughton, yet another of the host of British players who are now on this side, came over first, if I mistake not, to create the part of *Roland*, with Christie MacDonald, in "The Spring Maid." It was in this that he sang the now famous novelty song, punctuated with orchestral effects, "The Three Trees."

Christie MacDonald, by the way, is now a wife and mother, having married a New York manufacturer in 1912. She has retired to private life, and lives with her husband on upper Riverside Drive.

ERECTING A PULPIT AT THE PRINCESS

Nobly has the Princess Theater risen above the fiasco of its first bill for the season. After a period of closed doors for rehearsals, the company, of which Holbrook Blinn is director, presented a quartet of offerings which appealed strongly to the interest of the New York public.

In one case something more than this might fairly be said. "Across the Border," by Beulah Marie Dix, coauthor of "The Road to Yesterday," is not only an interesting play, but the most effective sermon against war that has yet been preached. For this reason it falls short in some respects as a drama; too much time is spent

in driving its points home. But one does not soon forget the awe-inspiring mysticism of the second episode, laid in "the place of quiet," where the junior lieutenant slowly awakes to the fact that he is not merely wounded but dead, and is among people who are existing in strange fashion "across the border."

This curious scene shows none of the signs or symbols one usually associates with the land beyond the grave. It is the half light, the unearthly stillness of the figures sitting there in the gloom, in what seems to be an ordinary sort of house, that impart the impress of the strange, the supernatural. There is just the right degree of light and shade in the impersonation of the junior lieutenant by David Powell, who scores heavily in the part. He is a Scotsman, and was three years with Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson as the artist in "The Passing of the Third Floor Back." A season or two back he became the hero in "The Yellow Jacket."

"Nettie," by George Ade, the only comedy in the list, despite its title, has only men in the cast, and shows how three impressionable hearts behind masculine waistcoats are "done" by a demure young woman posing as the most circumspect of music students.

"The Fog," by Frederick Truesdell, an actor in "On Trial," is a gruesome story of jealousy in the back room of a small London shop. There is, however, a delightful twist at the end, when Mr. Blinn, as the husband, having strangled the wrong man, shouts back from the door to his wife and her lover:

"Settle it between you which of you killed the fellow behind the screen! I'm going for the police."

Strong, but almost too harrowing for representation, is "The Denial," with its scene laid in the death-house at Sing Sing immediately before an electrocution. Excellent acting is done in this by Geoffrey Stein as the condemned man who refuses to see a woman claiming to be his mother, but afterward consents, only to tell her that she is mistaken, that he is another man of the same name, and that he killed her boy while the latter was trying to reform him. After she goes out he breaks down with a sobbing cry of "Mother!" unheard by the woman whom he had just saved the one pang it was in his power to spare her.

HIS WIFE'S LOVE-AFFAIR

BY HELEN E. HASKELL



MILY WRIGHT followed her husband into the hall.

"It's the 10th to-day, John."

The man reached for his overcoat on the rack.

"So it is! Unseemly weather for the season—too cold." He thrust his arms into his coat-sleeves and, without a glance at his wife, flung open the front door. "Don't wait dinner, Emmy, if I'm late getting home."

"You'll not be late to-night, John?"

"Never know. Deuced lot of work." He slapped his hat upon his head, crossed the piazza, and ran down the porch steps.

"Good-by!" his wife called after him.

The bang of the front gate drowned the words. Mrs. Wright sighed, and dabbed her eyes with her handkerchief.

"Why the leak, ma?" called a voice from the dining-room.

Mrs. Wright transferred the handkerchief to her nose.

"I believe I've a touch of hay-fever, Stephen. It usually comes on about this time—the 10th of October." She lingered over the date.

"Gee, I'd forgotten it was the 10th!"

The boy gulped the bit of toast remaining on his plate and made a dash for the door. As he pulled his cap over his ears, his mother caught him by the shoulders.

"Must you be off so soon, dear? School will not begin for an hour."

"But the Zanesville Blues are due in town early to-day—the 10th." He shook himself free of her. "I've got to beat it."

She caught him again, raising her lips.

"Oh, let's cut out the sloppy stuff, ma! I'm sixteen, and—and the other fellows don't do it."

His mother's hands dropped to her sides. She drew up her small shoulders.

"All right, Stephen. If you don't want me to kiss you any more, I—I won't."

The last words caught in her throat. With her handkerchief she covered the treacherous quivering at the corners of her mouth.

"I'm off, ma. Good-by!"

The door opened and closed again, and Emily Wright was alone.

"How little they need me!" she murmured. "They—they could hire a cook to take my place."

She walked wearily back to the dining-room, sank into the chair behind the coffee-pot, and, with her elbows on the table and her clasped hands beneath her chin, sat looking absently into space.

She was a small woman, her figure straight and angular as a young boy's. A pointed chin accented the triangular lines of her face, with its thin-lipped, slightly dished mouth. Three fine lines zigzagged across her forehead, and her dark hair was thickly threaded with gray. Only her eyes struck a wrong note in the sedate harmony of her appearance, and they were brown with golden flecks that suggested strange fires behind them.

Now, as she sank into the chair behind the coffee-pot, they were flooded with tears.

"They have both forgotten that to-day is my birthday," she said, speaking aloud, as people much alone have a habit of doing.

She shook her head slowly in self-pity. Then her attitude relaxed. Her chin sank upon her bosom. She yielded herself utterly to her hurt feelings, while her forefinger moved absently over the cloth, tracing the figures three and eight again and again.

"Thirty-eight years old!" she murmured. "A middle-aged woman and—and a sentimental fool, John would say." She laughed bitterly. "And I am not to kiss Stevie good-by any more." She clenched her hands. "Oh, it seems as if I could not stand it—shutting it all up within myself!"

As if to relieve the tensely of her feelings, she sprang to her feet and went about the work of clearing the table and washing the dishes with a sort of eager swiftness.

At ten o'clock she took the key of the R. F. D. box from its hook and went for the mail. There were no letters in the tin box, only a weekly story magazine. She lifted it out, pulling off its wrapper as she turned toward the house. The picture on the cover told her that the principal story was of the frozen north—a man's story.

She sighed as she settled into the easy chair by the sitting-room window and looked over the contents of the magazine.

"All of them stories of action and out of doors," she murmured.

She was in no mood for them. She wanted romance.

She turned to the editorial page, her eye skimming the columns of tantalizing advance notices of stories, then on to the published letters from readers. These always seemed to bring her into touch with the outside world. She read them each week painstakingly, almost as if they were letters from friends.

This morning one of them specially held her attention. She read and reread it. A soft color swept into her cheeks; her prim mouth took on an upward curve; her brown-flecked eyes glowed under her drooping lashes.

She felt as if somebody had spoken to her out of the distance. She glanced, half guiltily, toward the hall, then fixed her eyes again upon the published letter that had so strangely moved her.

I wish some of your readers would take pity on me and drop me a line. It would sure be appreciated by a chap who is still young, and awfully homesick and heart-hungry. Who dares?

The letter had been written from a town in Florida, a place that seemed as remote as the antipodes to untraveled Emily Wright.

She closed the magazine on her forefinger and sat for some minutes lost in reflection. Then suddenly she sprang from her chair, and with an air of brisk decision walked to her desk.

"Just for this once I'm going to let myself go," she said in a tone of finality, as she picked up her pen and began to write.

Noon found her still at her task, her color hectic, a lock of loosened hair brushing her cheek. She seemed but half awake

as she got lunch for Stephen, who gulped his food and was off again.

At two o'clock she finished her letter, signed it, and walked with it to the village post-office. As the metallic flap of the mail-box closed upon it irrevocably she felt a spiritual relaxation. She went home slowly, humming softly to herself.

At six o'clock John Wright, getting back from the city earlier than usual, found her waiting for him at the gate. She had put on a white muslin dress and had thrust a blazing zinnia into her hair. About her thin shoulders she had thrown a white crocheted shawl.

"For goodness' sake, Emmy," her husband scolded, as he hurried up to her, "are you trying to get pneumonia, hanging over the gate in Fourth of July clothes at this time of the year? Get into the house and put on something warm!"

As she crossed the piazza, Stephen burst from around the corner.

"Hello, ma!" he shouted. "What are you all dolled up for? Say, there's a zinnia sticking in your hair."

Emily Wright threw the flower away, went into the house, and put on a heavy dress. The color had faded from her face, the curly corners of her mouth straightened.

II

A WEEK later Emily Wright found a letter in the mail-box addressed to "Miss Emily Wright, R. F. D. No. 9, Richfield." It was postmarked Trenton, Florida.

"Why—why, he thinks me unmarried!" she whispered, as she tore open the envelope and pulled out the single sheet of paper it contained. She read:

DEAR MISS WRIGHT:

Your talk listened good to me. I know a whole lot about the inside of you now, but give me a line on the outside. Are your eyes blue or brown? What color is your hair? I'd sure like a photograph if you've got the nerve to send me one; a snap-shot or any old thing will do. As you see, I'm not much of a letter-writer, but don't let that make any difference with your letters to me. I can hardly wait for the next.

If you say the word, I'll fire along a photograph of myself. I am twenty-four years old and only passably good-looking.

Yours on the square,

HARRY BEDFORD.

Emily Wright mailed a photograph to Trenton that afternoon. It had come in a

silver frame she had bought two years before in which to place a picture of Stephen. She supposed it was a portrait of some actress, and hoped that Harry Bedford would not recognize it as such. She chose it from several similar photographs because the pose was simple. On the back of it she wrote:

Hair and eyes brown. I am not as pretty as this picture.

Three days later she posted her second letter to Florida. As before, the writing of it acted like a safety-valve. She felt relaxed, strangely at peace with the world, when it was done. And in the mean time she was more than ever thoughtful of the material comforts of her son and husband.

"You seem to have kind of settled down, Emmy," John Wright remarked one morning, as she held his coat for him. "I haven't seen any sign of nerves for almost a month; and you're eating better."

"Ma's getting fat," added Stephen. "She's getting as chesty as Mrs. Biddle."

"It's a fact," said John Wright, and pinched his wife's cheek. It was the nearest he had come to a caress in years.

Emily Wright went about her work that morning with a light heart. She merely glanced at the package of snap-shots that she found in the mail-box, showing a young man in a sombrero and light flannels doing various things in an orange-grove. As she dropped them into her desk drawer, she felt a vague sense of regret that in future she must think of her correspondent in concrete form. Until then he had been scarcely more real to her than the hero in a story.

The letter she wrote that afternoon was less spontaneous than usual.

As the winter wore on, Emily Wright was tempted many times to make a clean breast of things to Harry Bedford; but the relief of expressing herself to somebody was so great that she postponed her confession. And then, one day in early spring, the mail brought her a startling letter:

DEAREST EMMY:

I'm starting North on Sunday, and I'm going to bring you back with me. I can't get away from the look in your brown eyes. They follow me about my work. I just can't get along without you, girlie. You'll probably say that I don't know you well enough to be really in love with you; but I'll bet I know you better than anybody else in the world does, for you've driven on the snaffle with me since the start, and there isn't any use your trying to use a curb now. I've got to

have you, and you've got to have me; so I'm coming after you. If I could, I'd start to-morrow, but I want to paint the bungalow and get everything spick and span for my little Emmy.

This will be my last letter. After next week we drive double. Do you get me?

Your loving

HARRY.

Emily Wright finished the letter, then sat back in her chair, trying to think. She must act, and act at once, to prevent this man from coming to her. She would write to him. But no, a letter would not reach him in time. To-day was Friday, and he was starting on Sunday. She must wire to him first, ask him to wait for her letter.

Fear beat against her temples, made her face livid. It was impossible, she told herself, that this mystical, far-away person had so suddenly become human, threatening, and only three days' journey from her.

There was no time to be lost. She must try as best she could to make Bedford understand the soul tragedy that had impelled her—a middle-aged woman, married, the mother of a grown son—to pour out her wretched heartache to an utter stranger. She must write and get the letter to the post-office in time to catch the one-o'clock mail; and on the way back she must telegraph.

She sat down at her desk. Her pen flew over the paper. She made a clean breast of everything. She did not spare herself. What did she care that she made herself appear despicable, faithless, a middle-aged fool? She poured out her heart as she had never done to any human being before.

When she had done, without stopping to read what she had written, she put on her hat and coat and started for the post-office, a mile and a half away. As she passed the station, the eleven thirty train from the city rumbled in. In half an hour Stephen would come home from school, hungry, and wondering what had become of her. Her feet flew over the ground. She arrived at the post-office flushed and breathless. On her way home she stopped at the station and sent her telegram.

It was after twelve when she reached home again. As she opened the gate, John Wright came to the door.

"John!" she gasped, feeling suddenly faint. "What—what is the matter? How long have you been here?"

Her terrified eyes were on her husband's face.

She had left that letter in the drawer of her desk! Had he seen it? Did he know?

"I came out on the eleven thirty. I've a chance to sell the Barker place to a Stamford party. I'm to meet him there at two o'clock."

"I'll get lunch right away."

Emily Wright's eyes still searched her husband's face—that stern, impassive face that never showed an emotion. Did he know? Good Heavens, did he know?

"I've had a bite. I'd better get right along. It's a big deal."

"All right, John." She came close to him, raising her face. "You—you're not angry with me, John?" Her breath caught in a sob which she covered with an affected little cough.

"Certainly not, Emmy."

John Wright picked up his hat.

"John! John! Don't leave me like this."

"You're hysterical, Emily. You've over-exerted yourself. Sit down and rest before you get Stephen's lunch."

The door closed on his substantial back.

With clenched hands she waited until she heard the gate click; then she ran to her desk. Everything seemed in order, except the sheets of paper that she herself had scattered over the blotting-pad. She opened the drawer. Bedford's letter stared up at her. Apparently nothing had been disturbed.

In one corner was the little package of kodak pictures. She ran them over beneath her thumb, six of them in all. As she did so, one dropped into her lap and she saw for the first time that something was written on its back:

To Emmy, from her Harry.

She tore the picture into a dozen pieces. The others received like treatment. Then she destroyed the letter.

"It's fortunate for me that John has no curiosity," she whispered. "What would he have thought if he had seen these?"

She gathered up the fragments of letter and pictures, carried them to the kitchen stove, and watched until they had burned to cinders. Then she set about getting lunch for Stephen.

III

THREE days passed, and Emily Wright heard nothing from Bedford. She had inquired at the telegraph-office and had been told that her message had been delivered.

This brought a modicum of relief to her. If Bedford would only wait, as she had begged in her telegram, all would be well. But would he wait? The question tormented her day and night.

To make matters worse, her husband announced on Monday that he had decided to take a week off from business and set out a new hedge around the kitchen-garden.

"But—but I thought this was the busy season in real estate," his wife stammered, almost overcome with the shock of the announcement, and swaying a bit, as she grasped the table edge to steady herself.

"Don't want me around, eh?" rumbled her husband. "I sort of expected you'd like the idea of having me here to help with the spring cleaning."

"Oh, I do, John, I do. You know I'm always glad to have you at home, but—but I wasn't intending to do any house-cleaning just yet—not for a month or so, until the weather is more settled. And as for the hedge, the frost is hardly out of the ground yet. It's early for planting."

Her usually soft voice shrilled out the last words in an ecstasy of nervousness. John Wright towered above her, his arms folded, his brows drawn down. It seemed to Emily that his features had hardened during the past few days. She covered before the sternness in his eyes.

"Your nerves are getting away with you again, Em—Emily," he said.

Whirling on his heel, he went out of doors.

It was just before daylight on Wednesday morning that Emily Wright was awakened by the sound of soft footsteps in the hall. She listened. Somebody was going stealthily down-stairs. She stretched out her hand. The bed next to her own was empty.

"John!" she called softly.

There was no answer. She waited a moment. Outside a horse whinnied. There was a sound of footsteps on the graveled path leading to the porch.

"John!" she called again.

Still there was no answer, only the sound of a bolt being shot back in the door down-stairs.

"John, what is it? Who has come?"

The front door opened, then closed again. There was the roll of wheels in the road.

Emily Wright struck a match and lighted the night-lamp by her bed. The next moment her husband came into the room. She shrieked and covered her eyes as she glimpsed the blue barrel of a revolver that he carried.

"Milkman got around an hour earlier than usual," he remarked stolidly, thrusting the revolver beneath his pillow. "When I heard him drive up I thought it was one of those scoundrels who've been lifting cord-wood in the neighborhood."

"And you would have shot him, John?" whispered his wife.

"Any sneak who tries stealing from me will get plugged plumb full of lead, Emmy—I warn you of that!" He blew out the lamp, and climbed into bed. "Sorry I disturbed you, Emmy. It's still three hours to breakfast-time, and you need all the sleep you can get."

It seemed to Emily Wright but a few moments later that her husband's heavy breathing told her that he slept.

Until rising-time she lay with wide-open eyes, trying to muster the courage to awaken her husband and tell him the whole story of her correspondence with Harry Bedford. But it was useless. John Wright was not the man to understand the almost overwhelming desire for expression that had first prompted her to write to this stranger. He would be inexorable, scathing. She dared not tell him, and yet she was tormented by the thought that he already knew, that he had seen that letter in her desk.

She did her morning's work in a haze, going repeatedly into the front room to look down the winding ribbon of road that led to the village, fearful almost to the point of hysteria whenever she saw an unfamiliar figure approaching.

Meanwhile John Wright worked unconcernedly in the garden.

At ten o'clock, when the postman came, Emily hurried out to the mail-box; but her husband had thrown down his spade, and before she had a chance to prevent him, he was holding out his hand for the morning mail.

"The Florida letter is for the old man, this time, Mis' Wright," volunteered the postman, grinning and handing an envelope to John. "But you can't complain, Mis' Wright. You've been getting most of the valentines lately."

Emily Wright felt her knees weaken be-

neath her. She caught her husband's arm, but he shook her off and strode into the house.

Somehow she managed to get to the piazza, where she sank weakly down upon the lowest step, and sat, hunched forward, unmindful of the cold wind that lashed her hair into her eyes, wondering, wondering what Harry Bedford had written to her husband. Well, whatever it was, it served her right. There was no excuse for what she had done. And John would never forgive her, that was certain. He might leave her. He had reason enough. And Stephen—she moaned softly, then sat rigidly erect.

"Emily!"

Her husband was calling her.

"Yes, John."

Her reply was a mere gasp; but she got to her feet and stood for a moment leaning against the porch pillar. There came a strange sound from within the house. It was like a sigh, strangely magnified, and ending in a groan. She crossed the threshold, then paused in the dining-room doorway.

John Wright sat at the table, his face on his arms, which were thrust out straight in front of him with the fists clenched upon a twisted roll of something white.

For a moment Emily Wright stood, awe-struck, staring at him. Then she swept forward and gathered her husband's head against her breast, her terrified eyes fixed upon a sheet of paper spread out on the table beside him. On it were scrawled a few words in the handwriting of Harry Bedford:

Read the enclosed letter, old man, and wake up.

Emily Wright drew in her breath. What did Bedford mean? What letter had he sent for her husband to read. As she asked herself the question the head in her arms was thrown back, and John Wright's face was turned up to hers.

"Emmy!" The word seemed to come from the depths of him. His fingers closed on her shoulders, bruising her flesh. "Emily, forgive me!"

"Forgive you, John? You ask me to forgive you?" she gasped. "Why, it is I who must beg of you to forgive me!"

"No, Emmy, it is I who have been guilty. See!" He let go of her shoulders, and smoothed out the twisted wisp of paper. She recognized it at once. It was

her last letter to Bedford. "This is what you wrote, Emily. Listen to it, and then say you will forgive me for what I have done to you, my wife!"

His finger ran half-way down the page. Then he began to read:

There is no excuse for what I have done, Mr. Bedford. I am not trying to make any. You cannot understand it—no man could; but perhaps one day some woman, who like myself has felt the burning need to utter her own soul, will explain to you, as I cannot.

When I wrote to you that first letter, I was like a plant that has had no room for its roots to spread. I had become dwarfed, shriveled, old before my time. For years I had been withering up, just for lack of expression. And then, one day, I saw your appeal in the magazine. Without thinking what it might lead to, I sat down and poured out my heart. Again and again I wrote to you; but believe me, it was never really to you I wrote, but to my own husband and my own boy, neither of whom have ever let me say to them the things that are in me—the real things that I have said to you.

Mr. Bedford, the picture I sent you has nothing to do with me. I am an old woman. My hair is streaked with gray. My face is lined with—

John Wright's big hand spread over the page, shutting off the rest of the letter. His other hand reached up and pressed his wife's cheek against his own. And then, for the first time in his life, stress of emotion loosened the floodgates of his speech.

"Emmy, my wife, it is not true. You are not old!" He stood up and pushed her from him. Tilting her head back, he looked into her face searchingly, then passed his fingers across her forehead, as if to rub out the lines that zigzagged across it. "I am not the kind of a man who uses words easily, Emily; but God knows how I have cared for you—knows that for a week I have been in agony because I thought I had lost you. Why, girl, I have gone around with murder in my heart, waiting to kill the man who had robbed me!"

His hand swept up to brush back the hair from her temples, his breath catching as he saw the gray that threaded it.

"I am going to bring back your youth to you, Emily, if love and tenderness will do it. I have been strangling your soul. You said it in that letter, and I know it now. But I didn't mean to do it. You see, I never realized the need you felt for"—he hesitated, searching vainly for the right

words—"the need you felt for petting and for showing your affection. But let me tell you that every hour in my day you have been in my thoughts. It has been like this—is she warm enough? Is she overdoing? Is she sleeping well? You know that I have looked out for your physical comfort." He drew her closer. "How long has it been since I kissed you, Emily?"

"The last time was when I got word about mother's death." Her voice choked in her throat.

"You'll never again have the day stand out like that," he interrupted huskily, raising her face to his.

As his lips met hers, the front door was thrown open.

"Hello, dad! Ma!"

Half shyly Mrs. Wright tried to disengage her husband's arms. They drew her closer.

"Back already, Stephen? I'll get lunch—"

"Come here, Steve, and kiss your mother," called John Wright, holding his wife fast.

"Why, what's up, dad?" demanded Stephen in surprise.

"Don't you kiss your mother when you come home from school?"

"I'm almost seventeen. I'm too old—"

"You'll never be too old. Look here!" He kissed his wife's flushed cheek. "I'm not too old, and I've some years the best of you, Steve."

He laughed to cover the emotion that swept him; then he folded the boy's arms about his mother.

"I only quit because—well, dad didn't kiss you, ma," explained Stephen bashfully.

Then he kissed his mother in what, as a child, he had called the "snuggly" place in her neck, and again on her lips.

"Well, we understand one another now," said Emily tremulously, as her son's arms fell away from her. And then: "You both must be half starved!"

The happiness in her own voice, as she spoke the commonplace words, thrilled her. As she stopped before the kitchen mirror to smooth back her hair, she laughed under her breath.

In that last letter to Bedford she had called herself an old woman. Her eyes, her cheeks, her glowing lips gave the words the lie. She was younger than she had ever been before in her life—and happier.

CONCERNING HAIR-RESTORERS

BY FRANK X. FINNEGAN



YOU understand, I am not bald. Far from it! I have a very comfortable crop of hair for one of my years; but every now and again some over-solicitous friend cranes his neck until I can hear his thorax creak, trying to peer through the undergrowth. He seems to suspect that my hair is stitched on a silk base. Then he emits a criticism.

"Getting a little bit thin on top there, old boy," he says, with the genial grin that is being worn this season in fashionable insane asylums. "You'd better get after it before it's all gone. You'll be half naked if you lose what's left!"

Of course, this doesn't annoy me. I know how much hair I have—or, if you prefer it, how many hairs I have—without getting any suggestions from outsiders. If I wanted to take the trouble, I could count them and stop all arguments with definite and positive statistics. But as I stepped into a drug-store the other evening to light a cigar, I decided to get some information on the subject of *hirsuticus cadens*, or falling hair.

I am a strong believer in patronizing the neighborhood drug-stores. It encourages them to stay open late, so that there is a place to get a light on the way home from the theater.

"I suppose," I said to the attentive clerk, "that you have more or less calls for hair-restorers?"

I spoke lightly, because I did not want him to imagine that I was particularly interested in the subject. Also I pulled my hat down to my eyebrows.

"You suppose correctly," he replied. "Next to handing out two-cent stamps and answering the telephone, it's running

back there after hair-restorers that wears down my rubber heels."

"Ah, there is more than one on the market, then?" I suggested, flicking my ashes generously on the tessellated floor.

"We carry thirty-seven different infallible cures for falling hair," he said. "All are guaranteed to grow hair on any head that is not in the hands of a coroner's jury; but there is only one that I can really recommend. It's a little preparation of our own."

"What is it like?" I urged, idly enveloping him in a puff of smoke.

"Well," he coughed, "we call it Hibble's Happy Hit. It was discovered by a man who was furnishing Mexican hairless dogs to the New York market. He used to ship 'em up here naked. When they struck this climate they shivered so hard that they shook all their teeth out and starved to death. So he invented this Happy Hit, and it grew so much hair on the dogs that he sold them for Skye terriers at a hundred dollars each, and made his everlasting fortune. Then he sold us the formula. It's very easy to apply, but don't lick it. Some of the dogs did that, and it used to make them bilious."

"I have a friend who thinks his hair is getting a little bit thin," I said. "I believe I'll take a bottle for him."

He had it wrapped up for me before I had time to change my mind.

"It works fine on friends," he remarked.

"In fact, we sell most of it for them."

I took my flask of Happy Hit home with a light heart. Things looked brighter. The part about the Skye terriers appealed to me. They have so much hair—stacks of it!

I hastened to read the directions and opened the bottle. Then I daubed my

skull copiously. Following directions, I massaged briskly with my finger-tips.

After a few moments I noticed an unusual aroma in my apartment. It was that which lingers around a faithful watch-dog. To complete the illusion I needed only to bark and wag my tail against the floor. I began to believe what the clerk had said about the Mexican dogs more firmly than ever.

Then I observed that the movement of my fingers was being arrested by a strange, gluey substance, several degrees thicker than New Orleans molasses. I glanced into the mirror. My hands were enmeshed to the hilt in a sticky morass, which I should have declined to recognize but for the familiar features below. It was my hair.

Hastily I seized the bottle of Happy Hit and looked again at the directions. There was one trifling point that I had overlooked.

"First dilute two-thirds with alcohol," it read. "Otherwise the preparation may thicken slightly."

It had already thickened slightly, and it continued to thicken. As the night wore on, it settled down to its task and solidified. I had to sleep crosswise on the bed with my head hanging over.

In the morning I summoned the janitor for expert advice. He suggested cutting away the wreckage and shaving my scalp. He said he couldn't see any other way of making a neat, smooth job. I balked at this, however. I might become bald in time, but I had no desire to volunteer.

We put in the rest of the day inducing the stuff to let go. It took quarts of

benzin and alcohol. Some of the latter was applied to my gelatinous locks, and the remainder was consumed by the janitor. I found it necessary to treat him as a brother to insure secrecy. What I thought of Mr. Hibble and his Happy Hit by the time we were through could never be used as a testimonial. The police wouldn't allow it.

I was not to be daunted, however. Having started on the hair-restorer route, I was determined to see it through. There was a fascination about the thing. I could readily understand how the druggists had thirty-seven varieties of hair-restorer on the market. I started in to try all of them.

For several months my head was in a smeary and odorous state that made my friends shy visibly when I approached; but I persevered. The inventors of all the remedies advised perseverance.

My first waking thought in the gray dawn was to peer at my scalp in the mirror and see what had happened overnight. In a saddening succession of instances nothing had happened. My scalp merely seemed to flush indignantly under the close scrutiny. Now and then I thought I discovered a new hair peeping timidly above the desert. On closer examination it always proved to be a wrinkle.

When I had worked through the list to the thirty-fifth infallible preparation, my enthusiasm began to wane. My hair had been doing so with relentless pertinacity. I decided to quit with something in reserve. If I ever really need a hair-restorer, there are two remedies that I can approach with buoyant optimism. At least I have never tried them.

THE SEVEN SISTERS—A LULLABY


CRADLED in heaven,
Little stars seven,
Golden heads in a cloud;
How can the mother
Tell one from another
Over the cradle bowed?

Rock-a-by, darling,
While slumber is falling,
Dream-horses bear thee away;
The moon is thy mother,
The night is thy brother,
With the stars, thy sisters, play!

Catherine de Mille

THE ROCKY ROAD OF RECTITUDE

BY WILLIAM SLAVENS McNUTT

IRTUE is its own reward, ain't it?" the blond girl behind the hotel cigar-counter quizzed me, as she dulled the sheen of toil on her nose with a medicated cigarette - paper.

"Um! And if a canary had to live on what an elephant got for being good, the poor bird would be on some diet! A clear conscience gives a fine appetite, but nothing to feed it with; and us good ones don't even die young. If we did, I wouldn't worry, but we don't. No, we're too healthy. We live to be old and go to the poorhouse. I wish I was either a vampire or an idiot!"

"Why the selection?" I inquired.

"'Cause the vamps take care of themselves, and some wise old owl with a weak heart and a swollen wallet always takes care of a female idiot. I'm just good enough and sensible enough to have to do one dollar's worth of real work for every ninety-eight cents I collect. I'm sore. I don't care what I do to-day. I'm going to sympathize with the next man that tells me what a mistake he made when he married!"

"Notice that dainty little blue-eyed beam of sunshine that worked the other shift here for six weeks? If she was sunshine, lock me in the dark! She got the job here because her stepmother's third cousin by second marriage used to run errands for the manager's sister-in-law, or something like that. She come here straight from high school in some young town east of the mountains just about big enough to sprout an op'ry-house on its upper lip.

"She's inexperienced,' the boss says, 'but you can soon teach her.'

"Not soon nor late! No wonder the hair on her head grew thick and long; it

had no opposition. She ducked in behind here and watched me out of those round, china-blue eyes of hers like a girls' seminary bonbon fiend at a sob-fest matinée, while I jollied good sales out of a half a dozen cheap drummers, stalled a date with an old married goat that's got a boy old enough to beat his time, and got rid of a loving souse without having a row.

"Well,' I says, when trade got slack for a minute, 'what do you think of it?'

"She clapped her little hands and rolled those big blue eyes like the smallest child actress registering joy.

"Oh, isn't it just too romantic?' she squeals.

"Romantic! A waste-basket for all the cheap talk that any rummy with clothes good enough to let him in the door and all of a nickel to spend can pump out of his system. Romantic!"

"Just like sewing pants,' I told her, 'only more public.'

"I gave her the run of the stock and let her try a sale. She stood up there at the counter and posed and threw herself around like a limber wienerwurst with the jimjams, and simpered and blushed and kissed her own finger till a fat whisky salesman breezed in from the bar with more under his belt than he had in his order-book, and gave her the eye. You really couldn't blame him. If I met a peach on a low branch out over the sidewalk with the sign 'Pick Me' hung around its neck—and if I felt like peaches—I'd pluck it. He slouched his hat a little over one eye, tugged the bottom of his vest, shot his cuffs—they all pull the same preliminaries—and hung one elbow on the counter.

"Hello, chicken!' he says. 'My, what lovely eyes you've got!'

"O-o-oh!" she says, just like that—like a train letting off the air-brakes. "Do you think so? O-o-oh, thank you!"

"It almost sobered him up. He backed off and took a good look. When he saw it was real, he got down to business in a hurry. My, but his work was coarse! Never saw a girl, he said, that affected him the way she did; something about her that attracted him the moment he laid eyes on her; never been much of a hand to fuss around the ladies, but the moment he saw her— Wasn't it funny how they both liked the same things? Wah!

"He pulled all that old summer-resort canoe stuff, and she fairly climbed over the show-case to get it. He'd got down to 'that little bit of supper some place,' and she was nodding her head so fast it's a wonder she didn't dislocate her neck, when I butted in with a few well-chosen words that jarred him out of his poultry-yard.

"As she got more experience—got the hang of things, so to speak—she got worse. Every bum that smiled at her was just wild to slip the matrimonial lariat over her neck and drag her away to a life of idle luxury—according to her version of it. If they frowned, why, they were being gnawed by a secret passion which for some mysterious reason they couldn't divulge. We roomed together up-stairs, and it kept me busy pulling her back from the abyss. She was always tottering on the brink. As a long-distance totterer she had that President Hew-erta of Mexico beat by a dozen precipices.

"I talked it over with Mr. Matthews. You know him? The heavy-set, good-looking fellow with the iron-gray hair and nose-glasses? Lived here in the hotel for a couple of years. I once had hopes there. I'd have done a tandem with him, if I'd had the chance. He had lots of money, and he'd wrote a book called 'The Psychological Relation of Poverty and Crime.' He used to talk with me about it. I couldn't understand it, but it was awful interesting. Gee, I liked him. He felt bad about Bernice.

"She has absolutely no chance, situated as she is,' he says.

"The trouble with her is she's got too many chances,' I told him.

"Yes,' he says. 'Chances for evil. She is like a beautiful moth fluttering about the searing flame, and doomed to be consumed in the brilliance that attracts her.'

"I always fell for him strong when he talked like that; it sounded fine. Now to me she was just a flossy little empty-headed boob about ripe to learn some lessons not taught in school, and learn them quick and painful.

"Well, the front-page stuff started to pop last night. She was due on at eight, and when she didn't show I sent a bell-hop up to get her. He brought back a letter she'd left pinned to her pillow. It was a fine letter. I'd read most of it in a book by Bertha M. Clay that I found up in the room. The rest of it said she had benzined for paradise with Larry Marmaduke in his whiz-cart, and was going to live happy ever after and do good to the poor with his money. The first stop on the road to heaven was to be Tacoma. For some mysterious reason—she was strong for mystery; she'd believe anything that you couldn't explain to her—Larry couldn't be married in Seattle; so they was going to stop in Tacoma to have the seal of the church and State stamped on their little package of bliss billed right through to a box seat with the angels.

"You know young Marmaduke. Him marry? He'd run away with a rheumatic squaw, if no other woman was in sight, but he wouldn't marry a combination of Cleopatra and Joan of Arc. Just then I saw Mr. Matthews, and I called him over and showed him the letter.

"Too bad!' he says. 'Poor little girl!'

"Can't we do something?' I says.

"Get a machine and follow them up,' he says. 'It may not be too late. I'll frustrate that black-hearted hound yet!'

"He had an elegant way of putting things, didn't he? I always fell for him strong when he talked like that. I left the tobacco industry flat on its back and run out into the street after him. It was raining hard, but I didn't mind after the first minute, because then I couldn't get any wetter.

"We tumbled into a big seven-passenger machine, and Mr. Matthews give the chauffeur a handful of gold and told him not to wait around. He didn't. He kicked in the bottom of the car with his feet, and all of a sudden we exploded and just fell out of the city. I'm going to walk over the route when I have time and get my breath back.

"About twenty miles out we come to a sick machine, and in the glare of our head-

lights we saw Larry Marmaduke down on his knees in the mud operating on it. We jumped out and run up in the rain, and Bernice stuck her head out of the machine and says:

"O-o-oh, Mr. Matthews!"

"My dear little girl!" he says. "Thank God I have come in time! This loathsome blackguard means to betray you."

"He talked awful solemn and moral. I always fell for him strong when he spoke like that."

"O-o-oh, Mr. Matthews!" Bernice squeals all up and down the scale. "Do you think so?"

"Larry got up on his feet and says:

"Where do you horn in on this party, you four-eyed remnant?"

"Then, while Mr. Matthews was taking his glasses off, Larry beaned him. It was an awful fight. Mr. Matthews done fine, but Larry's bigger than him, and was beating him up. I told the chauffeur to get in and do something, but he says:

"I'm a chauffeur, not a prize-fighter."

"So I got a wrench out of the tool-box, and went and refereed the scrap till I got my chance; then I pasted a Jack Johnson on one of Larry's curls, and he slept a while. Mr. Matthews got up out of the mud, and says to me:

"You're a brave girl. You have saved my life, for that fiend would have murdered me."

"It was awful dignified the way he said it. I always fell for him strong when he talked like that. Then he went over and comforted Bernice. Ever since the scrap started she'd been bawling and jumping up and down and waving her hands like a spoiled kid that's dropped her buttered bread usual side down in the dirt. Mr. Matthews got her cooled off finally so that you could hear yourself speak if you yelled real loud. We all got into the machine, and the chauffeur started to turn around to go back. But just then Larry woke up and heaved a sliver off a young mountain that hit our poor chauffeur just outside of his brains. He let go the wheel, and the car upset in the ditch and spilled us on somebody's wheat-field. While we was picking out our own legs and arms and things, Larry fixed his car and beat it."

"It was dark and wet and cold and lonesome, and Bernice threw the stopper away and spilled all the noise there was left in her."

"There, there, my poor child," Mr. Matthews says. "Don't cry, I beg of you. I will protect you."

"It was awful nice, the way he said it, but it made me sore somehow. Then I had to wade through the mud for two miles to the nearest farmhouse, while Mr. Matthews carried the poor, dear angel simp in his arms. Her dreadful experience had weakened her so she couldn't walk a step. I'd hate to have seen the dear, sweet hussy boiled to death in oil, of course, but if somebody had tarred and feathered her, or burned just one eye out with a red-hot poker, I could have stood it."

"We phoned from the farm for a machine, and it beat daylight to us, but not much. I was all in by the time we got started back, and I went right to sleep in the tonneau. When Mr. Matthews woke me up, we was out here in front of the hotel, and it was beginning to get light."

"My dear, brave girl, congratulate us," he says. "We owe it all to you."

"Then I noticed that he was hugging Bernice. Sleep went away from me, and left me there to take it wide awake."

"It's all been a terrible mistake," Mr. Matthews says. "She loves only me, and she was driven to her rash act of last night by my neglect. How was I to know that the dearest, sweetest, most lovable creature in the world could possibly care for a crabbed old bachelor like me? And she has consented to wed me at once, this morning!"

"It sounded awful silly, the way he said it; sounded just like stale candy smells. But that's about the works, I guess. She's slated for a yum-yum trip around the world. I got bowled out for ditching the job like I done, spoiled a dress and a pair of shoes, caught cold in my head, and sprained my disposition. Oh, you virtue!"

"So you're going to turn vampire for revenge?" I inquired.

"Me for the vamp stuff," she assured me earnestly.

A fat man in a loud check suit, with an overgrown diamond in his tie, bought a handful of cigars, and, leaning over the counter, whispered to her confidentially.

"No breeze!" she declared with an emphatic shake of her head. "Not none! With you? Why, say, if I was the Sahara Desert, and you were a drop of water in the middle of me, you'd have to run a thousand miles to spill!"

Light Verse

SHAKESPEARE'S RIVAL

ANNE HATHAWAY I did adore;
I never loved a maiden more,
For she was tender, she was sweet,
What time she tripped through Shot-
tery's street
Like—well, there is no metaphor!

I was a wandering troubadour;
My songs, my love—how they would soar,
When I, grown brave, dared to entreat
Anne Hathaway!

All my poor passion I did pour
In reckless wooing; yea, I bore
Love's sorrow till I knew defeat.
Another's triumph was complete—
Yes, Will of Avon won her; for
Anne hath a way!

Charles Hanson Towne

AUTHENTIC NEWS FROM THE FRONT

"I'M glad that Red Cross ship could
sail,"
Said Jack in tones of glee.
"Hurrah for Red Cross nurses that
It took across the sea!"

"They should have stopped the ship,"
said Tom,
"Because I'm sure they'll find
The reddest, crossdest nurse of all
Is ours they've left behind!"

Blanche Elizabeth Wade

HE KNEW MY FATHER

THE look of him was wholly commonplace—
His grizzled beard, worn garments, fur-
rowed face.
It wanted all my life-learned poise to keep
Suppressed an adverse note that strove to creep
Into my judgment as I viewed the man,
So shaped he seemed on utter failure's plan.
His was the seldom-traveler's furtive look,
Cowering uneasy in his red-plush nook.

To me at length for friendliness he turned;
For human fellowship this lone man yearned.
I humored his pathetic eagerness
To know my name, my calling, my address.

"Your father's name?" He trembled as he spoke;
And when I told him, o'er his features broke
A look of satisfaction deep and sweet
As if I'd made his cup of joy replete.

"I knowed your dad—why, him an' me was
chums!"

And then I knew the happiness that comes
To every father-hungry grown-up lad
Who never ceases longing for the dad
So little understood in callow days—
'So quick to blame he seemed, so slow to praise;
So wished-for now, when wisdom holds her
throne,
That for our disrespect we might atone!

About that head, erstwhile so commonplace,
A halo formed, of glory and of grace.
He'd known and loved the father I had known;
As boy friends intimate the two had grown;
I clung to him—I all but held his hand,
This magic guest from an enchanted land.
Now with a thrill his voice in memory comes:
"I knowed your dad—why, him an' me was
chums!"

Strickland Gillilan

THE OLD BELLE'S DRINKING SONG

TO what shall I drink with this mild cup of
tea?
To the nights and the days that were jolly?
To the men that have broken their hearts over
me?
To the mistletoe sprays and the holly?
To the mild summer nights that were moonlit
and breezy?
Ah, no— for who values the things that come
easy?

I'll drink to the dresses I couldn't afford,
To the women I've envied and hated;
I'll drink to the times when my brain-cells were
bored,
To the loves that were sweet and ill-fated;
To the snubs and the flicks and the fears and the
aching;
To the times when my iron-clad heart was near
breaking!

I'll drink to the bitter campaign for a man—
For any old man that had money;
To the shrewd reconnoiter, the miscarried plan;
To the years with no milk and no honey;

A toast to the married life I might have led!
Just another weak cup, then away to my bed,
Where my very last chance lies so comfortably
curled—

The soothingest husband in all this nice world!

Jane Burr

THE LADY LISTENS

THE other night, while dining out, a maiden
most inviting
Said: "Mr. Smith, please do explain just why
they are all fighting!"

"The Germans—" I began—
You can see it was my plan
To get off some striking thoughts about the war.
"Oh, the germans!" murmured she;
"Let me fox-trot with my tea!
No one ever gives a german any more!"

"Turkey seems to—" once again
I began, but all in vain.
"Oh, you men! You love your turkey and your
roast!

But give me a nut *glacé*,
Or a cherry-crowned *parfait*,
Or a chicken-salad sandwich, at the most!"

"Now the Russians and the Eng—"
But I didn't get my fling.
"Oh, don't you think Pavlowa is a cutie?
And the Russian blouse! Divine!
Come to tea, I'll show you mine,
Black and green, with monkey fur—a perfect
beauty!"

Said I with quiet, stern despair: "I cannot tell
you more."

"Oh, thank you! Now I understand," cried she,
"about the war!"

Anne Parrish

THE KISS

A KISS is not like the poems at all
Which I drop through the editor's office
door;

For I like it as well "returned with thanks,"
As "accepted, with a request for more."

Clinton Harcourt

THE LOOSING

"WHERE'S my old dog?" I cry in jest,
As the child from the house above
Sinks her hands in his broad, white chest
And strains him back from his love.

Well she knows, as she holds him fast,
That his heart is elsewhere—
That I wait for his frantic leaps at last,
And his roguish, dear despair.

"Where's my old dog?" I cry again,
As the pines shut close on the trail;
There comes a sound from that throat so fain
As my feet go swift in the dale.

His bark rings far through the darkling wood,
Mutinous, eager, strong;
And I smile as I think that, though she would,
She cannot hold him for long.

"Where's my old dog?" I cry once more.
Ah, foolish clamor and quest!
For though he tugs on a neighbor's floor
His kennel waits in my breast.

The wood is still as the twilight hush
Renders its world-caress;
Who so fleet in the crackling brush—
Blind in his eagerness?

Love-hot yelps of a heart set free!
Gladly I welcome the shock,
As my dog flows upward in joy on me,
Like the foam on a weed-brown rock!

George Sterling

THE PARTS OF SPEECH

THE pronoun said:
"You'll find it true
The world is made
Of me and you."

The noun proclaimed:
"From me all springs;
The world in truth
Consists of things."

The verb announced:
"Tis plain to see
What makes the world
Is just to be."

Conjunction cried,
To end the tiff:
"You'll find the world
All hangs on if!"

McLamburgh Wilson

PRONUNCIAMENTO

MY mother learned in Boston town
From culture's rivulets to quaff;
And so, on vulgar speech to frown,
She says emphatically: "Hahf!"

At this my dad, Chicago-born,
Has made it e'er his point to chaff;
And often, just to show his scorn,
He tells me, quite distinctly: "Hahf!"

And so I stand between two fires;
You wonder how I stand the gaff?
My way's my mother's and my sire's—
For I pronounce it hahf and hahf!

A. Burstein

Victory*

An Island Story

By Joseph Conrad

Author of

"Chance." "Typhoon." "Lord Jim." "Youth," etc.

A full length book novel, printed complete in this issue

THERE is, as every schoolboy knows in this scientific age, a very close chemical relation between coal and diamonds. It is the reason, I believe, why some people allude to coal as "black diamonds."

Both these commodities represent wealth; but coal is a much less portable form of property. There is, from that point of view, a deplorable lack of concentration in coal. Now, if a coal-mine could be put into one's waistcoat-pocket—but it can't!

At the same time, there is a fascination in coal, the supreme commodity of the age in which we are camped like bewildered travelers in a garish, unrestful hotel. And I suppose those two considerations, the practical and the mystical, prevented Heyst—Axel Heyst—from going away.

The Tropical Belt Coal Company went into liquidation. The world of finance is a mysterious world in which, incredible as the fact may appear, evaporation precedes liquidation.

First the capital evaporates, and then the company goes into liquidation. These are very unnatural physics, but they account for the persistent inertia of Heyst, at which we "out there" used to laugh among ourselves—but not inimically.

An inert body can do no harm to any one, provokes no hostility, is scarcely worth derision. It may, indeed, be in the way sometimes; but this could not be said of Axel Heyst. He was out of everybody's way, as if he were perched on the highest peak of the Himalayas, and in a sense as conspicuous.

Every one in that part of the world knew of him, dwelling on his little island. An island is but the top of a mountain. Axel Heyst, perched on it immovably, was surrounded, instead of the stormy ocean of air merging into infinity, by a tepid, shallow sea; a passionless offshoot of the great waters which embrace the continents of this globe.

His most frequent visitors were shadows, the shadows of clouds, relieving the monotony of the inanimate, brooding sunshine of the

tropics. His nearest neighbor—I am speaking now of things showing some sort of animation—was an indolent volcano which smoked faintly all day with its head just above the northern horizon, and at night leveled at him from among the clear stars a dull, red glow, expanding and collapsing spasmodically like the end of a gigantic cigar puffed at intermittently in the dark. Axel Heyst was also a smoker; and when he lounged out on his veranda with his cheroot, the last thing before going to bed, he made in the night the same sort of glow as that other one so many miles away.

In a sense, the volcano was company to him in the shades of the night—which were often too thick, one would think, to let a breath of air through. There was seldom enough wind to blow a feather along. On most evenings of the year Heyst could have sat outside with a naked candle to read one of the books left him by his late father.

On the nights of full moon the silence around Samburan—the “Round Island” of the charts—was dazzling; and the sky, emptied of stars and with the lonely orb, looked as desolate as the empty and luminous sea. The warm glow of the volcano was extinguished by the flood of cold light. I don't know whether Heyst missed its company. I dare say not.

In exchange, he could see his immediate surroundings, which had the aspect of an abandoned settlement invaded by the jungle. There were vague roofs above low vegetation, and broken shadows of bamboo fences in the sheen of long grass. Something like an overgrown bit of road slanted among ragged thickets toward the shore only a couple of hundred yards away, with a black, rickety jetty and a mound of some sort, quite inky on its unlighted side.

But the most conspicuous object was a gigantic blackboard raised on two posts and presenting to Heyst, when the moon got over that side, the white letters “T. B. C. Co.” in a row at least two feet high. These were the initials of the Tropical Belt Coal Company, his employers—his late employers, to be precise.

According to the unnatural mysteries of the financial world, the T. B. C. Company's capital having evaporated in the course of two years, the company went into liquidation—forced, I believe, not voluntary. There was nothing forcible in the process, however. It was slow; and while the liquidation—in London and Amsterdam—pursued its languid course, Axel Heyst, styled in the prospectus “manager in the tropics,” remained at his

post on Samburan, the No. 1 coaling-station of the company.

And it was not only a mere coaling-station. There was a coal-mine there, with an outcrop in the hillside less than five hundred yards from the rickety wharf and the imposing blackboard. The company's object had been to get hold of all the outcrops on tropical islands and exploit them locally. And, Lord knows, there were any amount of outcrops. It was Heyst who had located most of them in this part of the tropical belt during his rather aimless wanderings, and, being a ready letter-writer, had written pages and pages about them to his friends in Europe. At least, so it was said.

We doubted whether he had any visions of wealth—for himself, at any rate. What he seemed mostly concerned for was the “stride forward,” as he expressed it. He was heard by more than a hundred persons in the islands talking of a “great stride forward for these regions.” The convinced wave of the hand which accompanied the phrase suggested tropical distances being impelled onward. In connection with the finished courtesy of his manner, it was persuasive, or at any rate silencing—for a time, at least.

Nobody cared to argue with him when he talked in this strain. His earnestness was discouraging, and we thought, also, that it could do no harm to anybody. There was no danger of any one taking seriously his dream of tropical coal, so what was the use of hurting his feelings?

Thus reasoned men in reputable business offices, where he had his entrée as a person who came out East with letters of introduction—and modest letters of credit, too—some years before these coal outcrops began to crop up in his playfully courteous talk. From the first there was some difficulty in making him out. He was not a traveler. A traveler arrives and departs, goes on somewhere. Heyst did not depart.

I met a man once—the manager of the branch of the Oriental Banking Corporation in Malacca—to whom Heyst exclaimed, in the billiard-room of the club:

“I am enchanted with these islands!”

He said it suddenly, in no connection with anything else—*à propos des bottes*, as the French say, and while chalking his cue. And perhaps it was some sort of enchantment. There are more spells than your commonplace magicians ever dreamed of.

Roughly speaking, a circle with a radius of eight hundred miles drawn round a point in

North Borneo was in Heyst's case a magic circle. It just touched Manila, and he had been seen there. It just touched Saigon, and he was likewise seen there once. Perhaps these were his attempts to break out. If so, they were failures. The enchantment must have been an unbreakable one.

The manager—the man who heard the exclamation—had been so impressed by the tone of it that he had related the experience to more than one person.

"Queer chap, that Swede!" was his only comment; but this is the origin of the name, "Enchanted Heyst," which some fellows fastened on our man.

He also had other names. In his early years, long before he got so bald on the top, he went to present a letter of introduction to Mr. Tesman, of Tesman Brothers, a Sourabaya firm—tip-top house. Well, Mr. Tesman was a kindly, benevolent old gentleman. He did not know what to make of that caller. After telling him that they wished to make his stay among the islands as pleasant as possible, and that they were ready to assist him in his plans, and so on, and after receiving Heyst's thanks—you know the usual kind of conversation—he proceeded to query in a slow, paternal tone:

"And you are interested in—"

"Facts," broke in Heyst in his courtly voice. "There's nothing worth knowing but facts. Hard facts! Facts alone, Mr. Tesman."

I don't know if old Tesman agreed with him or not, but he must have spoken about it, because, for a time, our man got the name of "Hard Facts." He had the singular good fortune that his sayings stuck to him and became part of his name.

Thereafter he mooned about the Java Sea in some of the Tesmans' trading schooners, and then vanished on an Arab ship, in the direction of New Guinea. He remained so long in that outlying part of his enchanted circle that he was nearly forgotten before he swam into view again in a native proa full of Goram vagabonds, burned black by the sun, very lean, his hair much thinned on top, and a portfolio of sketches under his arm. He showed these willingly, but was very reserved as to anything else. He had had an "amusing time," he said. A man who will go to New Guinea for fun—well!

Later, years afterward, when the last vestiges of youth had gone off his face and all the hair off the top of his head, and his red-gold pair of horizontal mustaches had grown

to really noble proportions, a certain disreputable white man fastened upon him an epithet. Putting down with a shaking hand a long glass emptied of its contents—paid for by Heyst—he said, with that deliberate sagacity which no mere water-drinker ever attained:

"Heyst's a puffect g'n'leman. Puffect! But he's a ut-uto-utopist."

Heyst had just gone out of the place of public refreshment where this pronouncement was voiced. Utopist, eh? Upon my word, the only thing I heard him say which might have had a bearing on the point was his invitation to old McNab himself. Turning with that finished courtesy of attitude, movement, voice, which was his obvious characteristic, he had said with delicate playfulness:

"Come along and quench your thirst with us, Mr. McNab!"

Perhaps that was it. A man who could propose, even playfully, to quench old McNab's thirst must have been a utopist, a pursuer of chimeras; for of downright irony Heyst was not prodigal. And, maybe, this was the reason why he was generally liked.

At that epoch in his life, in the fulness of his physical development, of a broad, martial presence, with his bald head and long mustache, he resembled Charles XII, of adventurous memory. However, we had no reason to think that Heyst was in any way a fighting man.

II

It was about this time that Heyst became associated with Morrison.

One day Heyst turned up in Timor. Why in Timor, of all places in the world, no one knows. Well, he was mooning about Delli, that highly pestilential place, possibly in search of some undiscovered facts, when he came in the street upon Morrison, who, in his way, was also an "enchanted" man.

When you spoke to Morrison of going home—he was from Dorsetshire—he shuddered. He said it was dark and wet there; that it was like living with your head and shoulders in a moist gunny-bag. That was only his exaggerated style of talking.

Morrison was "one of us." He was owner and master of the Capricorn, trading brig, and was understood to be doing well with her, except for too much altruism. He was the dearly beloved friend of a number of remote villages up dark creeks and obscure bays, where he traded for "produce."

He would often sail through awfully dangerous channels up to some village, only to find

a very hungry population clamorous for rice, and without so much "produce" between them as would have filled Morrison's suitcase. He would land the rice all the same, amid general rejoicings, explain to the people that it was an advance, that they were in debt to him now; would preach to them energy and industry, and make an elaborate note in a pocket diary which he always carried; and this would be the end of that transaction. I don't know if Morrison thought so, but the villagers had no doubt whatever about it.

We used to remonstrate with him:

"You will never see any of your advances if you go on like this, Morrison."

He would put on a knowing air.

"I shall squeeze them yet some day—never you fear! And that reminds me"—pulling out his inseparable pocketbook—"there's that So-and-So village. They are pretty well off again; I may just as well squeeze them to begin with."

He would make a ferocious entry in the pocketbook:

Memo.—Squeeze the So-and-So village at the first time of calling.

Then he would stick the pencil back and snap the elastic on with inflexible finality; but he never began the squeezing.

When Heyst met him in Delli, Morrison was walking along the street, his eye-glass tossed over his shoulder, his head down, with the hopeless aspect of those hardened tramps one sees on our roads trudging from workhouse to workhouse. Being hailed across the street, he looked up with a wild, worried expression. He was really in despair. He had come the week before into Delli, and the Portuguese authorities, on some pretense of irregularity in his papers, had inflicted a fine upon him and had arrested his brig.

Morrison never had any spare cash in hand. With his system of trading it would have been strange if he had; and all these debts entered in the pocketbook weren't good enough to raise a milreis—let alone a penny. The Portuguese officials begged him not to distress himself. They gave him a week's grace, and then proposed to sell the brig at auction. This meant ruin for Morrison; and when Heyst hailed him across the street in his usual courtly tone, the week was nearly out.

Heyst crossed over, and said with a slight bow, and in the manner of a prince addressing another prince on a private occasion:

"What an unexpected pleasure! Would you have any objection to drink something

with me in that infamous wine-shop over there? The sun is really too strong to talk in the street."

The haggard Morrison followed obediently into a somber, cool hovel which he would have disdained to enter at any other time. He was distracted. He did not know what he was doing. You could have led him over the edge of a precipice just as easily as into that wine-shop.

He sat down like an automaton. He was speechless, but he saw a glass full of rough red wine before him, and drank it. Heyst meantime, politely watchful, had taken a seat opposite.

"You are in for a bout of fever, I fear," he said sympathetically.

Poor Morrison's tongue was loosened at last.

"Fever!" he cried. "Give me fever! Give me plague! They are diseases. One gets over them. But I am being murdered. I am being murdered by the Portuguese. The gang here downed me at last among them. I am to have my throat cut the day after tomorrow!"

Morrison's despairing reserve had broken down. He had been wandering with a dry throat all over that miserable town of mud hovels, silent, with no soul to turn to in his distress, and positively maddened by his thoughts; and suddenly he had stumbled on a white man, figuratively and actually white—for Morrison refused to accept the racial whiteness of the Portuguese officials.

He let himself go for the mere relief of violent speech, his elbows planted on the table, his eyes bloodshot, his voice nearly gone, the brim of his round pith hat shading an unshaven, livid face. His white clothes, which he had not taken off for three days, were dingy. He looked already gone to the bad, past redemption.

The sight was shocking to Heyst; but he let nothing of it appear in his bearing, concealing his impression under that consummate good-society manner of his. Polite attention, what's due from one gentleman listening to another, was what he showed; and, as usual, it was catching; so that Morrison pulled himself together and finished his narrative in a conversational tone, with a man-of-the-world air.

"It's a villainous plot! Unluckily, one is helpless. That scoundrel Cousinho—Andreas, you know—has been coveting the brig for years. Naturally, I would never sell. She is not only my livelihood; she's my life. So he has hatched this pretty little plot with the

chief of the customs. The sale, of course, will be a farce. There's no one here to bid. He will get the brig for a song—no, not even that—a line of a song. You have been some years now in the islands, Heyst. You know us all; you have seen how we live. Now you shall have the opportunity to see how some of us end; for it is the end, for me. You see it—don't you?"

Morrison had pulled himself together, but one felt the snapping strain on his recovered self-possession. Heyst was beginning to say, with a drawl of urbane thoughtfulness, that he "could very well see all the bearings of this unfortunate—" when Morrison interrupted him jerkily.

"Upon my word, I don't know why I have been telling you all this. I suppose seeing a thoroughly white man like you made it impossible to keep my trouble to myself. I see now that words can't do it justice; but since I've told you so much I may as well tell you more. Listen! This morning on board, in my cabin, I went down on my knees and prayed for help. I went down on my knees!"

"You are a believer, Morrison?" asked Heyst with a distinct note of respect.

"Surely I am not an infidel."

Morrison was swiftly reproachful in his answer, and there came a pause, Morrison perhaps interrogating his conscience, and Heyst preserving a mien of unperturbed, polite interest.

"I prayed like a child, of course. I believe in children praying—well, women, too, but I rather think God expects men to be more self-reliant. I don't hold with a man everlastingly bothering the Almighty with his silly troubles. It seems such cheek. Anyhow, this morning I—I have never done any harm to any one, knowingly—I prayed. A sudden impulse—I went flop on my knees; so you may judge—"

They were gazing earnestly into each other's eyes. Poor Morrison added, as a discouraging afterthought:

"Only this is such a God-forsaken spot!"

Heyst did not depart from his habitual urbanity. He inquired with a delicate intonation whether he might know the amount for which the brig was seized.

Morrison suppressed an oath, and named curtly a sum which was relatively so insignificant that any other person than Heyst would have exclaimed at it. And even Heyst could hardly keep incredulity out of his politely modulated voice as he asked if it was a fact that Morrison had not that amount in hand.

Morrison hadn't. He had only a little Eng-

lish gold, a few sovereigns, on board. He had left all his spare cash with the Tesmans, in Samarang, to meet certain bills which would fall due while he was away on his cruise. Anyhow, that money would not have been any more good to him than if it had been in the innermost depths of the infernal regions.

He said all this brusquely. He looked with sudden disfavor at that noble bald forehead, at those great martial mustaches, at the tired eyes of the man sitting opposite him. Morrison knew no more of Heyst than the rest of us trading in the archipelago did. Had the Swede suddenly risen and hit him on the nose, he could not have been taken more aback than when this stranger, this nondescript wanderer, said with a little bow across the table:

"Oh! If that's the case, I would be very happy. Pray command me!"

Morrison didn't understand. This was one of those things that don't happen—unheard-of things. He had no real inkling of what it meant till Heyst said definitely:

"I can lend you the amount."

"You have the money?" whispered Morrison. "Do you mean here, in your pocket?"

"Yes, on me. Glad to be of use."

Morrison, staring open-mouthed, groped over his shoulder for the cord of the eye-glass hanging down his back. When he found it, he stuck it in his eye hastily. It was as if he expected Heyst's usual white suit of the tropics to change into a shining garment flowing down to his toes, and a pair of great, dazzling wings to sprout on the Swede's shoulders—and didn't want to miss a single detail of the transformation.

But if Heyst was an angel from on high, sent in answer to prayer, he did not betray his heavenly origin by outward signs. So, instead of going on his knees, as he felt inclined to do, Morrison stretched out his hand, which Heyst grasped with formal alacrity and a polite murmur:

"Trifle—delighted—of service."

"Miracles do happen," thought the awestruck Morrison. To him, as to all of us in the islands, this wandering Heyst, who didn't toil or spin visibly, seemed the very last person to be the agent of Providence in an affair concerned with money.

As they were trudging together through the sand of the roadway to the custom-house—another mud hovel—to pay the fine, Morrison broke into a cold sweat, stopped short, and exclaimed in faltering accents:

"I say! You aren't joking, Heyst?"

"Joking!" Heyst's blue eyes went hard as

he turned them on the discomposed Morrison. "In what way, may I ask?" he continued with austere politeness.

Morrison was abashed.

"Forgive me, Heyst. You must have been sent by God in answer to my prayer. I have been nearly off my chump for three days with worry; and it suddenly struck me: 'What if it's the devil who sent him?'"

"I have no connection with the supernatural," said Heyst graciously, moving on. "Nobody has sent me. I just happened along."

"I know better," contradicted Morrison. "I may be unworthy, but I have been heard. I know it. I feel it. For why should you offer—"

Heyst inclined his head, as from respect for a conviction in which he could not share; but he stuck to his point by muttering that in the presence of an odious fact like this, 'twas natural—

Later in the day, the fine paid, and the two of them on board the brig, from which the guard had been removed, Morrison—who, besides being a gentleman, was also an honest fellow—began to talk about repayment. He knew very well his inability to lay by any sum of money. It was partly the fault of circumstances and partly of his temperament; and it would have been very difficult to apportion the responsibility between the two.

"I don't know how it is that I can't save," he observed, with a worried air. "It's some sort of curse. There's always a bill or two to meet."

He plunged his hand into his pocket for the famous note-book so well known in the islands and fluttered the pages feverishly.

"And yet—look," he went on. "There it is—more than seven thousand dollars owing. Surely that's something!"

He ceased suddenly. Heyst, who had been all the time trying to look as unconcerned as he could, made reassuring noises in his throat. But Morrison was not only honest. He was honorable, too; and on this stressful day, before this amazing emissary of Providence, and in the revulsion of his feelings, he made his great renunciation. He renounced the abiding illusion of his existence.

"No. No. They are no good. I'll never be able to squeeze them. Never! I've been saying for years I would; but I give up. I never really believed I could. Don't reckon on that, Heyst. I have robbed you!"

Poor Morrison actually laid his head on the cabin table, and remained in that crushed at-

titude while Heyst talked to him soothingly. The Swede was as much distressed as Morrison; they must have had, both of them, a fairly painful time of it in the cabin of the brig. In the end Morrison, casting desperately for an idea in the blackness of his despondency, hit upon the notion of inviting Heyst to travel with him in his brig and have a share in his trading ventures up to the amount of his loan.

It is characteristic of Heyst's unattached, floating existence that he was in a position to accept this proposal. There is no reason to think that he wanted particularly just then to go poking aboard the brig into all the holes and corners of the archipelago where Morrison picked up most of his trade. Far from it; but he would have consented to almost any arrangement in order to put an end to the harrowing scene in the cabin. There was at once a great transformation act. Morrison raised his diminished head and stuck the glass in his eye to look affectionately at Heyst; a bottle was uncorked.

It was agreed that nothing should be said to any one of this transaction. Morrison, you understand, was not proud of the episode; and he was afraid of being unmercifully chaffed.

"An old bird like me! To let myself be trapped by those Portuguese rascals! I should never hear the last of it. We must keep it dark."

From quite other motives, among which his native delicacy was the principal, Heyst was even more anxious to bind himself to silence. A gentleman would naturally shrink from the part of heavenly messenger that Morrison would force upon him. It made Heyst uncomfortable, as it was. And perhaps he did not care that it should be known that he had some means, whatever they might have been—sufficient, at any rate, to enable him to lend money to people.

These two men had a duet down there, like conspirators in a comic opera, of "Sh—ssh, sh—ssh! Secrecy! Secrecy!" It must have been funny, because they were very serious about it. And for a time the conspiracy was successful in so far that we all concluded that Heyst was boarding with the good-natured—some said, sponging on the imbecile—Morrison in his brig.

But you know how it is with all such mysteries. There is always a leak somewhere. Morrison himself, not a perfect vessel by any means, was bursting with gratitude, and under the stress he must have let out something vague—enough to give the island gossip a chance. And you know how kindly the world

is in its comments on what it does not understand. A rumor sprang out that Heyst, having got some mysterious hold on Morrison, had fastened himself on him and was sucking him dry.

Those who had traced these mutterings back to their origin were very careful not to believe them. The originator, it seems, was a certain Schomberg, a big, manly, bearded creature of the Teutonic persuasion, with an ungovernable tongue which surely must have worked on a pivot. Whether he was a lieutenant of the reserve, as he declared, I don't know. Out there he was by profession a hotel-keeper, first in Bangkok, then somewhere else, and ultimately in Sourabaya. He dragged after him up and down that section of the tropical belt a silent, frightened little woman with long ringlets, who smiled at one stupidly, showing a blue tooth.

I don't know why so many of us patronized his various establishments. He was a noxious ass, and he satisfied his lust for silly gossip at the cost of his customers. It was he who, one evening, as Morrison and Heyst went past the hotel—they were not his regular patrons—whispered mysteriously to the mixed company assembled on the veranda:

"The spider and the fly just gone by, gentlemen." Then, very important and confidential, his thick paw at the side of his mouth: "We are among ourselves; well, gentlemen, all I can say is, don't you ever get mixed up with that Swede. Don't you ever get caught in his web!"

III

HUMAN nature being what it is, having a silly side to it as well as a mean side, there were not a few who pretended to be indignant on no better authority than a general propensity to believe every evil report; and a good many others who found it simply funny to call Heyst the Spider—behind his back, of course. He was as serenely unconscious of this as of his several other nicknames.

But soon people found other things to say of Heyst; not long afterward he came very much to the fore in larger affairs. He blossomed out into something definite. He filled the public eye as the manager on the spot of the Tropical Belt Coal Company, with offices in London and Amsterdam, and other things about it that sounded and looked grandiose.

The offices in the two capitals may have consisted—and probably did—of one room in each; but at that distance, out East there, all this had an air. We were more puzzled than

dazzled, it is true; but even the most sober-minded among us began to think that there was something in it. The Tesmans appointed agents, a contract for government mail-boats secured, the era of steam beginning for the islands—a great stride forward—Heyst's stride!

We heard that Morrison had gone home through the Suez Canal in order to push the magnificent coal idea personally in London. He parted with his brig and disappeared from our ken; but we heard that he had written a letter or letters to Heyst, saying that London was cold and gloomy; that he was "as lonely as a crow in a strange country." In truth, he pined after the Capricorn—I don't mean the tropic; I mean the ship.

Later on he went into Dorsetshire to see his people, caught a bad cold, and died with extraordinary precipitation in the bosom of his appalled family. Whether his exertions in the city of London had enfeebled his vitality I don't know; but I believe it was this visit that put life into the coal idea. Be it as it may, the Tropical Belt Coal Company was born very shortly after Morrison, the victim of gratitude and his native climate, had gone to join his forefathers in a Dorsetshire churchyard.

Heyst was immensely shocked. He got the news in the Moluccas through the Tesmans, and then disappeared for a time. It appears that he stayed with a Dutch government doctor in Amboyna, a friend of his who looked after him for a bit in his bungalow.

He became visible again rather suddenly, his eyes sunk in his head, and with a sort of guarded attitude, as if afraid some one would reproach him with the death of Morrison.

As a matter of fact, many of us did not hear of it till months afterward—from Schomberg, who disliked Heyst gratuitously and made up a piece of sinister whispered gossip:

"That's what comes of having anything to do with that fellow. He squeezes you dry like a lemon, then chucks you out—sends you home to die. Take warning by Morrison!"

Of course, we laughed at the innkeeper's suggestions of black mystery. Several of us heard that Heyst was prepared to go to Europe himself, to push on his coal enterprise personally; but he never went. It wasn't necessary. The company was formed without him, and his nomination of manager in the tropics came out to him by post.

From the first he had selected Samburan, or Round Island, for the central station. Some copies of the prospectus issued in Eu-

rope, having found their way out East, were passed from hand to hand. We greatly admired the map which accompanied them for the edification of the shareholders. On it Samburan was represented as the central spot of the eastern hemisphere, with its name engraved in enormous capitals. Heavy lines radiated from it in all directions through the tropics, figuring a mysterious and effective star—lines of influence or lines of distance, or something of that sort. There's no more romantic temperament on earth than the temperament of a company promoter.

Engineers came out, coolies were imported, bungalows were put up on Samburan, a gallery driven into the hillside, and actually some coal got out. These manifestations shook the soberest minds. For a time everybody in the islands was talking of the Tropical Belt Coal Company, and even those who smiled quietly to themselves were only hiding their uneasiness.

Oh, yes; it had come, and anybody could see what would be the consequences—the end of the individual trader, smothered under a great invasion of steamers. We could not afford to buy steamers. Not we! And Heyst was the manager.

"You know, Heyst, Enchanted Heyst."

"Oh, come! He was no better than a loafer around here as far back as any of us can remember."

"Yes, said he was looking for facts. Well, he's got hold of one that will do for all of us," commented a bitter voice.

"That's what they call development—and be hanged to it!" muttered another.

Never was Heyst talked about so much in the tropical belt before.

"Isn't he a Swedish baron or something?"

"He, a baron? Get along with you!"

For my part, I haven't the slightest doubt that he was. While he was still drifting among the islands, enigmatical and disregarded like an insignificant ghost, he told me so himself on a certain occasion. It was a long time before he materialized in this alarming way into the destroyer of our little industry—Heyst the Enemy!

It became the fashion with a good many to speak of Heyst as the Enemy. He was very concrete, very visible now. He was rushing all over the archipelago, jumping in and out of mail-packets as if they had been tram-cars, here, there, and everywhere—organizing with all his might.

This was no mooning about. This was business. And this sudden display of purposeful

energy shook the incredulity of the most skeptical more than any scientific demonstration of the value of his coal-outcrops could have done. It was impressive.

Schomberg was the only one who resisted the infection. Big, manly in a portly style, and profusely bearded, with a glass of beer in his thick paw, he would approach some table where the topic of the hour was being discussed, would listen for a moment, and then would come out with his invariable declaration:

"All this is very well, gentlemen; but he can't throw any of his coal-dust in my eyes. There's nothing in it. Why, there can't be anything in it. A fellow like that for manager? Phoo!"

Was it the clairvoyance of imbecile hatred, or mere stupid tenacity of opinion, which ends sometimes by scoring against the world in a most astonishing manner? Most of us can remember instances of triumphant folly; and that ass Schomberg triumphed. The T. B. C. Co. went into liquidation, as I began by telling you.

The talk died out, and presently it was remarked here and there that Heyst had faded completely away. He had become invisible, as in those early days when he used to make a bolt clear out of sight in his attempts to break away from the enchantment of "these isles," either in the direction of New Guinea or in the direction of Saigon—to cannibals or to cafés.

The enchanted Heyst! Had he at last broken the spell? Had he died? We were too indifferent to wonder overmuch. Schomberg was the only man who couldn't forget Heyst. The keen, manly Teutonic creature was a good hater. A fool often is.

"Good evening, gentlemen. Have you got everything you want? So? Good! You see? What was I always telling you? Aha! There was nothing in it. I knew it. But what I would like to know is what became of that—Swede."

He put a stress on the word Swede as if it meant scoundrel. He detested Scandinavians generally. Why? Goodness only knows. A fool like that is unfathomable. He continued:

"It's five months or more since I have spoken to anybody who has seen him."

As I have said, we were not much interested; but Schomberg, of course, could not understand that. He was grotesquely dense. Whenever three people came together in his hotel, he took good care that Heyst should be with them.

"I hope the fellow did not go and drown himself," he would add with a comical earnestness that ought to have made us shudder; only our crowd was superficial, and did not apprehend the psychology of this pious hope.

"Why? Heyst isn't in debt to you for drinks, is he?" somebody asked him once with shallow scorn.

"Drinks! Oh dear, no!"

The innkeeper put on a sinister expression to tell us that Heyst had not paid perhaps three visits altogether to his "establishment." This was Heyst's crime, for which he wished him nothing less than a long and tormented existence.

At last, one afternoon, Schomberg was seen approaching a group of his customers. He was obviously in high glee. He squared his manly chest.

"Gentlemen, I have news of him. Who? Why, that Swede. He is still on Samburan. He's never been away from it. The company is gone, the engineers are gone, the clerks are gone, the coolies are gone, everything's gone; but there he sticks. Captain Davidson, coming by from the westward, saw him with his own eyes. Something white on the wharf; so he steamed in and went ashore in a small boat. Heyst, right enough! Put a book into his pocket, always very polite. Been strolling on the wharf and reading. 'I remain in possession here,' he told Captain Davidson. What I want to know is what he gets to eat there. A piece of dried fish now and then—what? That's coming down pretty low for a man who turned up his nose at my *table d'hôte!*"

He winked with immense malice. A bell started ringing, and he led the way to the dining-room as if into a temple, very grave, with the air of a benefactor of mankind.

IV

A FEW of us who were sufficiently interested went to Davidson for details. They were not many. He told us that he passed to the north of Samburan on purpose to see what was going on. At first, it looked as if that side of the island had been altogether abandoned. This was what he expected.

Presently, above the dense mass of vegetation that Samburan presents to view, he saw the head of the flagstaff without a flag. Then, while steaming across the slight indentation which for a time was known officially as Black Diamond Bay, he made out with his glass the white figure on the coaling-wharf. It could be no one but Heyst.

"I thought for certain he wanted to be

taken off; so I steamed in. He made no signs. However, I lowered a boat. I could not see another living being anywhere. He had a book in his hand. He looked exactly as we have always seen him—very neat, white shoes, cork helmet. He explained to me that he had always had a taste for solitude. It was the first I ever heard of it, I told him. He only smiled. What could I say? He isn't the sort of man one can speak familiarly to.

"But what's the object? Are you thinking of keeping possession of the mine?" I asked him.

"Something of the sort," he says. "I am keeping hold."

"But all this is as dead as Julius Cæsar," I cried. "In fact, you have nothing worth holding on to, Heyst."

"Oh, I am done with facts," says he, putting his hand to his helmet sharply with one of his short bows."

Thus dismissed, Davidson went on board his ship, swung her out, and as he was steaming away he watched from the bridge Heyst walking shoreward along the wharf. He marched into the long grass and vanished—all but the top of his white cork helmet, which seemed to swim in a green sea. Then that, too, disappeared, as if it had sunk into the living depths of the tropical vegetation, which is more jealous of men's conquests than the ocean, and which was about to close over the last vestige of the liquidated Tropical Belt Coal Company—A. Heyst, manager in the East.

Davidson, a good, simple fellow in his way, was strangely affected. It is to be noted that he knew very little of Heyst. He was one of those whom Heyst's finished courtesy of attitude and intonation most strongly disconcerted. He himself was a fellow of fine feeling, I think; though, of course, he had no more polish than the rest of us. We were naturally a hail-fellow-well-met crowd, with standards of our own—no worse, I dare say, than other people's; but polish was not one of them.

Davidson's fineness was real enough to alter the course of the steamer he commanded. Instead of passing to the south of Samburan, he made it his practise to take the passage along the north shore, within about a mile of the wharf.

"He can see us if he likes to see us," remarked Davidson. Then he had an afterthought: "I say! I hope he won't think I am intruding, eh?"

We reassured him on the point of correct behavior. The sea is open to all.

This slight deviation added some ten miles

to Davidson's round trip, but as that was a matter of sixteen hundred miles it did not matter much.

"I have told my owner of it," said the conscientious commander.

To serve a Chinese firm is not so bad. Once they become convinced you deal straight by them, their confidence becomes unlimited. You can do no wrong. So Davidson's old Chinaman squeaked hurriedly:

"All right, all right, all right. You do what you like, captain."

And there was an end of the matter; not altogether, though. From time to time the Chinaman used to ask Davidson about the white man. He was still there, eh?

"I never see him," Davidson had to confess to his owner, who would peer at him silently through round, horn-rimmed spectacles several sizes too large for his little old face. "I never see him."

To me, on occasions, he would say:

"I haven't a doubt he's there. He hides. It's very unpleasant." Davidson was a little vexed with Heyst. "Funny thing," he went on. "Of all the people I speak to, nobody ever asks after him but that Chinaman of mine—and Schomberg," he added after a while.

Yes, Schomberg, of course. He was asking everybody about everything, and arranging the information into the most scandalous shape his imagination could invent.

From time to time he would step up, his blinking, cushioned eyes, his thick lips, his very chestnut beard looking full of malice.

"Evening, gentlemen. Have you got all you want? So? Good! Well, I am told the jungle has choked the very sheds in Black Diamond Bay. Fact! He's a hermit in the wilderness now. But what can this manager get to eat there? It beats me."

Sometimes a stranger would inquire with natural curiosity:

"Who? What manager?"

"Oh, a certain Swede"—with sinister emphasis, as if he were saying "a certain brigand"—"well known here. He's turned hermit from shame. That's what the devil does when he's found out!"

Hermit! This was the latest of the more or less witty labels applied to Heyst during his aimless pilgrimage in this section of the tropical belt, where the inane clacking of Schomberg's tongue vexed our ears.

But apparently Heyst was not a hermit by temperament. The sight of his kind was not invincibly odious to him. After something

more than a year and a half in Samburan, he suddenly reappeared in the world, broad chest, bald forehead, long mustache, polite manner, and all—the complete Heyst, even to the kindly, sunken eyes on which there still rested the shadow of Morrison's death.

Naturally, it was Davidson who had given him a lift out of his forsaken island. There were no other opportunities, unless some native craft were passing by—a very remote and unsatisfactory chance to wait for. He came out with Davidson, to whom he volunteered the statement that it was only for a short time—a few days, no more. He meant to go back to Samburan.

Davidson expressing his horror at such foolishness, Heyst explained that when the company came into being he had his few belongings sent out from Europe.

To Davidson, as to any of us, the idea of Heyst, the wandering, drifting, unattached Heyst, having any belongings of the sort that can furnish a house was startlingly novel. It was grotesquely fantastic. It was like a bird owning real property.

"Belongings? Do you mean chairs and tables?" Davidson asked with unconcealed astonishment.

Heyst did mean that.

"My poor father died in London. It was all stored there ever since," he explained.

"For all these years?" exclaimed Davidson, thinking how long we all had known Heyst flitting from tree to tree in a wilderness.

"Even longer," said Heyst, who had understood very well.

This seemed to imply that he had been wandering before he came under our observation. It what regions? At what early age? Mystery. Perhaps he was a bird that had never had a nest.

"I left school very early," he remarked once to Davidson, on the passage. "It was in England. A very good school. I was not a shining success there."

The confessions of Heyst! Not one of us—with the probable exception of Morrison, who was dead—had ever heard so much of his history. It looks as if the experience of hermit life has the power to loosen one's tongue, doesn't it?

During that memorable passage, on the *Sissie*, which took about two days, he volunteered other hints—for you could not call it information—about his history. Davidson was telling us all about it afterward. Heyst said that his father had written a lot of books. He was a philosopher.

"Seems to me he must have been something of a crank, too," was Davidson's comment. "Apparently he had quarreled with his people in Sweden. Just the sort of father you would expect Heyst to have. Isn't he a bit of a crank himself? He told me that directly his father died he lit out into the wide world on his own, and had been on the move till he fetched up against this famous coal business. Fits the son of his father somehow, don't you think? Great fact that didn't pay, eh?"

For the rest, Heyst was as polite as ever. He offered to pay for his passage; but when Davidson refused to hear of it he seized him heartily by the hand, gave one of his courtly bows, and declared that he was touched by his friendly proceedings.

"I am not alluding to this trifling amount which you decline to take," he went on, giving a shake to Davidson's hand, "but I am touched by your humanity." Another shake. "Believe me, I am profoundly aware of having been an object of it." Final shake of the hand.

All this meant that Heyst understood in a proper sense the little Sissie's periodic appearance in sight of his hermitage.

"He's a genuine gentleman," Davidson said to us. "I was really sorry when he went ashore."

We asked him where he had left Heyst.

"Why, in Sourabaya—where else?"

The Tesmans had their principal counting-house in Sourabaya. There had long existed a connection between Heyst and the Tesmans. The incongruity of a hermit having agents did not strike us, nor yet the absurdity of a forgotten, cast-off, derelict manager of a wrecked, collapsed, vanished enterprise, having business to attend to.

We said Sourabaya, of course, and took it for granted that he would stay with one of the Tesmans. One of us even wondered what sort of reception he would get; for it was known that Julius Tesman was unreasonably bitter about the Tropical Belt Coal fiasco. But Davidson set us right. It was nothing of the kind. Heyst went to stay in Schomberg's hotel, going ashore in the hotel launch.

Not that Schomberg would think of sending his launch alongside a mere trader like the Sissie. But she had been meeting a coasting mail-packet, and had been signaled to. Schomberg himself was steering her.

"You should have seen Schomberg's eyes bulge out when Heyst jumped in with an ancient brown leather bag!" said Davidson. "He pretended not to know who it was—at

first, anyway. I didn't go ashore with them. We didn't stay more than a couple of hours altogether. Landed two thousand coconuts and cleared out. I have agreed to pick him up again on my next trip in twenty days' time."

V

DAVIDSON happened to be two days late on his return trip; no great matter, certainly, but he made a point of going ashore at once, during the hottest hour of the afternoon, to look for Heyst.

Schomberg's hotel stood back in an extensive enclosure containing a garden, some large trees, and, under their spreading boughs, a detached "hall available for concerts and other performances," as Schomberg worded it in his advertisements. Torn and fluttering bills, intimating in heavy red capitals "Concerts every night," were stuck on the brick pillars on each side of the gateway.

The walk had been long and confoundedly sunny. Davidson stood wiping his wet neck and face on what Schomberg called "the piazza." Several doors opened on to it, but all the screens were down. Not a soul was in sight, not even a China boy—nothing but a lot of painted iron chairs and tables.

Solitude, shade, and gloomy silence—and a faint, treacherous breeze which came from under the trees and quite unexpectedly caused the melting Davidson to shiver slightly—the little shiver of the tropics which in Sourabaya, especially, often means fever and the hospital to the incautious white man.

The prudent Davidson sought shelter in the nearest darkened room. In the artificial dusk, beyond the levels of shrouded billiard-tables, a white form heaved up from two chairs on which it had been extended. The middle of the day, *table d'hôte* tiffin once over, was Schomberg's easy time. He lounged out, portly, deliberate, on the defensive, the great, fair beard like a cuirass over his manly chest. He did not like Davidson, never a very faithful client of his.

He hit a bell on one of the tables as he went by, and said in a distant, officer-of-the-reserve manner:

"Your desire?"

The good Davidson, still sponging his wet neck, declared with simplicity that he had come to fetch away Heyst, as agreed.

"Not here!"

A Chinaman appeared in response to the bell. Schomberg turned to him very severely and said:

"Take the gentleman's order."

Davidson had to be going, he told Schomberg. Couldn't wait—only begged that Heyst should be informed that the Sissie would leave at midnight.

"Not—here, I am telling you!"

Davidson slapped his thigh in concern.

"Dear me! Hospital, I suppose." A natural enough surmise in a very feverish locality.

The lieutenant of the reserve only pursed up his mouth and raised his eyebrows without looking at him. It might have meant anything, but Davidson dismissed the hospital idea with confidence. However, he persisted in his quest, for he had to get hold of Heyst between this and midnight.

"He has been staying here?" he asked.

"Yes, he was staying here."

"Can you tell me where he is now?" Davidson went on placidly.

Within himself he was beginning to grow anxious, having developed the affection of a self-appointed protector toward Heyst. The answer he got was:

"Can't tell. It's none of my business," accompanied by majestic oscillations of the hotel-keeper's head, hinting at some awful mystery.

Davidson was placidity itself. It was his nature. He did not betray his sentiments, which were not favorable to Schomberg.

"I am sure to find out at the Tesmans' office," he thought.

But it was a very hot hour, and if Heyst was down at the port he would have learned already that the Sissie was in. It was even possible that Heyst had already gone on board, where he could enjoy a coolness denied to the town.

Davidson, being stout, was much preoccupied with coolness and inclined to immobility. He lingered a while, as if irresolute. Schomberg, at the door looking out, affected perfect indifference. He could not keep it up, though. Suddenly he turned inward and asked, with brusque rage:

"You wanted to see him?"

"Why, yes," said Davidson. "We agreed to meet—"

"Don't you bother. He doesn't care about that now."

"Doesn't he?"

"Well, you can judge for yourself. He isn't here, is he? You take my word for it. Don't you bother about him. I am advising you as a friend."

"Thank you," said Davidson, inwardly startled at the savage tone. "I think I will

sit down here for a moment and have a drink, after all."

This was not what Schomberg had expected to hear. He called brutally:

"Boy!"

The Chinaman approached, and after referring him to the white man by a nod the hotel-keeper departed, muttering to himself. Davidson fancied he heard him gnash his teeth as he went.

Davidson sat alone with the billiard-tables. Something had happened; and he was loath to go away to investigate, being restrained by a presentiment that somehow enlightenment would come to him there.

A poster of "Concerts Every Evening," like those on the gate, but in a good state of preservation, hung on the wall fronting him. He looked at it idly and was struck by the fact—then not so very common—that it was a ladies' orchestra; "Zangiaco's eastern tour—eighteen performers." The poster stated that they had had the honor of playing their select repertoire before various colonial excellencies, also before pashas, sheiks, chiefs, H.H. the Sultan of Mascate, *et cetera, et cetera*.

Davidson felt sorry for the eighteen lady performers. He knew what that sort of life was like, the sordid conditions and brutal incidents of such tours led by such Zangiacos who often were anything but musicians by profession.

While Davidson was staring at the poster, a door somewhere at his back opened, and a woman came in who was looked upon as Schomberg's wife, no doubt with truth. As somebody remarked cynically once, she was too unattractive to be anything else. The opinion that he treated her abominably was based on her frightened expression.

Davidson lifted his hat to her. Mrs. Schomberg gave him an inclination of her fallow head and incontinently sat down behind a sort of raised counter, facing the door, with a mirror and rows of bottles at her back. Her hair was very elaborately done with two ringlets on the left side of her scraggy neck; her dress was of silk, and she had come on duty for the afternoon.

For some reason or other Schomberg exacted this from her, though she added nothing to the fascinations of the place. She sat there in the smoke and noise, like an enthroned idol, smiling stupidly over the billiards from time to time, speaking to no one, and no one speaking to her. Schomberg himself took no more interest in her than may be implied in

a sudden and totally unmotivated scowl. Otherwise the very Chinamen ignored her existence.

She had interrupted Davidson in his reflections. Being alone with her, her silence and open-eyed immobility made him uncomfortable. He was easily sorry for people. It seemed rude not to take any notice of her. He said, in allusion to the poster:

"Are you having these people in the house?"

She was so unused to being addressed by customers that at the sound of his voice she jumped in her seat. Davidson was telling us afterward that she jumped exactly like a figure made of wood, without losing her rigid immobility. She did not even move her eyes; but she answered him freely, though her very lips seemed made of wood.

"They stayed here a fortnight. They are gone now. They played every evening."

"Pretty good, were they?"

To this she said nothing; and as she kept on staring fixedly in front of her, her silence disconcerted Davidson. It looked as if she had not heard him—which was impossible. Perhaps she drew the line of speech at the expression of opinions. Schomberg might have trained her, for domestic reasons, to keep them to herself. But Davidson felt in honor obliged to converse with her; so he said, putting his own interpretation on this surprising silence:

"I see—not much account. Such bands hardly ever are. An Italian lot, Mrs. Schomberg, to judge by the name of the boss?"

She shook her head negatively.

"No. He is a German really; only he dyes his hair and beard black for business. Zangiaco is his business name."

"That's a curious fact," said Davidson. His head being full of Heyst, it occurred to him that she might be aware of other facts. "The other members of that orchestra were real Italians, were they not?" he asked.

Mrs. Schomberg said they were not. They were of all sorts, apparently. "There was even one English girl," she added.

"Poor devil!" said Davidson. "I suppose these women are not much better than slaves really. Was that fellow with the dyed beard decent in his way?"

The mechanism remained silent. The sympathetic soul of Davidson drew its own conclusions.

"Beastly life for these women!" he said. "When you say an English girl, Mrs. Schomberg, do you really mean a young girl? Some of these orchestra girls are no chicks."

"Young enough," came the low voice out of Mrs. Schomberg's unmoved physiognomy.

Davidson, encouraged, remarked that he was sorry for her. As has been said, he was easily sorry for people.

"Where did they go to from here?" he asked.

"She did not go with them. She ran away."

This was the pronouncement Davidson obtained next. It introduced a new sort of interest.

"Well! Well!" he exclaimed placidly; and then, with the air of a man who knows life: "Who with?" he inquired with assurance.

Mrs. Schomberg's immobility gave her an appearance of listening intently. Perhaps she was really listening; but Schomberg must have been finishing his sleep in some distant part of the house. The silence was profound, and lasted long enough to become startling. Then, enthroned above Davidson, she whispered at last:

"That friend of yours."

"Oh, you know I am here looking for a friend," said Davidson hopefully. "Won't you tell me—"

"I've told you."

"Eh?"

A mist seemed to roll away from before Davidson's eyes, disclosing something he could not believe.

"You can't mean it!" he cried. "He's not the man for it." But the last words came out in a faint voice.

Mrs. Schomberg never moved her head the least bit. Davidson, after the shock which made him sit up, went slack all over.

"Heyst! Such a perfect gentleman!" he exclaimed weakly.

Mrs. Schomberg did not seem to have heard him.

This startling fact did not tally with the idea Davidson had of Heyst. He never talked of women, he never seemed to think of them, or to remember that they existed; and then all at once—like this! Running off with a casual orchestra girl!

"You might have knocked me down with a feather," Davidson told us some time afterward.

He confronted our open grins or quiet smiles with a serious, round face. Heyst had taken the girl away to Samburan; and that was no joking matter. The loneliness, the ruins of the spot, had impressed Davidson's simple soul. They were incompatible with the frivolous comments of people who had not seen it.

This black jetty, sticking out of the jungle into the empty sea; these roof-ridges of deserted houses peeping dismally above the long grass! Ough! The gigantic and funereal blackboard sign of the Tropical Belt Coal Company, still emerging from a wild growth of bushes like an inscription stuck above a grave, added to the general desolation.

Thus the sensitive Davidson. The girl must have been miserable indeed to follow a strange man to such a spot. Heyst, had, no doubt, told her the truth. He was a gentleman. But no words could do justice to the conditions of life on Samburan. A desert island was nothing to it.

Moreover, when you were cast away on a desert island—why, you could not help yourself; but to expect a fiddle-playing girl out of an ambulant ladies' orchestra to remain content there for a day, for one single day, was inconceivable. She would be frightened at the first sight of it.

The capacity for sympathy in these stout, placid men! Davidson was stirred to the depths; and it was easy to see that it was about Heyst that he was concerned. We asked him if he had passed that way lately.

"Oh, yes. I always do—about half a mile off shore."

"Seen anybody about?"

"No, not a soul. Not a shadow."

"Did you blow your whistle?"

"Blow the whistle? You think I would do such a thing?"

He rejected the mere possibility of such an unwarrantable intrusion. Wonderfully delicate fellow, Davidson!

"Well, but how do you know that they are there?" he was naturally asked.

Heyst had entrusted Mrs. Schomberg with a message for Davidson—a few lines in pencil on a scrap of crumpled paper. It was to the effect that an unforeseen necessity was driving him away before the appointed time. He begged Davidson's indulgence for the apparent discourtesy. The woman of the house—meaning Mrs. Schomberg—would give him the facts, though unable to explain them, of course.

"What was there to explain?" wondered Davidson dubiously. "He took a fancy to that fiddle-playing girl, and—"

"And she to him, apparently," I suggested.

"Wonderfully quick work," reflected Davidson. "What do you think will come of it?"

"Repentance, I should say. But how is it that Mrs. Schomberg has been selected for a confidante?"

For indeed a waxwork figure would have seemed more useful than that woman whom we all were accustomed to see sitting elevated above the two billiard-tables—without expression, without movement, without voice, without sight.

"Why, she helped the girl to bolt," said Davidson, turning on me his innocent eyes, rounded by the state of constant amazement in which this affair had left him.

"Mrs. Schomberg jerked Heyst's note, twisted like a pipe-light, into my lap while I sat there unsuspecting," Davidson went on. "Directly I had recovered my senses, I asked her what on earth she had to do with it that Heyst should leave it with her. And then, behaving like a painted image rather than a live woman, she whispered, just loud enough for me to hear:

"I helped them. I got her things together, tied them up in my own shawl, and threw them into the compound out of a back window. I did it."

"That woman that you would think hadn't the pluck to lift her little finger!" marveled Davidson in his quiet, slightly panting voice. "What do you think of that?"

I thought she must have had some interest of her own to serve. She was too lifeless to be suspected of impulsive compassion for the girl. It was scarcely possible to think that Heyst had bribed her. Whatever means he had, he had not the means to do that. Or could it be that she was moved by that disinterested passion for delivering a woman to a man which in respectable spheres is called match-making?

"It must have been a very small bundle," remarked Davidson further.

"I imagine the girl must have been specially attractive," I said.

"I don't know. She was miserable. I don't suppose it was more than a little linen and a couple of these white frocks they wear on the platform."

Davidson pursued his own train of thought. He supposed that such a thing had never been heard of in the history of the tropics. For where could you find any one to steal a girl out of an orchestra? It needed a lunatic like Heyst.

"Only think what it means," wheezed Davidson, imaginative under his invincible placidity. "Just only try to think! Brooding alone on Samburan has upset his brain. How is a thing like that to go on? What's he going to do with her in the end? It's madness."

"You say that he's mad. Schomberg tells us that he must be starving on his island; so he may end yet by eating her," I suggested.

Mrs. Schomberg had had no time to enter into details, Davidson told us. Indeed, the wonder was that they had been left alone so long. The drowsy afternoon was slipping by. Footsteps and voices resounded on the veranda—I beg pardon, the piazza—the scraping of chairs, the ping of a smitten bell. Customers were turning up.

Mrs. Schomberg was begging Davidson hurriedly, but without looking at him, to say nothing to any one, when on a half-uttered word her nervous whisper was cut short. Through a small inner door Schomberg came in, his hair brushed, his beard combed neatly, but his eyelids still heavy from his nap. He looked with suspicion at Davidson, and even glanced at his wife; but he was baffled by the natural placidity of the one and the acquired habit of immobility in the other.

"Have you sent out the drinks?" he asked surlily.

She did not open her lips, because just then the head boy appeared with a loaded tray, on his way out. Schomberg went to the door and greeted the customers outside, but did not join them. He remained blocking half the doorway, with his back to the room, and was still there when Davidson, after sitting still for a while, rose to go.

At the noise, he made Schomberg turned his head, watched him lift his hat to Mrs. Schomberg and receive her wooden bow accompanied by a stupid grin, and then looked away. He was loftily dignified. Davidson stopped at the door.

"I am sorry you won't tell me anything about my friend's absence," he said. "My friend Heyst, you know. I suppose the only course for me now is to make inquiries down at the port. I shall hear something there, I don't doubt."

"Make inquiries of the devil!" replied Schomberg in a hoarse mutter.

Davidson's purpose in addressing the hotel-keeper had been mainly to make Mrs. Schomberg safe from suspicion; but he would, fain have heard something more of Heyst's exploit from another point of view. It was a shrewd try. It was successful in a rather startling way, because the hotel-keeper's point of view was horribly abusive. All of a sudden, in the same hoarse, sinister tone, he proceeded to call Heyst many names, of which "pig-dog" was not the worst, with such vehemence that he actually choked himself.

Profiting from the pause, Davidson, whose temperament could withstand worse shocks, remonstrated in an undertone:

"It's unreasonable to get so angry as that. Even if he had run off with your cash-box—"

The big hotel-keeper bent down and put his infuriated face close to Davidson's.

"My cash-box! My—he—look here, Captain Davidson! He ran off with a girl. What do I care for the girl? The girl is nothing to me."

He shot out an infamous word which made Davidson start. That's what the girl was; and he reiterated the assertion that she was nothing to him. What he was concerned for was the good name of his house. Wherever he had been established, he had always had "artist parties" staying in his house. One recommended him to the others; but what would happen now, when it got about that leaders ran the risk in his house—his house!—of losing members of their troupe? And just now, when he had spent seven hundred and thirty-four guilders in building a concert-hall in his compound. Was that a thing to do in a respectable hotel? The cheek, the indecency, the impudence, the atrocity! Vagabond, impostor, swindler, ruffian, *schweinhund!*

He had seized Davidson by a button of his coat, detaining him in the doorway, and exactly in the line of Mrs. Schomberg's stony gaze. Davidson stole a glance in that direction, and thought of making some sort of reassuring sign to her, but she looked so bereft of senses, and almost of life, perched up there, that it seemed not worth while. He disengaged his button with firm placidity.

Thereupon, with a last stifled curse, Schomberg vanished somewhere within, to try and compose his spirits in solitude.

Davidson stepped out on the veranda. The party of customers there had become aware of the explosive interlude in the doorway. Davidson knew one of these men, and nodded to him in passing; but his acquaintance called out:

"Isn't he in a filthy temper? He's been like that ever since."

The speaker laughed aloud, while all the others sat smiling. Davidson stopped.

"It seems unreasonable," he murmured thoughtfully.

"Oh, but they had a scrap!" the other said.

"What do you mean? Was there a fight—a fight with Heyst?" asked Davidson, much perturbed.

"Heyst? No, these two—the band-master and our Schomberg. Signor Zangiaco ran amuck in the morning, and went for our worthy friend. I tell you, they were rolling on the floor together on this very veranda, after chasing each other all over the house, doors slamming, women screaming, seventeen of them, in the dining-room; Chinamen up the trees—hey, John! You climb tree to see fight, eh?"

The boy, almond-eyed and impassive, emitted a scornful grunt, finished wiping the table, and withdrew.

"That's what it was—a real go-as-you-please fight. And Zangiaco began it. Oh, here's Schomberg. Say, Schomberg, didn't he fly out at you, when the girl was missed, because it was you who insisted that the artists should go about the audience during the interval?"

Schomberg had reappeared in the doorway. He advanced. His bearing was stately, but his nostrils were extraordinarily expanded, and he controlled his voice with apparent effort.

"Certainly. That was only business. I quoted him special terms, and all for your sake, gentlemen. I was thinking of my regular customers. There's nothing to do in the evenings in this town. I think, gentlemen, you were all pleased at the opportunity of hearing a little good music; and where's the harm of offering a grenadine, or what not, to a lady artist? But that fellow—that Swede—he got round the girl. He got round all the people out here. I've been watching him for years. You remember how he got round Morrison."

He changed front abruptly, as if on parade, and marched off. The customers at the table exchanged glances silently. Davidson's attitude was that of a spectator. Schomberg's moody pacing of the billiard-room could be heard on the veranda.

"And the funniest part is," resumed the man who had been speaking before—an English clerk in a Dutch house—"the funniest part is that before nine o'clock that same morning those two were driving together in a gharry down to the port, to look for Heyst and the girl. I saw them rushing around making inquiries. I don't know what they would have done to the girl, but they seemed quite ready to fall upon your Heyst, Davidson, and kill him on the quay."

It appeared that the two investigators entered a steam-launch, and went flying from ship to ship all over the harbor, causing no

end of sensation. The captains of vessels, coming on shore in due course, brought tales of a strange invasion, and wanted to know who were the two offensive lunatics in a steam-launch, apparently after a man and a girl, and telling a story of which one could make neither head nor tail. Their reception by the roadstead was generally unsympathetic, even to the point of the mate of an American ship bundling them out over the rail with unseemly precipitation.

Meantime Heyst and the girl were a good few miles away, having gone in the night on board one of the Tesman schooners bound to the eastward. This was known afterward from the Javanese boatmen whom Heyst hired for the purpose at three o'clock in the morning. The Tesman schooner had sailed at daylight with the usual land breeze, and was probably still in sight in the offing at the time. However, the two pursuers, after their experience with the American mate, made for the shore.

On landing, they had another violent row in the German language. But there was no second fight; and finally, with looks of fierce animosity, they got together into a gharry—obviously with the frugal view of sharing expenses—and drove away, leaving an astonished little crowd of Europeans and natives on the quay.

After hearing this wondrous tale, Davidson went away from the hotel veranda, which was filling with Schomberg's regular customers. Heyst's escapade was the general topic of conversation. Davidson concluded that people liked to discuss that sort of scandal better than any other.

I asked him if he believed that this was such a great scandal, after all.

"Heavens, no!" said that excellent man, who himself was incapable of any impropriety of conduct. "But it isn't a thing I would have done myself; I mean even if I had not been married."

There was no implied condemnation in the statement; rather something like regret. Davidson evidently shared my suspicion that this was in its essence the rescue of a distressed human being. Not that we were two romantics, tingeing the world to the hue of our temperament, but that both of us had been acute enough to discover a long time ago that Heyst was one.

"I shouldn't have had the pluck," he continued. "I see a thing all round, as it were; but Heyst doesn't, or else he would have been scared. You don't take a woman into a

desert jungle without being made sorry for it sooner or later, in one way or another; and Heyst being a gentleman only makes it worse."

VI

WE said no more about Heyst on that occasion, and it so happened that I did not meet Davidson again for some three months. When we did come together, almost the first thing he said to me was:

"I've seen him."

Before I could exclaim, he assured me that he had taken no liberty, that he had not intruded. He was called in.

"Heyst called you in?" I asked, interested.

Yes, Heyst had called him in as he was going by on his usual date. Davidson was examining the shore through his glasses with his unwearied and punctual humanity as he steamed past Samburan.

"I saw a man in white. It could only have been Heyst. He had fastened some sort of enormous flag to a bamboo pole, and was waving it at the end of the old wharf."

Davidson didn't like to take his steamer alongside—for fear of being indiscreet, I suppose; but he steered close inshore, stopped his engines, and lowered a boat. He went himself in that boat, which was manned, of course, by his Malay seamen.

Heyst, when he saw the boat pulling toward him, dropped his signaling-pole; and when Davidson arrived, he was kneeling down engaged busily in unfastening the flag from it.

"Was there anything wrong?" I inquired.

"The very words that came out of my mouth," said Davidson, "before I laid the boat against the piles. I could not help it."

Heyst got up from his knees and began carefully folding up the flag thing, which struck Davidson as having the dimensions of a blanket.

"No, nothing wrong," he cried. His white teeth flashed agreeably below the coppery horizontal bar of his long mustache.

I don't know whether it was his delicacy or his obesity which prevented Davidson from clambering upon the wharf. He stood up in the boat, and, above him, Heyst stooped low with urbane smiles, thanking him and apologizing for the liberty, exactly in his usual manner.

Davidson had expected some change in the man, but there was none. Nothing in him betrayed the momentous fact that within that jungle there was a girl, a performer in a ladies' orchestra, whom he had carried straight off the concert platform into the wilderness.

He was not ashamed or defiant or abashed about it.

"I took this course of signaling to you," he said to Davidson, "because to preserve appearances might be of the utmost importance. Not to me, of course. I don't care what people may say, and of course no one can hurt me. I suppose I have done a certain amount of harm, since I allowed myself to be tempted into action. It seemed innocent enough, but all action is bound to be harmful. That is why this world is evil upon the whole. But I have done with it! I shall never lift a little finger again. At one time I thought that intelligent observation of facts was the best way of cheating the time which is allotted to us whether we want it or not; but now I have done with observation, too."

Imagine poor, simple Davidson being addressed in such terms alongside an abandoned, decaying wharf jutting out of tropical bush! He had never heard anybody speak like this before; certainly not Heyst, whose conversation was concise, polite, with a faint ring of playfulness in the cultivated tones of his voice.

"He's gone mad," Davidson thought to himself.

But, looking at the physiognomy above him on the wharf, he was obliged to dismiss the notion of common, crude lunacy. It was truly most unusual talk. Then he remembered—in his surprise he had lost sight of it—that Heyst now had a girl there. This bizarre discourse was probably the effect of the girl.

Davidson shook off the absurd feeling, and asked, wishing to make clear his friendliness, and not knowing what else to say:

"You haven't run short of stores or anything like that?"

Heyst smiled and shook his head.

"No, no. Nothing of the kind. We are fairly well off here. Thanks, all the same. If I have taken the liberty to detain you, it is not from any uneasiness for myself and my—companion. The person I was thinking of when I made up my mind to invoke your assistance is Mrs. Schomberg."

"I have talked with her," interjected Davidson.

"Oh! You? Yes? I hoped she would find means to—"

"But she didn't tell me much," interrupted Davidson, who was not averse to hearing something—he hardly knew what.

"H-m—yes. But that note of mine? Yes? She found an opportunity to give it to you? That's good, very good. She's more resourceful than one would give her credit for."

"Women often are," remarked Davidson. The strangeness from which he had suffered, merely because his interlocutor had carried off a girl, wore off as the minutes went by. "There's a lot of unexpectedness about women," he generalized with a didactic aim which seemed to miss its mark; for the next thing Heyst said was:

"This is Mrs. Schomberg's shawl." He touched the stuff hanging over his arm. "An Indian thing, I believe," he added, glancing at his arm sidewise.

"It isn't of particular value," said Davidson truthfully.

"Very likely. The point is that it belongs to Schomberg's wife. That Schomberg seems to be an unconscionable ruffian—don't you think so?"

Davidson smiled faintly.

"We out here have got used to him," he said, as if excusing a universal and guilty toleration of a manifest nuisance. "I'd hardly call him that. I only know him as a hotel-keeper."

"I never knew him even as that—not till this time, when you were so obliging as to take me to Sourabaya. I went to stay there from economy. The Netherlands House is very expensive, and they expect you to bring your own servant with you. It's a nuisance."

"Of course, of course," protested Davidson hastily.

After a short silence Heyst returned to the matter of the shawl. He wanted to send it back to Mrs. Schomberg. He said that it might be very awkward for her if she were unable, if asked, to produce it. This had given him, Heyst, much uneasiness. She was terrified of Schomberg. Apparently she had reason to be.

"And—she helped me—us," he concluded.

"She told me so," Davidson replied. "How did you get round her, Heyst? Why, she looks too stupid to understand human speech and too scared to shoo a chicken away. Oh, the women, the women! You don't know what there may be in the quietest of them."

"She was engaged in the task of defending her position in life," said Heyst. "It's a very respectable task."

"Is that it? I had some idea it was that," confessed Davidson.

He then imparted to Heyst the story of the violent proceedings following on the discovery of his flight. Heyst's polite attention to the tale took on a somber cast; but he manifested no surprise and offered no comment. When Davidson had finished he handed down the

shawl into the boat, and Davidson promised to do his best to return it to Mrs. Schomberg in some secret fashion. Heyst expressed his thanks in a few simple words, set off by his manner of finished courtesy.

Davidson prepared to depart. They were not looking at each other. Suddenly Heyst spoke.

"You understand that this was a case of odious persecution, don't you? I became aware of it and—"

It was a view which the sympathetic Davidson was capable of appreciating.

"I am not surprised to hear it," he said placidly. "Odious enough, I dare say. And you, of course—not being a married man—were free to step in. Ah, well!"

He sat down in the stern-sheets and already had the steering-lines in his hands when Heyst observed abruptly:

"The world is a bad dog. It will bite you if you give it a chance; but I think that here we can safely defy the fates."

When relating all this to me, Davidson's only comment was:

"Funny notion of defying the fates—to take a woman in tow!"

VII

SOME considerable time afterward—we did not meet very often—I asked Davidson how he had managed about the shawl. I heard that he had tackled his mission in a direct way, and had found it easy enough.

At the very first call he made at Sourabaya he rolled the shawl as tightly as he could into the smallest possible brown-paper parcel, which he carried ashore with him. His business in the town being transacted, he got into a gharry with the parcel and drove to the hotel. With his previous experience, he timed his arrival accurately for the hour of Schomberg's siesta.

Finding the place empty, as on the former occasion, he marched into the billiard-room, took a seat at the back, near the sort of dais which Mrs. Schomberg would in due course come to occupy, and broke the slumbering silence of the house by thumping a bell vigorously. Of course a Chinaman appeared promptly. Davidson ordered a drink and sat tight.

"I would have ordered twenty drinks one after another, if necessary," he said—Davidson's a very abstemious man—"rather than take that parcel out of the house again. Couldn't leave it in a corner without letting the woman know it was there. It might have

turned out worse for her than not bringing the thing back at all."

And so he waited, ringing the bell again and again, and swallowing two or three iced drinks which he did not want.

Presently, as he hoped it would happen, Mrs. Schomberg came in, silk dress, long neck, ringlets, scared eyes, and silly grin—all complete. Probably that lazy beast had sent her out to see who was the thirsty customer waking up the echoes of the house at this quiet hour. Bow, nod—and she clambered up to her regular post behind the raised counter, looking so helpless, so utterly inane, as she sat there, that if it hadn't been for the parcel, Davidson declared, he would have thought he had merely dreamed of all that had passed between them.

He ordered another drink, to get the Chinaman out of the room, then seized the parcel, which was reposing on a chair near him, and with no more than a mutter—"This is something of yours"—he rammed it swiftly into a recess in the counter at her feet. The rest was her affair.

And just in time, too. Schomberg turned up, yawning affectedly, almost before Davidson had regained his seat. He cast about suspicious and irate glances. An invincible placidity of expression helped Davidson wonderfully at the moment, and the other, of course, could have no grounds for the slightest suspicion of any sort of understanding between his wife and this customer.

As to Mrs. Schomberg, she sat there like a joss. Davidson was lost in admiration. He believed, now, that the woman had been putting it on for years. She never even winked. It was immense! She was a miracle of dissimulation. No wonder Heyst got the girl away from under two men's noses, if he had her to help with the job!

Presently Schomberg, wandering about, joined a party that had taken the table next to Davidson's.

"A man like that Swede, gentlemen, is a public danger," he began. "I remember him for years. I won't say anything of his spying—well, he used to say himself he was looking for out-of-the-way facts, and what is that if not spying? He was spying into everybody's business. He got hold of Captain Morrison, squeezed him dry, like you would an orange, and scared him off to Europe, to die there. Everybody knows that Captain Morrison had a weak chest. Robbed first and murdered afterward! I don't mince words—not I. Next he gets up that swindle of the

Belt Coal. You all know about it. And now, after lining his pockets with other people's money, he kidnaps a white girl belonging to an orchestra which is performing in my public room for the benefit of my patrons, and goes off to live like a prince on that island, where nobody can get at him. It's disgusting—*tfui!*"

He spat. He choked with rage—for he saw visions, no doubt. He jumped up from his chair and went into the room where Mrs. Schomberg sat. Her aspect could not have been very consoling to the sort of pain from which he was suffering.

Davidson did not feel called upon to defend Heyst. His proceeding was to enter into conversation with one and another, casually, and showing no particular knowledge of the affair, in order to discover something about the girl. Was she anything out of the way? Was she pretty?

She couldn't have been markedly so. She had not attracted special notice. She was young—on that everybody agreed. The English clerk of Tesman's remembered that she had a sallow face. He was respectable and highly proper. He was not the sort to associate with such people.

Most of these women were fairly battered specimens. Schomberg had them housed in what he called the Pavilion, in the grounds, where they were hard at it mending and washing their white dresses, and could be seen hanging them out to dry between the trees, like a lot of washerwomen. They looked very much like middle-aged washerwomen on the platform, too. But the girl had been living in the main building along with the boss, the director, the fellow with the black beard, and a hard-bitten, oldish woman who took the piano and was understood to be the fellow's wife.

This was not a very satisfactory result. Davidson stayed on, and even joined the *table d'hôte* dinner, without gleaning any more information. He was resigned.

"I suppose," he wheezed placidly, "I am bound to see her some day."

He meant to take the Samburan channel every trip, as before, of course.

"Yes," I said. "No doubt you will. Some day Heyst will be signaling to you again; and I wonder what it will be for!"

Davidson made no reply. He had his own ideas about that, and his silence concealed a good deal of thought. We spoke no more of Heyst's girl. Before we separated he gave me a piece of unrelated observation.

"It's funny," he said, "but I fancy there's some gambling going on in the evening at Schomberg's place, on the quiet. I've noticed men strolling away in twos and threes toward that Pavilion, where the orchestra used to live. The windows must be specially well shuttered, because I could not spy the smallest gleam of light from that direction; but I can't believe that those beggars would go in there every evening only to sit and think of their sins in the dark."

"That's strange. I can't believe Schomberg would risk that sort of thing," I said.

VIII

As we know, Heyst had gone to stay in Schomberg's hotel in complete ignorance that his person was odious to that worthy. When he arrived, Zangiaco's Ladies' Orchestra had been established there for some time.

The business which had called him out from his seclusion in his lost corner of the Eastern seas was with the Tesmans, and it had something to do with money. He transacted it quickly, and then found himself with nothing to do while he awaited Davidson, who was to take him back to his solitude; for back to his solitude Heyst meant to go.

He whom we used to refer to as the Enchanted Heyst was suffering from thorough disenchantment. Not with the islands, however. The archipelago has a lasting fascination. It is not easy to shake off the spell of island life. Heyst was disenchantment with life as a whole. His scornful temperament, beguiled into action, suffered from failure in a subtle way unknown to men accustomed to grapple with the realities of common human enterprise.

It was like the gnawing pain of a useless apostasy, a sort of shame before his own betrayed nature; and, in addition, he also suffered from plain, downright remorse. He deemed himself guilty of Morrison's death. A rather absurd feeling, since no one could possibly have foreseen the horrors of the cold, wet summer lying in wait for poor Morrison at home.

It was not in Heyst's character to turn morose; but his mental state was not compatible with a sociable mood. He spent his evenings sitting apart on the veranda of Schomberg's hotel. The lamentations of string instruments issued from the building in the hotel compound, the approaches to which were decorated with Japanese paper lanterns strung up between the trunks of several big trees. Scraps of tunes more or less plaintive

reached his ears. They pursued him even into his bedroom, which opened into an up-stairs veranda.

Like most dreamers, to whom it is given sometimes to hear the music of the spheres, Heyst, the wanderer of the archipelago, had a taste for silence which he had been able to gratify for years. The islands are very quiet. One sees them lying about, clothed in their dark garments of leaves, in a great hush of silver and azure, where the sea meets the sky in a ring of magic stillness. A sort of smiling somnolence broods over them; the very voices of their people are soft and subdued, as if afraid to break some protecting spell.

Perhaps this was the very spell which had enchanted Heyst in the early days. For him, however, that was broken. He was no longer enchanted, though he was still a captive of the islands. He had no intention to leave them ever.

Where could he have gone to, after all these years? Not a single soul belonging to him lived anywhere on earth. Of this fact—not such a remote one, after all—he had only lately become aware; for it is failure that makes a man enter into himself and reckon his resources. And though he had made up his mind to retire from the world in hermit fashion, yet he was irrationally moved by this sense of loneliness which had come to him in the hour of renunciation.

Meantime Schomberg watched him out of the corner of his eye. Toward the unconscious object of his enmity he preserved a distant lieutenant-of-the-reserve demeanor. Nudging certain of his customers with his elbow, he begged them to observe what airs "that Swede" was giving himself.

"I really don't know why he has come to stay in my house. This place isn't good enough for him. I wish to goodness he had gone somewhere else to show off his superiority! Here I have got up this series of concerts for you, gentlemen, just to make things a little brighter generally; and do you think he'll condescend to step in and listen to a piece or two of an evening? Not he! There he sits at the dark end of the piazza, all the evening long—planning some new swindle, no doubt. For twopence I would ask him to go and look for quarters somewhere else; only one doesn't like to treat a white man like that out in the tropics. I don't know how long he means to stay, but I'm willing to bet a trifle that he'll never work himself up to the point of spending the fifty cents of entrance money for the sake of a little good music."

Nobody cared to bet, or the hotel-keeper would have lost. One evening Heyst was driven to desperation by the rasped, squeaked, scraped snatches of tunes pursuing him even to his hard couch, with a mattress as thin as a pancake and a diaphanous mosquito-net. He descended among the trees, where the soft glow of Japanese lanterns picked out parts of their great rugged trunks, here and there, in the dense mass of darkness under the lofty foliage. More lanterns, hanging in a row from a slack string, decorated the doorway of what Schomberg called grandiloquently "my concert-hall."

In his desperate mood Heyst ascended three steps, lifted a calico curtain, and went in.

The uproar in that small, barnlike structure, built of imported pine boards, and raised clear of the ground, was simply stunning. An instrumental uproar was screaming, grunting, whining, sobbing, scraping, squeaking, some kind of lively air; while a grand piano, operated upon by a bony, red-faced woman with bad-tempered nostrils, rained hard notes like hail through the tempest of fiddles. The small platform was filled with white muslin dresses and crimson sashes slanting from shoulders provided with bare arms, which sawed away without respite.

Zangiaco conducted. He wore a white mess-jacket, a black dress waistcoat, and white trousers. His longish, tousled hair and his great beard were purple-black. He was horrible. The heat was terrific. There were perhaps thirty people having drinks at several little tables.

Heyst, overcome by the volume of noise, dropped into a chair. In the quick time of that music, in the varied, piercing clamor of the strings, in the movements of the bare arms, in the low dresses, the coarse faces, the stony eyes of the executants, there was a suggestion of brutality—something cruel, sensual, and repulsive.

"This is awful!" Heyst murmured to himself.

But there is an unholy fascination in systematic noise. He did not flee from it incontinently, as one might have expected him to do. He remained, astonished at himself for remaining, since nothing could have been more repulsive to his tastes, more painful to his senses, and, so to speak, more contrary to his genius, than this rude exhibition of vigor.

When the piece of music came to an end the relief was so great that he felt slightly dizzy, as if a chasm of stillness had yawned at his feet. When he raised his eyes the women

in white muslin dresses were coming down in pairs from the platform into the body of Schomberg's concert-hall. They dispersed themselves all over the place. The male creature with the hooked nose and purple-black beard disappeared somewhere.

This was the interval during which, as the astute Schomberg had stipulated, the members of the orchestra were encouraged to favor the members of the audience with their company—that is, such members as seemed inclined to fraternize with the arts in a familiar and generous manner; the symbol of familiarity and generosity consisting in offers of refreshment.

The procedure struck Heyst as highly incorrect. However, the impropriety of Schomberg's ingenious scheme was defeated by the circumstance that most of the women were no longer young, and that none of them had ever been beautiful. Their more or less worn cheeks were slightly rouged; but apart from that fact, which might have been simply a matter of professional routine, they did not seem to take the success of the scheme unduly to heart.

The impulse to fraternize with the arts being obviously weak in the audience, some of the musicians sat down listlessly at unoccupied tables, while others went on perambulating the central passage arm in arm, glad enough, no doubt, to stretch their legs while resting their arms. Their crimson sashes gave a factitious touch of gaiety to the smoky atmosphere of the concert-hall; and Heyst felt a sudden pity for these beings exploited, hopeless, devoid of charm and grace, whose fate of cheerless dependence invested their coarse and joyless features with a touch of pathos.

He was preparing to rise and go out when he noticed that two white muslin dresses and crimson sashes had not yet left the platform. One of these dresses concealed the rawboned frame of the woman with the bad-tempered curve to her nostrils. She was no less a personage than Mrs. Zangiaco. She had left the piano and, with her back to the hall, was preparing the parts for the second half of the concert, with a brusque, impatient action of her ugly elbows.

This task done, she turned, and, perceiving the other white muslin dress motionless on a chair in the second row, she strode toward it between the music-stands with an aggressive and masterful gait. On the lap of that dress there lay, unclasped and idle, a pair of small hands, not very white, attached to well-formed arms. The next detail Heyst was led to observe was the arrangement, of the hair—two

thick brown tresses rolled round an attractively shaped head.

"A girl, by Jove!" he exclaimed mentally.

It was evident that she was a girl. It was evident in the outline of the shoulders, in the slender white bust springing up, barred slantwise by the crimson sash, from the bell-shaped spread of muslin skirt hiding the chair on which she sat averted a little from the body of the hall. Her feet, in low white shoes, were crossed prettily.

She had captured Heyst's awakened faculty of observation; he had the sensation of a new experience. That was because his faculty of observation had never before been captured by any feminine creature in that marked and exclusive fashion. He looked at her anxiously, as no man ever looks at another man; and he positively forgot where he was. He had lost touch with his surroundings.

The big woman, advancing, concealed the girl from his sight for a moment. She bent over the seated girlish figure, as if to drop a word into its ear. Her lips did certainly move. But what sort of word could it have been to make the girl jump up so swiftly?

Heyst, at his table, was surprised into a sympathetic start. He glanced quickly round. Nobody was looking toward the platform; and when his eyes swept back there again the girl, with the big woman treading at her heels, was coming down the three steps from the platform to the floor of the hall. There she paused, stumbled one pace forward, and stood still again, while the other—the escort, the dragoon, the coarse, big woman of the piano—passed her roughly, and, marching truculently down the center aisle between the chairs and tables, went out to rejoin the hook-nosed Zangiaco somewhere outside.

During her extraordinary transit, as if everything in the hall were dirt under her feet, her scornful eyes met the upward glance of Heyst, who looked away at once toward the girl. She had not moved. Her arms hung down; her eyelids were lowered.

Heyst laid down his half-smoked cigar and compressed his lips. Then he rose and walked up the central passage. It was the same sort of impulse which years ago had made him cross the sandy street of the abominable town of Delli in the island of Timor and accost Morrison, practically a stranger to him then, a man in trouble, harassed, dejected, lonely.

Several of the women, by this, had found an anchorage here and there among the occupied tables. They talked to the men, leaning on their elbows, and suggesting funnily—

if it hadn't been for the crimson sashes—in their white dresses an assembly of middle-aged brides with free and easy manners and hoarse voices. The murmuring noise of conversations carried on with some spirit filled Schomberg's concert-hall.

Nobody remarked Heyst's movements—for indeed he was not the only man on his legs there. He had been confronting the girl for some time before she became aware of his presence. She was looking down, very still, without color, without glances, without voice, without movement. It was only when Heyst addressed her in his courteous tone that she raised her eyes.

"Excuse me," he said in English, "but that horrible female has done something to you. She has pinched you, hasn't she? I am sure she pinched you just now, when she stood by your chair."

The girl received this overture with the wide, motionless stare of profound astonishment. Heyst, vexed with himself, suspected that she did not understand what he said. One could not tell what nationality these women were, except that they were of all sorts. But she was astonished almost more by the near presence of the man himself, by this large bald head, by the white brow, the sunburnt cheeks, the long, horizontal moustache of crinkly bronze hair, by the kindly expression of the man's blue eyes looking into her own. He saw the stony amazement in hers give way to a momentary alarm, which was succeeded by an expression of resignation.

"I am sure she pinched your arm most cruelly," he murmured, rather disconcerted now at what he had done.

It was a great comfort to hear her say:

"It wouldn't have been the first time. And suppose she did—what are you going to do about it?"

"I don't know," he said with a faint, remote playfulness in his tone which had not been heard in it lately, and which seemed to catch her ear pleasantly. "I am grieved to say that I don't know. But can I do anything? What would you wish me to do? Pray command me!"

Again the greatest astonishment became visible in her face; for she now perceived how different he was from the other men in the room. He was as different from them as she was different from the other members of the ladies' orchestra.

"Command you?" she breathed, after a time, in a bewildered tone. "Who are you?" she asked, a little louder.

"I am staying in this hotel for a few days. I just dropped in casually here to-night. This outrage—"

"Don't you try to interfere," she said so earnestly that Heyst asked, in his faintly playful tone:

"Is it your wish that I should leave you?"

"I haven't said that," the girl answered. "She pinched me because I didn't get down here quick enough."

"I can't tell you how indignant I am," said Heyst. "But since you are down here now," he went on with the ease of a man of the world speaking to a young lady in a drawing-room, "hadn't we better sit down?"

She obeyed his inviting gesture, and they sat down on the nearest chairs. They looked at each other across a little round table with a surprised, open gaze, self-consciousness growing on them so slowly that it was a long time before they averted their eyes; and very soon they met again, temporarily, only to rebound, as it were. At last they steadied in contact, but by that time, say some fifteen minutes from the moment when they sat down, the "interval" came to an end.

So much for their eyes. As to the conversation, it had been perfectly insignificant, because naturally they had nothing to say to each other.

Heyst had been interested by the girl's physiognomy. Its expression was neither simple nor yet very clear. It was not distinguished—that could not be expected—but the features had more fineness than those of any other feminine countenance he had ever had the opportunity to observe so closely. There was in it something indefinably audacious and infinitely miserable—because the temperament and the existence of that girl were reflected in it.

But her voice! It seduced Heyst by its amazing quality. It was a voice fit to utter the most exquisite things, a voice which would have made silly chatter supportable and the roughest talk fascinating. Heyst drank in its charm as one listens to the tone of some instrument without heeding the tune.

"Do you sing as well as play?" he asked her abruptly.

"Never sang a note in my life," she said, obviously surprised by the irrelevant question. She was clearly unaware of her voice. "I don't remember that I ever had much reason to sing since I was little," she added.

That inelegant phrase, by the mere vibrating, warm nobility of sound, found its way into Heyst's heart. His mind, cool, alert,

watched it sink there with a sort of vague concern at the absurdity of the occupation, till it rested at the bottom, deep down, where our unexpressed longings lie.

"You are English, of course," he said.

"What do you think?" she answered. "Cockney, too." Then, as if thinking that it was her turn to place a question: "Why do you always smile when you speak?"

It was enough to make any one look grave; but her good faith was so evident that Heyst recovered himself at once.

"It's my unfortunate manner," he said with his delicate, polished playfulness. "Is it very objectionable to you?"

She was very serious.

"No. I only noticed it. I haven't come across so many pleasant people as all that in my life."

"It's certain that this woman who plays the piano is infinitely more disagreeable than any cannibal I have ever had to do with."

"I believe you!" She shuddered. "How did you come to have anything to do with cannibals?"

"It would be too long a tale," said Heyst with a faint smile in which his playfulness disappeared. Heyst's smiles were rather melancholy, and accorded badly with his great mustache, under which his mere playfulness lurked as comfortably as a shy bird in its native thicket. "Much too long. How did you get among this lot here?"

"Bad luck," she answered briefly.

"No doubt, no doubt," Heyst assented with slight nods. Then, still indignant at the pinch which he had divined rather than actually seen inflicted: "I say, couldn't you defend yourself somehow?"

She had risen already. The ladies of the orchestra were slowly regaining their places. Some were already seated, idle, stony-eyed, before the music-stands. Heyst was standing up, too.

"They are too many for me," she said.

These few words came out of the common experience of mankind; yet, by virtue of her voice, they thrilled Heyst like a revelation.

IX

On a later evening, during the interval between the two parts of the concert, the girl told Heyst about herself. She was almost a child of the streets. Her father was a musician in the orchestras of small theaters. Her mother ran away from him while she was little, and the landladies of various poor lodging-houses had attended casually to her aban-

doned childhood. It was never positive starvation and absolute rags, but it was the hopeless grip of poverty all the time.

It was her father who taught her to play the violin. It seemed that he used to get drunk sometimes, but without pleasure, and only because he was unable to forget his fugitive wife. After he had a paralytic stroke, and fell over with a crash in the well of a music-hall orchestra during the performance, she had joined the Zangiaco company. He was now in a home for incurables.

"And I am here," she finished, "with no one to care if I make a hole in the water the next chance I get or not!"

Heyst told her that he thought she could do a little better than that, if it was only a question of getting out of the world. She looked at him with special attention and with a puzzled expression which gave to her face an air of innocence. She had never had a friend before; and the sensation of this friendliness going out to her was exciting by its novelty alone.

Besides, any man who did not resemble Schomberg appeared for that very reason attractive. She was afraid of the hotel-keeper who, in the daytime, taking advantage of the fact that she lived in the hotel itself and not in the pavilion with the other "artists," prowled round her, mute, hungry, portentous behind his great beard.

The contrast of Heyst's quiet, polished manner gave her special delight and filled her with admiration. She had never seen anything like that before. If she had, perhaps, known kindness in her life, she had never met the forms of simple courtesy. She was interested by it as by a very novel experience, not very intelligible, but distinctly pleasurable.

"I tell you they are too many for me," she repeated, sometimes recklessly, but more often shaking her head with ominous dejection.

She had, of course, no money at all. The quantities of "black men" all about frightened her. She really had no definite idea where she was on the surface of the globe. The orchestra was generally taken from the steamer to some hotel, and kept shut up there till it was time to go on board another steamer. She could not remember the names she heard.

"How do you call this place again?" she used to ask Heyst.

"Sourabaya," he would say distinctly, and would watch the discouragement at the outlandish sound coming into her eyes, which

were fastened on his face. He could not defend himself from compassion.

He suggested that she might go to the consul, but it was his conscience that dictated this advice, not his conviction. She had never heard of the animal or of its uses. A consul! What was it? Who was he? What could he do? And when she learned that perhaps he could be induced to send her home her head dropped on her breast.

"What am I to do when I get there?" she murmured with an intonation so true, with an accent so penetrating—the charm of her voice did not fail her even in whispering—that Heyst seemed to see the illusion of human fellowship on earth vanish before the naked truth of her existence and leave them both face to face in a moral desert as arid as the sands of Sahara, without restful shade, without refreshing water.

She leaned slightly over the little table—the same little table at which they had sat when they first met each other; and with no other memories but of the stones in the streets her childhood had known, the distress of the incoherent, confused, rudimentary impressions of her travels inspiring her with a vague terror of the world, she said rapidly, as one speaks in desperation:

"You do something! You are a gentleman. It wasn't I who spoke to you first, was it? I didn't begin, did I? It was you who came along and spoke to me when I was standing over there. What did you want to speak to me for? I don't care what it is, but you must do something!"

Her attitude was fierce and entreating at the same time—clamorous, in fact, though her voice had hardly risen above a breath. It was clamorous enough to be noticed. Heyst, on purpose, laughed aloud. She nearly choked with indignation at this brutal heartlessness.

"What did you mean, then, by saying 'command me'?" she almost hissed.

Something hard in his mirthless stare and a quiet final "All right" steadied her.

"I am not rich enough to buy you out," he went on, speaking with an extraordinary detached grin, "even if it were to be done; but I can always steal you."

She looked at him profoundly, as if these words had a hidden and very complicated meaning.

"Get away now," he said rapidly, "and try to smile as you go."

She obeyed with unexpected readiness; and as she had a set of very good white teeth the effect of the mechanical, ordered smile was

joyous, radiant. It astonished Heyst. No wonder, it flashed through his mind, women can deceive men so completely. The faculty was inherent in them; they seemed to be created with a special aptitude. Here was a smile, the origin of which was well known to him; and yet it had conveyed a sensation of warmth, had given him a sort of ardor to live, which was very new to his experience.

By this time she was gone from the table and had joined the other "ladies of the orchestra." They trooped toward the platform, driven in truculently by the haughty mate of Zangiaco, who looked as if she were restraining herself with difficulty from punching their backs.

Zangiaco followed with his great, pendulous dyed beard and short mess-jacket, with an aspect of hangdog concentration imparted by his drooping head and the uneasiness of his eyes, which were set very close together. He climbed the steps last of all, turned about, displaying his purple beard to the hall, and tapped with his bow. Heyst winced in anticipation of the horrible racket. It burst out immediately, unabashed and awful. At the end of the platform the woman at the piano, presenting her cruel profile, her head tilted back, banged the keys without looking at the music.

Heyst could not stand the uproar for more than a minute. He went out, his brain racked by the rhythm of some more or less Hungarian dance-music. He sought the obscurity and the peace of his bedroom; but they were not complete. The distant sounds of the concert reached his ear, faint but still disturbing.

He did not attempt to go to sleep; he did not even unbutton the top button of his tunic. He sat in a chair and mused. Formerly, in solitude and in silence, he had been used to think clearly and sometimes even profoundly, seeing life outside the flattering optical delusion of everlasting hope, of conventional self-deception, of an ever-expected happiness. But now he was troubled; a light veil seemed to hang before his mental vision; the awakening of a tenderness, indistinct and confused as yet, toward an unknown woman.

Gradually silence, a real silence, had established itself round him. The concert was over; the audience had gone; the concert-hall was dark; and even the pavilion where the ladies' orchestra slept after its noisy labors, showed not a gleam of light.

Heyst suddenly felt restless in all his limbs. As this reaction from the long immobility would not be denied, he humored it by pass-

ing quietly along the back veranda and out into the grounds at the side of the house, into the black shadows under the trees, where the extinguished paper lanterns were gently swinging their globes like withered fruit.

He paced there to and fro for a long time, a calm, meditative ghost in his white-drill suit, revolving in his head thoughts absolutely novel, disquieting and seductive; accustoming his mind to the contemplation of his purpose, in order that by being faced steadily it should appear praiseworthy and wise. For the use of reason is to justify the obscure desires that move our conduct, impulses, passions, prejudices, and follies, and also our fears.

He felt that he had engaged himself by a rash promise to an action big with incalculable consequences. And then he asked himself if the girl had understood what he meant. Who could tell? He was assailed by all sorts of doubts.

Raising his head he perceived something white flitting between the trees. It vanished almost at once; but there could be no mistake. He was vexed at being detected roaming like this in the middle of the night. Who could that be? It never occurred to him that perhaps the girl, too, would not be able to sleep.

He advanced prudently. Then he saw the white, fantomlike apparition again; and next moment all his doubts as to the state of her mind were laid at rest, because he felt her clinging to him after the manner of suppliants all the world over. Her whispers were so incoherent that he could not understand anything; but this did not prevent him from being profoundly moved.

"Calm yourself, calm yourself," he murmured in her ear, returning her clasp at first mechanically and afterward with a growing appreciation of her distressed humanity.

The heaving of her breast and the trembling of all her limbs, in the closeness of his embrace, seemed to enter his body, to infect his very heart. While she was growing quieter in his arms he was becoming more agitated, as if there were only a fixed quantity of violent emotion on this earth. The very night seemed more dumb, more still, and the immobility of the vague, black shapes surrounding him more perfect.

"It will be all right," he tried to reassure her, with a tone of conviction, speaking into her ear, and of necessity clasping her more closely than before.

Either the words or the action had a very good effect. He heard a light sigh of relief. She spoke with a calmed ardor.

"Oh, I knew it would be all right from the first time you spoke to me! Yes, indeed, I knew directly you came up to me that evening. I knew it would be all right, if you only cared to make it so; but, of course, I could not tell if you meant it. 'Command me,' you said. Funny thing for a man like you to say! Did you really mean it? You weren't making fun of me?"

He protested that he had been a serious person all his life.

"I believe you," she said ardently. He was touched by this declaration. "It's the way you have of speaking as if you were amused with people," she went on. "But I wasn't deceived. I could see you were angry with that beast of a woman. And you are clever. You spotted something at once. You saw it in my face, eh? It isn't a bad face—say? You'll never be sorry. Listen—I'm not twenty yet. It's the truth, and I can't be so bad-looking, or else—I will tell you straight that I have been worried and pestered by fellows like this before. I don't know what comes to them—"

She was speaking hurriedly. She choked, and then exclaimed, with an accent of despair:

"What is it? What's the matter?" Heyst had removed his arms from her suddenly and had recoiled a little. "Is it my fault? I didn't even look at them, I tell you straight. Never! Have I looked at you? Tell me. It was you that began it."

In truth, Heyst had shrunk from the idea of competition with fellows unknown, with Schomberg, the hotel-keeper. The vaporous white figure before him swayed pitifully in the darkness. He felt ashamed of his fastidiousness.

"I am afraid we have been detected," he murmured. "I think I saw somebody on the path between the house and the bushes behind you."

He had seen no one. It was a compassionate lie, if there ever was one. His compassion was as genuine as his shrinking had been, and in his judgment more honorable.

She never turned her head. She was obviously relieved.

"Would it be that brute?" she breathed out, meaning Schomberg, of course. "He's getting too forward with me now. What can you expect? Only this evening, after supper, he—but I slipped away. You don't mind him, do you? Why, I could face him myself now that I know you care for me. A girl can always put up a fight. You believe me? Only it isn't easy to stand up for yourself when you feel there's nothing and nobody at your back.

There's nothing so lonely in the world as a girl who has got to look after herself. When I left poor dad in that home—it was in the country, near a village—I came out of the gate with seven shillings and threepence in my old purse, and my railway ticket. I tramped a mile and got into a train—"

She broke off and was silent for a moment.

"Don't you throw me over now," she went on. "If you did, what should I do? I should have to live, to be sure, because I'd be afraid to kill myself; but you would have done a thousand times worse than killing a body. You told me you had always been alone, you had never had a dog even. Well, then, I won't be in anybody's way if I live with you—not even a dog's. And what else did you want when you came up and looked at me so close?"

"Close? Did I?" he murmured, unstirring before her in the profound darkness. "So close as that?"

She had an outbreak of anger and despair in subdued tones.

"Have you forgotten then? What did you expect to find? I know what sort of girl I am; but all the same I am not the sort that men turn their backs on—and you ought to know it, unless you aren't made like the others. Oh, forgive me! You aren't like the others; you are like no one in the world I ever spoke to. Don't you care for me? Don't you see—"

What he saw was that, white and spectral, she was putting out her arms to him out of the black shadows like an appealing ghost. He took her hands and was affected, almost surprised, to find them so warm, so real, so firm, so living in his grasp. He drew her to him, and she dropped her head on his shoulder with a deep sigh.

"I am dead tired," she whispered plaintively.

He put his arms round her, and only by the convulsive movements of her body became aware that she was sobbing without a sound. Sustaining her he lost himself in the profound silence of the night.

After a while she became still and cried quietly. Then suddenly, as if waking up, she asked:

"You haven't seen any more of that somebody you thought was spying about?"

He started at her quick, sharp whisper, and answered that very likely he had been mistaken.

"If it was anybody at all," she reflected aloud, "it wouldn't have been any one but that hotel woman—the landlord's wife."

"Mrs. Schomberg?" Heyst said, surprised.

"Yes. Another one that can't sleep o' nights. Why? Don't you see why? Because, of course, she sees what's going on. That beast doesn't even try to keep it from her. If she had only the least bit of spirit! She knows how I feel, too, only she's too frightened even to look him in the face, let alone open her mouth. He would tell her to go hang herself!"

For some time Heyst said nothing. A public, active contest with the hotel-keeper was not to be thought of. The idea was altogether too unpleasant. Whispering gently to the girl, he tried to explain to her that as things stood an open withdrawal from the company would probably be opposed. She listened to his explanation anxiously, from time to time pressing the hand she had sought and got hold of in the dark.

"As I told you, I am not rich enough to buy you out; so I shall steal you as soon as I can arrange some means of getting away from here. Meantime it would be fatal to be seen together at night. We mustn't give ourselves away. We had better part at once. I think I was mistaken just now; but if, as you say, that poor Mrs. Schomberg can't sleep of nights, we must be more careful. She would tell the fellow."

The girl had disengaged herself from his loose hold while he talked and now stood free of him, but still clasping his hand firmly.

"Oh, no," she said with perfect assurance. "I tell you she daren't open her mouth to him. And she isn't as silly as she looks. She wouldn't give us away. She knows a trick worth two of that. She'll help—that's what she'll do, if she dare do anything at all."

"You seem to have a very clear view of the situation," said Heyst, and received a warm, lingering kiss for this commendation.

He discovered that to part from her was not such an easy matter as he had supposed it would be.

"Upon my word," he said before they separated, "I don't even know your name!"

"Don't you? They call me Alma. I don't know why. Silly name! Magdalen, too. It doesn't matter; you can call me by whatever name you choose. Yes, you give me a name. Think of one you would like the sound of—something quite new. How I should like to forget everything that has gone before, as one forgets a dream that's done with, fright and all! I would try."

"Would you really?" he asked in a murmur. "But that's not forbidden. I under-

stand that women easily forget whatever in their past diminishes them in their eyes."

"It's your eyes that I was thinking of, for I'm sure I've never wished to forget anything till you came up to me that night and looked me through and through. I know I'm not much account; but I know how to stand by a man. I stood by father ever since I could understand. He wasn't a bad chap. Now that I can't be of any use to him, I would just as soon forget all that and make a fresh start. But these aren't things that I could talk to you about. What could I ever talk to you about?"

"Don't let it trouble you," Heyst said. "Your voice is enough. I am in love with it, whatever it says."

She remained silent for a while, as if rendered breathless by this quiet statement.

"Oh! I wanted to ask you—"

He remembered that she probably did not know his name and expected the question to be put to him now; but after a moment of hesitation she went on:

"Why is it that you told me to smile this evening in the concert-room there—you remember?"

"I thought we were being observed. A smile is the best of masks. Schomberg was at a table next but one to us, drinking with some Dutch clerks from the town. No doubt he was watching us—watching you, at least. That's why I asked you to smile."

"Ah, that's why! It never came into my head."

"And you did it very well, too—very readily, as if you had understood my intention."

"Readily!" she repeated. "Oh, I was ready enough to smile then. That's the truth. It was the first time for years I may say that I felt disposed to smile. I've not had many chances to smile in my life, I can tell you—especially of late."

"But you do it most charmingly—in a perfectly fascinating way."

He paused. She stood still, waiting for more with the stillness of extreme delight, wishing to prolong the sensation.

"It astonished me," he added. "It went as straight to my heart as if you had smiled for the purpose of dazzling me. I felt as if I had never seen a smile before in my life. I thought of it after I left you. It made me restless."

"It did all that?" came her voice, unsteady, gentle, and incredulous.

"If you had not smiled as you did I should not have come out here to-night," he said with his playful earnestness of tone.

He felt her lips touch his lightly, and the next moment she was gone. Her white dress gleamed in the distance, and then the opaque darkness of the house seemed to swallow it. Heyst waited a little while before he went the same way, round the corner of the hotel, up the steps of the veranda, and into his room, where he lay down at last—not to sleep, but to go over in his mind all that had been said at their meeting.

"It's exactly true about that smile," he thought. There he had spoken the truth to her; and about her voice, too. For the rest—what must be must be!

A great wave of heat passed over him. He turned on his back, flung his arms crosswise on the broad, hard bed, and lay still, open-eyed under the mosquito-net, till daylight entered his room, brightened swiftly, and turned to unfailing sunlight.

He got up then, went to a small looking-glass hanging on the wall, and stared at himself steadily. It was not a new-born vanity which induced this long survey. He felt so strange that he could not resist the suspicion of his personal appearance having changed during the night.

What he saw in the glass, however, was the man he knew before. It was almost a disappointment—a belittling of his recent experience. And then he smiled at his naiveness; for, being over five and thirty years of age, he ought to have known that in most cases the body is the unalterable mask of the soul, which even death itself changes but little, till it is put out of sight, where no changes matter any more, either to our friends or to our enemies.

X

For fifteen years Heyst had wandered, invariably courteous and unapproachable, and in return generally considered a "queer chap." He had started off on these travels of his after the death of his father, an expatriated Swede, dissatisfied with his country and angry with all the world, which had instinctively rejected his wisdom.

Thinker, stylist, and man of the world in his time, the elder Heyst had begun by coveting all the joys, those of the great and those of the humble, those of the fools and those of the sages. For more than sixty years he had dragged on this painful earth of ours the most weary, the most uneasy soul that civilization had ever fashioned to its ends of disillusion and regret. One could not refuse him a measure of greatness, for he was unhappy in a way unknown to mediocre souls.

His mother Heyst had never known, but he kept his father's pale, distinguished face in affectionate memory. He remembered him mainly in an ample blue dressing-gown in a large house of a quiet London suburb. For three years, after leaving school at the age of eighteen, he had lived with the elder Heyst, who was then writing his last book. In this work, at the end of his life, he claimed for mankind that right to absolute moral and intellectual liberty of which he no longer believed them worthy.

Three years of such companionship at that plastic and impressionable age were bound to leave a profound mistrust of life. The young man had learned to reflect, which is a destructive process, a reckoning of the cost. It is not the clear-sighted who lead the world. Great achievements are accomplished in a blessed, warm, mental fog, which the pitiless cold blasts of the father's analysis had blown away from the son.

"I'll drift," Heyst had said to himself deliberately.

He did not mean intellectually or sentimentally or morally. He meant to drift altogether and literally, body and soul, like a detached leaf drifting in the wind-currents under the immovable trees of a forest glade; to drift without ever catching on to anything.

"This shall be my defense against life," he had said to himself with a sort of inward consciousness that for the son of his father there was no other worthy alternative.

He became a waif and stray, austere, from conviction, as others do through drink, from vice, from some weakness of character—with deliberation, as others do in despair. This, stripped of its facts, had been Heyst's life up to that disturbing night.

Next day, when he saw the girl called Alma, she managed to give him a glance of frank tenderness, quick as lightning, and leaving a profound impression, a secret touch on the heart. It was in the grounds of the hotel, about tiffin-time, while the ladies of the orchestra were strolling back to their pavilion after rehearsal or practise, or whatever they called their morning musical exercises in the hall.

Heyst, returning from the town, where he had discovered that there would be difficulties in the way of getting away at once, was crossing the compound, disappointed and worried. He had walked almost unwittingly into the stragglers group of Zangiaco's performers. It was a shock to him, on coming out of his brown study, to find the girl so near him, as

if one waking suddenly should see the figure of his dream turned into flesh and blood. She did not raise her shapely head, but her glance was no dream thing. It was real—the most real impression of his detached existence—so far.

Heyst had not acknowledged it in any way, though it seemed to him impossible that its effect on him should not be visible to any one who happened to be looking on. And there were several men on the veranda, steady customers of Schomberg's *table d'hôte*, gazing in his direction—at the ladies of the orchestra, in fact. Heyst's dread arose, not out of shame or timidity, but from his fastidiousness.

On getting among them, however, he noticed no signs of interest or astonishment on their faces, any more than if they had been blind men. Even Schomberg himself, who had to make way for him at the top of the stairs, was completely unperturbed, and continued the conversation he was carrying on with a client.

Schomberg, indeed, had observed "that Swede" talking with the girl in the intervals. A crony of his had nudged him; and he had thought that it was so much the better; the silly fellow would keep everybody else off. He watched them out of the corner of his eye with a malicious enjoyment of the situation—a sort of satanic glee. For the hotel-keeper had little doubt of his personal fascination, and still less of his power to get hold of the girl, who seemed too ignorant to know how to help herself, and who was worse than friendless, since she had for some reason incurred the animosity of Mrs. Zangiaco, a woman with no conscience.

Schomberg had told Alma, as an argument, that she was a clever enough girl to see that she could do no better than to put her trust in a man of substance, in the prime of life, who knew his way about. But for the excited trembling of his voice, and the extraordinary way in which his eyes seemed to be starting out of his crimson, hirsute countenance, such speeches had every character of calm, unselfish advice—which, after the manner of lovers, passed easily into sanguine plans for the future.

"We'll soon get rid of the old woman," he whispered to her hurriedly, with panting ferocity. "Hang her! I've never cared for her. The climate don't suit her; I shall tell her to go to her people in Europe. She will have to go, too! I will see to it. *Eins, zwei*, march! And then we shall sell this hotel and start another somewhere else."

He assured her that he didn't care what he did for her sake; and it was true. Fifty is the age of recklessness for many men, as if in defiance of the decay and death waiting with open arms in the sinister valley at the bottom of the inevitable hill.

Her shrinking form, her downcast eyes, when she had to listen to him, cornered at the end of an empty corridor, he regarded as signs of submission to the overpowering force of his will, the recognition of his personal fascinations. For every age is fed on illusions, lest men should renounce life early and the human race come to an end.

It is easy to imagine Schomberg's humiliation, his shocked fury, when he discovered that the girl who had for weeks resisted his attacks; his prayers, and his fiercest protestations, had been snatched from under his nose by "that Swede," apparently without any trouble worth speaking of. He refused to believe the fact. He would have it, at first, that the Zangiaco, for some unfathomable reason, had played him a scurvy trick; but when no further doubt was possible, he changed his view of Heyst. The despised Swede became for Schomberg the deepest, the most dangerous, the most hateful of scoundrels.

It became a recognized entertainment to go and hear his abuse of Heyst, while sipping iced drinks on the veranda of the hotel. It was in a manner a more successful draw than the Zangiaco concerts had ever been—intervals and all. There was never any difficulty in starting the performer off. Anybody could do it, by almost any distant allusion.

As likely as not, he would begin his endless denunciations in the very billiard-room where Mrs. Schomberg sat enthroned as usual, swallowing her sobs, concealing her tortures of abject humiliation and terror under her stupid, set, everlasting grin, which, having been provided for her by nature, was an excellent mask, inasmuch that nothing—not even death itself, perhaps—could tear it away.

But nothing lasts, in this world at least, without changing its physiognomy. So, after a few weeks, Schomberg regained his outward calm, as if his indignation had dried up within him. And it was time. He was becoming a bore with his inability to talk of anything else but Heyst's unfitness to be at large, Heyst's wickedness, his wiles, his astuteness, and even his criminality.

"If that ass keeps on like this, he will end by going crazy," one of his customers, an elderly man, had remarked one evening.

And this belief was less than half wrong.

Schomberg had Heyst on the brain. Even the unsatisfactory state of his affairs, which had never been so unpromising since he came out East directly after the Franco-Prussian War, he referred to some subtly noxious influence of Heyst. It seemed to him that he could never be himself again till he had got even with that artful Swede.

He was ready to swear that Heyst had ruined his life. At fifty a disappointment like the one from which he suffered may well wear such an aspect. The girl so unfairly, craftily, basely decoyed away would have inspired him to success in a new start. He had grown generally neglectful, but with a partiality for reckless expedients, as if he did not care when and how his career as a hotel-keeper was to be brought to an end.

This demoralized state accounted for what Davidson had observed on his last visit to the Schomberg establishment, some three or four months after Heyst's secret departure with the girl to the solitude of Samburan.

The Schomberg of a few years ago—the Schomberg of the Bangkok days, for instance, when he started the first of his famed *table d'hôte* dinners—would never have risked anything of the sort. His genius ran to catering, white man for white men, and to the inventing, elaborating, and retailing of scandalous gossip with asinine unctiousness and impudent delight. But now his mind was perverted by the pangs of wounded vanity and of thwarted passion.

In this state of moral weakness Schomberg allowed himself to be corrupted.

XI

THE business was done by a guest who arrived one fine morning by mail-boat—immediately from Celebes, having boarded her in Macassar, but generally, Schomberg understood, from up China Sea way; a wanderer, clearly, even as Heyst was, but not alone and of quite another kind.

Schomberg, looking up from the stern-sheets of his steam-launch, which he used for boarding passenger ships on arrival, discovered a dark, sunken stare plunging down on him over the rail of the first-class part of the deck. He was no great judge of physiognomy. He was out there on business; a human being was but an "account," from that point of view. Human beings, for him, were either the objects of scandalous gossip or else the recipients of narrow strips of paper, with proper bill-heads stating the name of his hotel—"W. Schomberg, proprietor; accounts settled weekly."

So in the clean-shaven, extremely thin face hanging over the mail-boat's rail Schomberg saw only the face of a possible "account." The steam-launches of his rivals were also alongside, but he had the preference.

"You are Mr. Schomberg, aren't you?" the face had asked quite unexpectedly.

"I am, at your service," he had answered from below; for business is business, and its forms and formulas must be observed, even if one's manly bosom is tortured by that dull rage which succeeds the fury of baffled passion, like the glow of embers after a fierce blaze.

Presently the possessor of the handsome but emaciated face was seated beside Schomberg in the stern-sheets of the hotel steam-launch. His body was long and loose-jointed; his slender fingers, intertwined, clasped the leg resting on his knee, as he lolled back in a careless yet tense attitude. On the other side of Schomberg sat another passenger, who was introduced by the clean-shaven man as—

"My secretary. He must have the room next to mine."

"We can manage that easily for you."

Schomberg steered with dignity, staring straight ahead, but very much interested by these two promising "accounts." Their belongings, a couple of large leather trunks browned by age and a few smaller packages, were piled up in the bow.

A third individual—a nondescript, hairy creature—had modestly made his way forward and had perched himself on the luggage. The lower part of his physiognomy was overdeveloped; his narrow and low forehead, unintelligently furrowed by horizontal wrinkles, surmounted wildly hirsute cheeks and a flat nose with wide, baboonlike nostrils. There was something equivocal in the appearance of his shaggy, hair-smothered humanity.

He, too, seemed to be a follower of the clean-shaven man, and apparently had traveled on deck with native passengers, sleeping under the awnings. His broad, squat frame denoted great strength. Grasping the gunwales of the launch, he displayed a pair of remarkably long arms terminating in thick, brown, hairy paws of simian aspect.

"What shall we do with that fellow of mine?" the chief of the party asked Schomberg. "There must be a boarding-house somewhere near the port—some grog-shop where they could let him have a mat to sleep on?"

Schomberg said there was a place kept by a Chinaman.

"A servant of yours?" he asked.

"Well, he hangs on to me. He is an alligator-hunter. I picked him up in Colombia, you know. Ever been in Colombia?"

"No," said Schomberg, very much surprised. "An alligator-hunter? Funny trade! Are you coming from Colombia, then?"

"Yes, but I have been coming for a long time. I come from a good many places. I am traveling west, you see."

"For sport, perhaps?" suggested Schomberg.

"Yes. Sort of sport. What do you say to chasing the sun?"

"I see—a gentleman at large," said Schomberg, watching a sailing canoe about to cross his bow, and ready to clear it by a touch of the helm.

The other passenger made himself heard suddenly.

"Hang these native craft! They always get in the way."

He was a muscular, short man with eyes that gleamed and blinked, a harsh voice, and a leaden, pock-marked face ornamented by a thin, disheveled mustache sticking out quaintly under the tip of a rigid nose. Schomberg made the reflection that there was nothing secretarial about him. Both he and his long, lank principal wore the usual white suit of the tropics, cork helmets, pipe-clayed white shoes—all correct. The hairy, nondescript creature perched on their luggage in the bow had a check shirt and blue dungaree trousers. He gazed in their direction from forward in an expectant, trained-animal manner.

"You spoke to me first," said Schomberg in his manly tones. "You were acquainted with my name. Where did you hear of me, gentlemen, may I ask?"

"In Manila," answered the gentleman at large, readily. "From a man with whom I had a game at cards one evening in the Hotel Castille."

"What man? I've no friends in Manila that I know of," wondered Schomberg with a severe frown.

"I can't tell you his name. I've clean forgotten it; but don't you worry. He was anything but a friend of yours. He called you all the names he could think of. He said you set a lot of scandal going about him once, somewhere—in Bangkok, I think. Yes, that's it. You were running a *table d'hôte* in Bangkok at one time, weren't you?"

Schomberg, astounded by the turn of the information, could only throw out his chest more and exaggerate his austere lieutenant-of-the-reserve manner. A *table d'hôte*? Yes, certainly. He always—for the sake of white

men. And here in this place, too? Yes, in this place, too.

"That's all right, then." The stranger turned his black, cavernous, mesmerizing glance away from the bearded Schomberg, who sat gripping the brass tiller in a sweating palm. "Many people in the evening at your place?"

Schomberg had recovered somewhat.

"Twenty covers or so, take one day with another," he answered feelingly, as befitting a subject on which he was sensitive. "Ought to be more, if only people would see that it's for their own good. Precious little profit I get out of it. You are partial to *table d'hôtes*, gentlemen?"

The new guest made answer that he liked a hotel where one could find some local people in the evening. It was infernally dull otherwise. The secretary, in sign of approval, emitted a grunt of astonishing ferocity, as if proposing to himself to eat the livers of the local people.

All this sounded like a longish stay, thought Schomberg, satisfied under his grave air; till, remembering the girl snatched away from him by the last guest who had made a prolonged stay in his hotel, he ground his teeth so audibly that the other two looked at him in wonder. The momentary convulsion of his florid physiognomy seemed to strike them dumb. They exchanged a quick glance.

Presently the clean-shaven man fired out another question in his curt, unceremonious manner:

"You have no women in your hotel, eh?"

"Women!" Schomberg exclaimed indignantly, but also as if a little frightened. "What on earth do you mean by women? What women? There's Mrs. Schomberg, of course," he added, suddenly appeased, with lofty indifference.

"If she knows how to keep her place, then it will do. I can't stand women near me. They give me the horrors," declared the other. "They are a perfect curse!"

During this outburst the secretary wore a savage grin. The chief guest closed his sunken eyes, as if exhausted, and leaned the back of his head against the stanchion of the awning. In this pose his long, feminine eyelashes were very noticeable, and his regular features, sharp line of the jaw, and well-cut chin were brought into prominence, giving him a sort of used-up, weary, depraved distinction.

He did not open his eyes till the steam-launch touched the quay. Then he and the other man got ashore quickly, entered a

gharry, and drove away to the hotel, leaving Schomberg to look after their luggage and take care of their strange companion. The latter, looking more like a performing bear abandoned by his showmen than a human being, followed all Schomberg's movements step by step, close behind his back, muttering to himself in a language that sounded like some sort of uncouth Spanish.

The hotel-keeper felt uncomfortable till at last he got rid of him at an obscure den where a very clean, portly Chinaman, standing serenely in the doorway, seemed to understand exactly how to deal with clients of every kind. He took from the creature the strapped bundle it had been hugging closely through all its peregrinations in that strange town, and cut short Schomberg's attempts at explanation by a most confident—

"Velly good, velly good. Me savee plenty."

"It's more than I do," thought Schomberg, going away thankful at being relieved of the alligator-hunter's company. He wondered what these fellows were, without being able to form a guess of sufficient probability. Their names he learned that very day by direct inquiry—"to enter in my books," he explained in his formal military manner, chest thrown out, beard very much in evidence.

The shaven man, lounging in a long chair, with his air of withered youth, raised his eyes languidly.

"My name? Oh, plain Mr. Jones—put that down—a gentleman at large. And that is Ricardo." The pock-marked man, lying prostrate in another long chair, made a grimace, as if something had tickled the end of his nose, but did not come out of his supineness. "Martin Ricardo, secretary. You don't want any more of our history, do you? Eh, what? Occupation? Put down, well—tourists. We've been called by harder names before now; it won't hurt our feelings. And that fellow of mine—where did you tuck him away? Oh, he will be all right. When he wants anything he'll take it. He's Peter. Citizen of Colombia, Peter, Pedro—I don't know that he ever had any other name. Pedro, alligator-hunter. Oh, yes—I'll pay his board with the Chinaman. Can't help myself. He's so confoundedly devoted to me that if I were to give him the sack he would fly at my throat. Shall I tell you how I killed his brother in the wilds of Colombia? Well, perhaps some other time—it's a rather long story. What I shall always regret is that I didn't kill him, too. I could have done it without any extra trouble then; now it's too late. Great nuisance; but he's

useful sometimes. I hope you are not going to put all this in your book?"

The offhand, hard manner and the contemptuous tone of "plain Mr. Jones" disconcerted Schomberg utterly. He had never been spoken to like this in his life. He shook his head in silence and withdrew, not exactly scared—though he was in reality of a timid disposition under his manly exterior—but distinctly mystified and impressed.

XII

THREE weeks later, after putting his cash-box away in the safe which filled with its iron bulk a corner of their bedroom, Schomberg turned toward his wife, but without looking at her exactly, and said:

"I must get rid of these two. It won't do!"

Mrs. Schomberg had entertained that very opinion from the first; but she had been broken years ago into keeping her opinions to herself. Sitting in her night attire in the light of a single candle, she was careful not to make a sound, knowing from experience that her very assent would be resented. With her eyes she followed the figure of Schomberg, clad in his sleeping-suit, and moving restlessly about the room.

He never looked her way, for the reason that Mrs. Schomberg, in her night attire, looked the most unattractive object in existence—miserable, insignificant, faded, crushed, old. And the contrast with the feminine form he had ever in his mind's eye made his wife's appearance painful to his esthetic sense.

Schomberg walked about swearing and fuming for the purpose of screwing his courage up to the sticking point.

"Hang me if I don't go now, at once, this minute, into his bedroom, and tell him to be off—him and that secretary of his—early in the morning. I don't mind a round game of cards, but to make a decoy of my *table d'hôte*—my blood boils! He came here because some lying rascal in Manila told him I kept a *table d'hôte*."

He said these things, not for Mrs. Schomberg's information, but simply thinking aloud, and trying to work his fury up to a point where it would give him courage enough to face "plain Mr. Jones."

"Impudent, overbearing, swindling sharper!" he went on. "I have a good mind to—"

Though his eyes strayed about irresolutely, yet his swollen, angry features awakened in the miserable woman over whom he had been tyrannizing for years a fear for his precious carcass; since the poor creature had nothing

else but that to hold onto in the world. She knew him well; but she did not know him altogether. The last thing a woman will consent to discover in a man whom she loves, or on whom she simply depends, is want of courage. And, timid in her corner, she ventured to say pressingly:

"Be careful, Wilhelm! Remember the knives and revolvers in their trunks."

In guise of thanks for that anxious reminder he swore horribly in the direction of her shrinking person. In her scanty night-dress, and barefooted, she seemed like a medieval penitent being reproved for her sin in blasphemous terms.

Those lethal weapons were always present to Schomberg's mind. Personally he had never seen them. His part, some three weeks before, had been to lounge in manly, careless attitudes on the veranda—on the watch—while Mrs. Schomberg, provided with a bunch of assorted keys, her discolored teeth chattering and her globular eyes absolutely idiotic with fright, was "going through" the luggage of these strange clients. Her terrible Wilhelm had insisted on it.

"I'll keep good watch, I tell you," he said. "I shall give you a whistle when I see them coming back. Even if he were to catch you at it, and chuck you out by the scruff of the neck, it wouldn't hurt you much; but he won't touch a woman. Not he! He has told me so. Affected beast! I must find out something about their little game, and so there's an end of it. Go in! Go now! Quick, march!"

It had been an awful job; but she did go in, because she was much more afraid of Schomberg than of any possible consequences of the act. The trunks, she found, had been left open; but her investigation did not last long. She was frightened of firearms, and generally of all weapons, not exactly from personal cowardice, but from an abstract horror of violence and murder. She was out again on the veranda long before Wilhelm had any occasion to sound his warning whistle; and nothing could induce her to return to her investigations—neither threatening growls nor ferocious hisses, nor yet a poke or two in the ribs.

"Stupid female!" muttered the hotel-keeper, perturbed by the notion of that armory in one of his bedrooms. This was from no abstract sentiment; with him it was constitutional. "Get out of my sight!" he snarled. "Go and dress yourself for the *table d'hôte*."

Left to himself, Schomberg had meditated. What did this mean? His thinking processes were sluggish and spasmodic; but suddenly the truth came to him.

"By Heavens, they are desperadoes!" he thought.

Just then he beheld "plain Mr. Jones" and his secretary with the ambiguous name of Ricardo entering the grounds of the hotel. They had been down to the port on some business, and now were returning; Mr. Jones, lank, spare, opening his long legs with angular regularity, like a pair of compasses, the other stepping out briskly by his side.

Conviction entered Schomberg's heart. They were two desperadoes—no doubt about it! But as the funk which he experienced was merely a general sensation, he managed to put on his most severe officer-of-the-reserve manner long before they had closed in with him.

"Good morning, gentlemen!"

Being answered with curiously derisive civility, he became confirmed in his sudden conviction of their desperate character. The way Mr. Jones turned his hollow eyes on one, like an incurious specter, and the way the other, when addressed, suddenly retracted his lips and exhibited his teeth without looking round—here was evidence enough to settle that point. Desperadoes! They passed through the billiard-room, inscrutably mysterious, to the back of the house, to join their violated trunks.

"Tiffin bell will ring in five minutes, gentlemen," Schomberg called after them, exaggerating the deep manliness of his tone.

He had managed to upset himself very much. He dreaded any kind of disturbance—"fracas," he called it—in his hotel. Such things were not good for business. Of course, sometimes one had to have a "fracas"; but it had been a comparatively trifling task to seize the frail Zangiaco—whose bones were no larger than a chicken's—round the ribs, lift him up bodily, dash him to the ground, and fall on him. It had been easy. The wretched, hook-nosed creature lay without movement, buried under its purple beard.

Suddenly, remembering the occasion of that "fracas," Schomberg groaned with the pain as of a hot coal under his breast-bone, and gave himself up to desolation. Ah, if he only had that girl with him he would have been masterful and resolute and fearless—fight twenty desperadoes—care for nobody on earth! Whereas the possession of Mrs. Schomberg was no incitement to a display of manly virtues.

He sat gloomily through the tiffin.

Extreme resolutions at the age of fifty are seldom final. They settle nothing; they merely unsettle the action which at that time of life should follow the cold dictates of matured wisdom. In his state of moral decomposition, Schomberg, master as he was of the art of hotel-keeping, and careful of giving no occasion for criticism to the powers regulating that branch of human activities, let things take their course; though he saw very well where that course was tending.

It began first with a game or two after dinner—for the drinks, apparently—with some lingering customer, at one of the little tables ranged against the walls of the billiard-room. Schomberg detected the meaning of it at once. That's what it was! This was what they were!

Moving about restlessly, he cast sidelong looks at the game; but he said nothing. It was not worth while having a row with men who were so overbearing. Even when money appeared in connection with these post-prandial games, into which more and more people were being drawn, he still refrained from raising the question.

One evening, however, after the public rooms of the hotel had become empty, Schomberg made an attempt to grapple with the problem in an indirect way.

In a distant corner the tired Chinaman dozed on his heels, his back against the wall. Mrs. Schomberg had disappeared, as usual, between ten and eleven. Schomberg walked about slowly, in and out of the room and the veranda, thoughtful, waiting for his two guests to go to bed. Then suddenly he approached them, militarily, his chest thrown out, his voice curt and soldierly.

"Hot night, gentlemen!"

Mr. Jones, lolling back idly in a chair, looked up. Ricardo, as idle, but more upright, at a little table, made no sign.

"Won't you have a drink with me before retiring?" went on Schomberg, sitting down brusquely by the little table.

"By all means," said Mr. Jones lazily.

Ricardo showed his teeth in a strange, quick grin. Schomberg felt painfully how difficult it was to get in touch with these men, both so quiet, so deliberate, so menacingly unceremonious. He ordered the Chinaman to bring in the drinks. His purpose was to discover how long these guests intended to stay.

Ricardo displayed no conversational vein, but Mr. Jones appeared communicative enough. His voice somehow matched his

sunken eyes. It was hollow without being in the least mournful; it sounded distant, uninterested, as if he were speaking from the bottom of a well. Schomberg learned that he would have the privilege of lodging and boarding these gentlemen for at least a month more. He could not conceal his discomfiture at this piece of news.

"What's the matter? Don't you like to have people in your house?" asked plain Mr. Jones languidly. "I should have thought the owner of a hotel would be pleased."

He lifted his delicate and beautifully penciled eyebrows. Schomberg muttered something about the locality being dull and uninteresting to travelers—nothing going on—too quiet altogether; but he only provoked the declaration that quiet had its charms sometimes, and even dulness was welcome as a change.

"We haven't had time to be dull for the last three years," added plain Mr. Jones, his eyes fixed darkly on Schomberg, whom he furthermore invited to have another drink, this time with him, and not to worry himself about things he did not understand; and especially not to be inhospitable—which in a hotel-keeper was highly unprofessional.

"I don't understand," grumbled Schomberg. "Oh, yes, I understand perfectly well. I—"

"You are frightened," interrupted Mr. Jones. "What is the matter?"

"I don't want any scandal in my place. That's what's the matter."

Schomberg tried to face the situation bravely, but that steady, black stare affected him. It seemed to watch for his words with unfathomable intentions. And when he glanced aside uncomfortably, he met Ricardo's grin uncovering a lot of formidable teeth, though the man seemed absorbed in his thoughts all the time.

"And, moreover," went on Mr. Jones in that distant tone of his, "you can't help yourself. Here we are and here we stay. Would you try to put us out? I dare say you could do it; but you couldn't do it without getting badly hurt—very badly hurt. We can promise him that, can't we, Martin?"

The secretary retracted his lips and looked up sharply at Schomberg, as if only too anxious for an order to leap upon him with teeth and claws.

Schomberg managed to produce a deep laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Jones closed his eyes wearily, as if the

light had hurt them, and looked remarkably like a corpse for a moment. This was bad enough; but when he opened them again, it was almost a worse trial for Schomberg's nerves. The spectral intensity of that glance, fixed on the hotel-keeper without any definite expression, seemed to dissolve the last grain of resolution in his character.

"You don't think, by any chance, that you have to do with ordinary people, do you?" inquired Mr. Jones, in his lifeless manner, which seemed to imply some sort of menace from beyond the grave.

"He's a gentleman," testified Martin Ricardo with a sudden snap of the lips, after which his mustache stirred in an odd, feline manner.

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of that," said Mr. Jones, while Schomberg, dumb and planted heavily in his chair, looked from one to the other, leaning forward a little. "Of course I am that; but Ricardo attaches too much importance to such a social advantage. What I mean, for instance, is that he, quiet and inoffensive as you see him sitting here, would think nothing of setting fire to this house of entertainment of yours. It would blaze like a box of matches. Think of that! It wouldn't advance your affairs much, would it?—what-ever happens to us."

"Come, come, gentlemen," remonstrated Schomberg in a murmur. "This is very wild talk!"

"And you have been used to deal with tame people, haven't you? But we aren't tame. We once kept a whole angry town at bay for two days, and then we got away with our plunder. It was in Venezuela. Ask Martin here—he can tell you."

Instinctively Schomberg looked at Ricardo, who only passed the tip of his tongue over his lips with an uncanny sort of gusto, but did not offer to begin.

"Well, perhaps it would be a rather long story," Mr. Jones conceded after a short silence.

"I have no desire to hear it, I am sure," said Schomberg. "This isn't Venezuela. You wouldn't get away from here like that. But all this is silly talk of the worst sort. Do you mean to say you would make deadly trouble for the sake of a few guilders that you and that other"—eying Ricardo suspiciously, as one would look at a strange animal—"gentleman can win of an evening? 'Tisn't as if my customers were a lot of rich men with pockets full of cash. I wonder you take so much trouble and risk for so little money."

Schomberg's argument was met by Mr. Jones's statement that he lived in this peculiar way, did what he was doing, and stayed where he was not wanted, not from any considerations of profit, but to please his humor. Ricardo needed to keep himself in practise. And then one must do something to kill time. Killing time was not forbidden. For the rest, being in a communicative mood, Mr. Jones said languidly and in a voice indifferent, as if issuing from a tomb, that he depended on himself, as if the world were still one great, wild jungle without law. Martin was something like that, too—for reasons of his own.

All these statements Ricardo confirmed by short, inhuman grins. Schomberg lowered his eyes, for the sight of these two men intimidated him; but he was losing patience.

"Of course, I could see at once that you were two desperate characters—something like what you say. Why are you trying to frighten me now? There's no necessity. It's nothing to me. But what would you think if I told you that I am pretty near as desperate as you two gentlemen? 'That Schomberg has an easy time running his hotel,' people think; and yet it seems to me I would just as soon let you rip me open and burn the whole show as not. There!"

A low whistle was heard. It came from Ricardo, and was derisive. Schomberg, breathing heavily, looked on the floor. He was really desperate. Mr. Jones was languidly skeptical.

"Tut, tut! You have a tolerable business. You are perfectly tame; you—" He paused, then added in a tone of disgust: "You have a wife."

Schomberg angrily tapped the floor with his foot and uttered an indistinct, laughing curse.

"What do you mean by flinging that trouble at my head?" he cried. "I wish you would carry her off with you somewhere to the devil! I wouldn't run after you."

This unexpected outburst affected Mr. Jones strangely. He had a horrified recoil, chair and all, as if Schomberg had thrust a wriggling viper in his face.

"What's this infernal nonsense?" he muttered thickly. "What do you mean? How dare you?"

Ricardo chuckled audibly.

"I tell you I am desperate," Schomberg repeated. "I am as desperate as any man ever was. I don't care a hang what happens to me!"

"Well, then"—Mr. Jones began to speak with a quietly threatening effect, as if the

common words of daily use had some other deadly meaning to his mind—"well, then, why should you make yourself ridiculously disagreeable to us? If you don't care, as you say, you might just as well let us have the key of that music-shed of yours for a quiet game; a modest bank—a dozen candles or so. It would be greatly appreciated by your clients, as far as I can judge from the way they bet on a game of *écarté* I had with that fair, baby-faced man—what's his name? They just yearn for a modest bank. And I am afraid Martin here would take it badly if you objected; but, of course, you won't. Think of the calls for drinks!"

Schomberg's small reserve of resistance was worn out. This slow, lifeless voice, dropping words without passion, without insistence, affected his imagination with thoughts of death and graveyards and powers from another world. The cadaverous coloring of Mr. Jones, his slow, spectral way of turning his eyes on one, suggested that he had been resurrected, and was now going about, not exactly alive, but animated by the power of some abominable magic.

There were moments when Mr. Jones gave that impression strongly enough to make one shudder. At other times he was nothing worse than a very thin gentleman with a perfectly smooth, livid countenance and regular features, like the head of a statue.

Schomberg, raising his eyes, at last met the gleams in two dark caverns under Mr. Jones's devilish eyebrows, directed upon him impenetrably. He shuddered as if horrors worse than murder had been lurking there, and said, nodding toward Ricardo:

"I dare say he wouldn't think twice about sticking me, if he had you at his back! I wish I had sunk my launch, and gone to the bottom myself in her, before I boarded that steamer you came by! Ah, well, I've been living in hell for weeks, so you don't make much difference. I'll let you have the concert-room—and hang the consequences! But what about the China boy on late duty? If he sees cards and actual money passing, he will be sure to blab, and it will be all over the town in no time."

A ghastly smile stirred the lips of Mr. Jones.

"Ah, I see you want to make a success of it! Very good. That's the way to get on. Don't let it disturb you. You chase all the Chinamen to bed early, and we'll get Pedro here every evening. He hasn't the conventional waiter's cut, but he will do to run to

and fro with the tray, while you sit here from nine to eleven serving out drinks and gathering the money."

"There will be three of them now," thought the unlucky Schomberg.

But Pedro, at any rate, was just a simple, straightforward brute, if a murderous one. There was no mystery about him, nothing uncanny, no suggestion of a stealthy, deliberate wildcat turned into a man, or of an insolent specter on leave from Hades, endowed with skin and bones and a subtle power of creating terror. Besides, Schomberg could no longer help himself.

"That will do very well," he consented mournfully. "But mind, gentlemen, if you had turned up here only three months ago—aye, less than three months ago—you would have found somebody very different from what I am now to talk to you. It's true. What do you think of that?"

"I scarcely know what to think. I should think it was a lie. You were probably as tame three months ago as you are now. Yith were born tame, like most people in the world."

Mr. Jones got up spectrally, and Riccably imitated him with a snarl and a streeed; Schomberg, in a brown study, went on, as he to himself:

"There has been an orchestra here—eighteen women."

Mr. Jones let out an exclamation of dismay, and looked about as if the walls around him and the whole house had been infected with plague. Then he became very angry, and swore violently at Schomberg for daring to bring up such subjects.

The hotel-keeper was too much surprised to get up. He gazed from his chair at Mr. Jones's anger, which had nothing spectral in it, but was not the more comprehensible for that.

"What's the matter?" he stammered out. "What subject? Didn't you hear me say it was an orchestra? There's nothing wrong in that. Well, there was a girl among them—" Schomberg's eyes went stony; he clasped his hands in front of his breast with such force that his knuckles were white. "Such a girl! Tame, am I? I would have kicked everything to pieces about me for her. Then a fellow bewitched her—a vagabond, a false, lying, swindling, underhand, stick-at-nothing brute. Ah!"

His entwined fingers cracked as he tore his hands apart, flung out his arms, and leaned his forehead on them in a passion of fury.

The other two men looked at his shaking back—the attenuated Mr. Jones with mingled scorn and a sort of fear, Ricardo with the expression of a cat which sees a piece of fish in the pantry out of reach.

Schomberg flung himself backward. He was dry-eyed, but he gulped as if swallowing sobs.

"No wonder you can do with me what you like. You have no idea—just let me tell you of my trouble—"

"I don't want to know anything of your beastly trouble," said Mr. Jones, in his most lifelessly positive voice.

He stretched forth an arresting hand, and, as Schomberg remained open-mouthed, he walked out of the billiard-room in all the uncanniness of his thin shanks. Ricardo followed at his leader's heels; but he showed his teeth to Schomberg over his shoulder.

XIII

FROM that evening dated those mysterious significant phenomena in Schomberg's environment which attracted Captain David's casual notice when he dropped in, placidly stute, in order to return Mrs. Schomberg's Indian shawl.

It was a curious and impressive sight, the inside of Schomberg's concert-hall, encumbered at one end by a great stack of chairs piled up on and about the musicians' platform, and lighted at the other by two dozen candles disposed about a long trestle table covered with green cloth. In the middle, Mr. Jones, a starved specter turned into a banker, faced Ricardo, a rather nasty, slow-moving cat turned into a croupier.

By contrast, the other faces round that table, anything between twenty and thirty, must have looked like collected samples of intensely helpless humanity—pathetic in their innocent watch for the small turns of luck. They had no notice to spare for the hairy Pedro, carrying a tray with the clumsiness of a creature caught in the woods and taught to walk on its hind legs.

As to Schomberg, he kept out of the way as much as possible. He remained in the billiard-room, serving out drinks to the unspeakable Pedro with an air of not seeing the growling monster, of not knowing where the drinks went, of being unaware that there was such a thing as a music-room over there under the trees within fifty yards of the hotel. He submitted himself to the situation with a low-spirited stoicism compounded of fear and resignation.

As soon as the party had broken up, he would withdraw out of sight behind a door not quite closed in order to avoid meeting his two extraordinary guests; but he would watch through the crack their contrasted forms pass through the billiard-room and disappear on their way to bed. Then he would shudder, pull himself together, and creep out, with movements strangely inappropriate to the lieutenant-of-the-reserve bearing by which he tried to keep up his self-respect.

A great loneliness oppressed him. One after another he extinguished the lamps, and moved softly toward his bedroom. He lay awake a long time; and his slumbers, when they came, were unsatisfactory and short. The morning light had no joy for his eyes. He listened dismally to the movements in the house. The Chinamen were unlocking and flinging wide the doors of the public rooms which opened on the veranda. Horrors! Another poisoned day to get through somehow!

The recollection of his resolve made him feel actually sick for a moment. First of all the lordly, abandoned attitude of Mr. Jones disconcerted him. Then there was his contemptuous silence. Mr. Jones never addressed himself to Schomberg with any general remarks, never spoke to him unless to say "Good morning"—two simple words which, uttered by that man, seemed a mockery of a threatening character. And, lastly, there was the strange fear that he inspired. It was not a frank, physical fear—for, as to that, even a cornered rat will fight—but a superstitious, shrinking awe, something like an invincible repugnance to seek speech with a wicked ghost.

The fact that it was a daylight ghost, surprisingly angular in his attitudes, and for the most part spread out on three chairs, did not make it any easier. Daylight only made him a more weird, disturbing, and unlawful apparition. Strangely enough, in the evening, when he came out of his mute supineness, this unearthly side of him was less obtrusive. At the gaming-table, when actually handling the cards, it was probably sunk quite out of sight; but Schomberg, having made up his mind in ostrichlike fashion to ignore what was going on, never crossed the threshold of the desecrated music-room. He had never seen Mr. Jones in the exercise of his vocation—or perhaps it was only his trade.

"I will speak to him to-night," Schomberg said to himself, while he drank his morning tea, in pajamas, on the veranda, before the rising sun had topped the trees of the com-

pound, and while the undried dew still lay silvery on the grass. "That's what I'll do. I won't keep out of sight to-night. I shall come out and catch him as he goes to bed carrying the cash-box."

After all, what was the fellow but a common desperado? Murderous? Oh, yes; murderous enough, perhaps—and the muscles of Schomberg's stomach had a quivering contraction under his airy attire. But even a common desperado would think twice, or, more likely, a hundred times, before openly murdering an inoffensive citizen in a civilized, European-ruled town.

He shuddered again, and paddled back to his room to dress himself. His mind was made up, and he would think no more about it; but still he had his doubts. They grew and unfolded themselves with the progress of the day, as some plants do. At times they made him perspire more than usual, and they did away with the possibility of his afternoon siesta. After turning over on his couch more than a dozen times, he gave up his attempt to repose, got up, and went down-stairs.

It was between three and four o'clock, the hour of profound peace. The very flowers seemed to doze on their stalks set with sleepy leaves. Not even the air stirred, for the sea breeze was not due till later. The servants were out of sight, catching naps in the shade somewhere behind the house. Mrs. Schomberg, in a dim up-stairs room with closed jalousies, was elaborating those two long pendent ringlets which were such a feature of her hair-dressing for her afternoon duties. At that time no customers ever troubled the repose of the establishment.

Wandering about his premises in profound solitude, Schomberg recoiled at the door of the billiard-room, as if he had seen a snake in his path. All alone with the billiards, the bare little tables, and a lot of untenanted chairs, Mr. Secretary Ricardo sat near the wall, performing with lightning rapidity something that looked like tricks with his own personal pack of cards, which he always carried about in his pocket.

Schomberg would have backed out quietly if Ricardo had not turned his head. Having been seen, the hotel-keeper elected to walk in as the lesser risk of the two. The consciousness of his inwardly abject attitude toward these men caused him always to throw his chest out and assume a severe expression. Ricardo watched his approach, clasping the pack of cards in both hands.

"You want something, perhaps?" suggested

Schomberg in his lieutenant-of-the-reserve voice.

Ricardo shook his head in silence and looked expectant. With him Schomberg exchanged at least twenty words every day. He was infinitely more communicative than his patron. At times he looked very much like an ordinary human being of his class; and he seemed to be in an amiable mood at that moment. Suddenly spreading some ten cards face downward in the form of a fan, he thrust them toward Schomberg.

"Come, man, take one quick!"

Schomberg obeyed. Martin Ricardo's eyes gleamed phosphorescent in the half light of the room, screened from the heat and glare of the tropics.

"That's a king of hearts you've got," he chuckled, showing his teeth in a quick flash.

Schomberg, after looking at the card, admitted that it was, and slowly laid it down on the table.

"I can make you take any card I like nine times out of ten," exulted the secretary, with a strange curl of his lips and a green flicker in his raised eyes.

Schomberg looked down at him dumbly. For a few seconds neither of them stirred; then Ricardo lowered his glance, and, opening his fingers, let the whole pack fall on the table.

Schomberg sat down. He sat down because of the faintness in his legs, and for no other reason. His mouth was dry.

Having sat down, he felt that he must speak. He squared his shoulders in parade style.

"You are pretty good at that sort of thing," he said.

"Practise makes perfect," replied the secretary. His precarious amiability made it impossible for Schomberg to get away. Thus, from his very timidity, the hotel-keeper found himself engaged in a conversation the thought of which had filled him with apprehension.

It must be said, in justice to Schomberg, that he concealed his funk very creditably. The habit of throwing out his chest and speaking in a severe voice stood him in good stead. With him, too, practise made perfect; and he would probably have kept it up to the end, to the very last moment, to the ultimate instant of breaking strain which would leave him groveling on the floor.

To add to his secret trouble, he was at a loss what to say. He found nothing else but the remark:

"I suppose you are fond of cards."

"What would you expect?" asked Ricardo in a simple, philosophical tone. "Is it likely I should not be?" Then, with sudden fire: "Fond of cards? Aye, passionately!"

"I suppose you've always been so—from your early youth."

Ricardo's eyes remained cast down. His fingers toyed absently with the pack on the table.

"I don't know that it was so early. I first got in the way of it playing for tobacco—in forecastles of ships, you know—common sailor games. We used to spend whole watches below at it, round a chest, under a slush lamp. We would hardly spare the time to get a bite of salt-horse—neither eat nor sleep. We could hardly stand when the watches were mustered on deck. Talk of gambling!" He dropped the reminiscent tone to add the information: "I was bred to the sea from a boy, you know."

Schomberg had fallen into a reverie, but without losing the sense of impending calamity. The next words he heard were:

"I got on all right at sea, too. Worked up to be mate. I was mate of a schooner—a yacht you might call her—a special good berth, too, in the Gulf of Mexico, a soft job that you don't run across more than once in a lifetime. Yes, I was mate of her when I left the sea to follow him."

Ricardo tossed up his chin to indicate the room above; from which Schomberg, his wits painfully aroused by this reminder of Mr. Jones's existence, concluded that the latter had withdrawn into his bedroom. Ricardo, observing him from under lowered eyelids, went on:

"It so happened that we were shipmates."

"Mr. Jones, you mean? Is he a sailor, too?"

Ricardo raised his eyelids at that.

"He's no more Mr. Jones than you are," he said with obvious pride. "He's a sailor! That just shows your ignorance. But there, a foreigner can't be expected to know any better. I am an Englishman, and I know a gentleman at sight. I should know one drunk, in the gutter, in jail, under the gallows. There's a something—it isn't exactly the appearance, it's a—no use me trying to tell you. You ain't an Englishman; and if you were, you wouldn't need to be told."

An unsuspected stream of loquacity had broken its dam somewhere deep within the man, had diluted his fiery blood and softened his pitiless fiber. Schomberg experienced a mingled relief and apprehension, as if suddenly an enormous savage cat had begun to wind itself about his legs in inexplicable friendliness.

No prudent man under such circumstances would dare to stir. Schomberg didn't stir. Ricardo assumed an easy attitude, with an elbow on the table. Schomberg, staring at him, began to feel interested, and squared his shoulders afresh without a word.

"I was employed, in that there yacht—schooner, whatever you call it—by ten gentlemen at once. That surprises you, eh? Yes, yes, ten. Leastwise there were nine of them gents good enough in their way, and one downright gentleman, and that was—"

Ricardo gave another upward jerk of his chin.

"And no mistake," he went on. "I spotted him from the first day. How? Why? Aye, you may ask. I hadn't seen that many gentlemen in my life. Well, somehow I did. If you were an Englishman, you would—"

"What was your yacht?" Schomberg interrupted as impatiently as he dared; for this harping on nationality jarred on his already tried nerves. "What was the game?"

"You have a head-piece on you! Game? 'Xactly. That's what it was—the sort of silliness gentlemen will get up among themselves. It was a treasure-hunting expedition. Each of them put down so much money, you understand, to buy the schooner. Their agent in the city engaged me and the skipper. The greatest secrecy, and all that. I reckon he had a twinkle in his eye all the time—and no mistake. But that wasn't our business. Let them bust their money as they like. The pity of it was that so little of it came our way. Just fair pay, and no more; and confound any pay, much or little, anyhow—that's what I say!"

He blinked his eyes greenishly in the dim light. The heat seemed to have stilled everything in the world but his voice. He swore at large, abundantly, in snarling undertones, it was impossible to say why; then calmed down no less inexplicably and went on again as a sailor yarns.

"At first there were only nine of them adventurous sparks; then, just a day or two before the sailing date, *he* turned up. Heard of it somehow, somewhere—I should say from some woman, if I didn't know him as I do. He would give any woman a ten-mile berth. He can't stand them. Anyway, the agent netted him in, all right—cash down, and only about four and twenty hours for him to get ready; but he didn't miss his ship. Not he! You might have called it a pier-head jump—for a gentleman. I saw him come along. Know the West India Docks, eh?"

Schomberg did not know the West India Docks. Ricardo looked at him in pensive wonder for a while, and then continued, as if such ignorance had to be disregarded.

"Our tug was already alongside. Two loafers were carrying his dunnage behind him. I told the dockmen at our moorings to keep all fast for a minute. The gangway was down already; but he made nothing of it. Up he jumps, one leap, swings his long legs over the rail, and there he is on board. They pass up his swell dunnage, and he put his hand in his trouser-pocket and throws all his small change on the wharf for them chaps to pick up. They were still promenading that wharf on all fours when we cast off. It was only then that he looked at me—quietly, you know; in a slow way. He wasn't so thin then as he is now; but I noticed he wasn't so young as he looked—not by a long chalk. He seemed to touch me inside somewhere. I went away pretty quick from there; I was wanted forward, anyhow. Jee-miny, if anybody had told me we should be partners before the year was out—well, I would have—"

He swore a variety of strange oaths, some common, others quaintly horrible to Schomberg's ears, but all intended as mere innocent exclamations of wonder at the shifts and changes of human fortune. Schomberg moved slightly in his chair. But the admirer and partner of "plain Mr. Jones" seemed to have forgotten the hotel-keeper's existence for the moment.

Schomberg shuffled his feet. The stream of ingenious blasphemy—some of it in bad Spanish—had run dry, and Martin Ricardo, connoisseur in gentlemen, sat dumb with a stony gaze, as if still marveling inwardly at the amazing elections, conjunctions, and associations of events which influence man's pilgrimage on this earth.

At last Schomberg spoke tentatively:

"And so the—the gentleman, up there, talked you over into leaving a good berth?"

Ricardo started.

"Talked me over! Didn't need to talk me over. He just beckoned to me, and that was enough. By that time we were in the Gulf of Mexico. One night we were lying at anchor, close to a dry sand-bank—to this day I am not sure where it was—off the Yucatan coast or thereabouts. We were to start digging the next morning, and all hands had turned in early, expecting a hard day with the shovels. I was on deck, when up he comes, and in his quiet, tired way of speaking—you can tell a gentleman by that as much

as by anything else almost—up he comes behind me and says, just like that:

"Well, and what do you think of our treasure-hunt now?"

"I didn't even turn my head; 'xactly as I stood, I remained, and I spoke no louder than himself:

"If you want to know, sir, it's nothing but just infernal tomfoolery."

"We had, of course, been having short talks together at one time or another during the passage. I dare say he had read me like a book. There ain't much to me, except that I have never been tame, even when walking the pavement and cracking jokes and standing drinks to chums—aye, and to strangers, too. I would watch them lifting their elbows at my expense, or splitting their sides at my fun—I *can* be funny when I like, you bet!"

A pause for self-complacent contemplation of his own generosity checked the flow of Ricardo's speech. Schomberg was concerned to keep within bounds the enlargement of his eyes, which he seemed to feel growing bigger in his head.

"Yes, yes," he whispered hastily.

"I would watch them and think: 'You boys don't know who I am. If you did—' With girls, too. Once I was courting a girl. I used to kiss her behind the ear and say to myself: 'If you only know who's kissing you, my dear, you would scream and bolt!' Ha, ha! Not that I wanted to do them any harm; but I felt the power in myself. Now here we sit, friendly like, and that's all right. You aren't in my way. But I am not friendly to you. I just don't care. You are no more to me, one way or another, than that fly there. Just so, I'd squash you or leave you alone. I don't care what I do."

If real force of character consists in overcoming our sudden weaknesses, Schomberg displayed plenty of that quality. At the mention of the fly he reenforced the severe dignity of his attitude as one inflates a collapsing toy balloon with a great effort of breath. The easy-going, relaxed attitude of Ricardo was really appalling.

"That's so," he went on. "I am that sort of fellow. You wouldn't think it, would you? No. You have to be told. So I am telling you, and I dare say you only half believe it. Takes a real gentleman to see through a fellow. Oh, yes—he spotted me. I told you we had a few talks at sea about one thing or another. And I used to watch him down the skylight, playing cards in the cuddy with the others. They had to pass the time away

somehow. By the same token he caught me at it once, and it was then that I told him I was fond of cards—and generally lucky in gambling, too. Yes, he had sized me up. Why not? A gentleman's just like any other man—and something more."

It flashed through Schomberg's mind that these two were indeed well matched in their enormous dissimilarity, identical souls in different disguises.

"Says he to me"—Ricardo started again in a gossiping manner—"I'm packed up. It's about time to go, Martin."

"It was the first time he called me Martin. Says I:

"Is that it, sir?"

"You didn't think I was after that sort of treasure, did you? I wanted to clear out from home quietly. It's a pretty expensive way of getting a passage across, but it has served my turn."

"I let him know very soon that I was game for anything, from pitch-and-toss to wilful murder, in his company.

"Wilful murder?" says he in his quiet way. 'What the deuce is that? What are you talking about? People do get killed sometimes when they get in one's way, but that's self-defense—you understand?"

"I told him I did. And then I said I would run below for a minute, to ram a few of my things into a sailor's bag that I had. I've never cared for a lot of dunnage; I believed in going about flying light when I was at sea. I came back and found him strolling up and down the deck, as if he were taking a breath of fresh air before turning in, like on any other evening.

"Ready?"

"Yes, sir."

"He didn't even look at me. We had had a boat in the water astern ever since we came to anchor in the afternoon. He throws the stump of his cigar overboard.

"Can you get the captain out on deck?" he asks.

"That was the last thing in the world I should have thought of doing. I lost my tongue for a moment.

"I can try," says I.

"Well, then, I am going below. You get him up and keep him with you till I come back on deck. Mind! Don't let him go below till I return."

"I could not help asking why he told me to rouse a sleeping man, when we wanted everybody on board to sleep sweetly till we got clear of the schooner. He laughs a little

and says that I didn't see all the bearings of this business.

"Mind," he says, 'don't let him leave you till you see me come up again.' He puts his eyes close to mine. 'Keep him with you at all costs.'

"And that means?" says I.

"All costs to him—by every possible or impossible means. I don't want to be interrupted in my business down below. He would give me lots of trouble. I take you with me to save myself trouble in various circumstances; and you've got to enter on your work right away."

"Just so, sir," says I; and he slips down the companion.

"With a gentleman you know at once where you are; but it was a ticklish job. The skipper was nothing to me one way or another, any more than you are at this moment, Mr. Schomberg. You may light your cigar or blow your brains out this minute, and I don't care a hang which you do, both or neither. To bring the skipper up was easy enough. I had only to stamp on the deck a few times over his head. I stamped hard. But how to keep him up when he got there?"

"Anything the matter, Mr. Ricardo?" I heard his voice behind me.

"There he was, and I hadn't thought of anything to say to him; so I didn't turn round. The moonlight was brighter than many a day I could remember in the North Sea.

"Why did you call me? What are you staring at out there, Mr. Ricardo?"

"He was deceived by my keeping my back to him. I wasn't staring at anything, but his mistake gave me a notion. I hope he hasn't run up against anything since to prevent him dying quietly in his bed of old age.

"I am staring at something that looks like a canoe over there," I said very slowly.

"The skipper got concerned at once. It wasn't any danger from the inhabitants, whoever they were.

"Oh, hang it!" says he. 'That's very unfortunate. Dashed awkward, with the business we have in hand, to have a lot of niggers watching operations. But are you certain this is a canoe?"

"It may be a drift-log," I said, 'but I thought you had better have a look with your own eyes. You may make it out better than I can.'

"Nothing strange in seeing drift-logs off a coast like that; and I'm hanged if the skipper didn't make one out in the wake of the moon. Strange what a little thing a man's life hangs

on sometimes—a single word! Here you are, sitting unsuspecting before me, and you may let out something unbeknown to you that would settle your hash. Not that I have any ill feeling. I have no feelings. If the skipper had said, 'Oh, bosh!' and had turned his back on me, he would not have gone three steps toward his bed; but he stood there and stared. And now the job was to get him off the deck when he was no longer wanted there.

"'We are just trying to make out if that object there is a canoe or a log,' says he to Mr. Jones.

"Mr. Jones had come up, lounging as carelessly as when he went below. While the skipper was jawing about boats and drifting logs, I asked by signs, from behind, if I hadn't better knock him on the head and drop him quietly overboard. The night was slipping by, and we had to go. It couldn't be put off till next night. And do you know why?"

Schomberg made a slight negative sign with his head. This direct appeal annoyed him, jarred on the induced quietude of a great talker forced into the part of a listener. Mr. Ricardo struck a note of scorn.

"Don't know why? Can't you guess? No? Because the boss had got hold of the skipper's cash-box by then. See?"

XIV

"A COMMON thief!"

Schomberg bit his tongue just too late, and woke up completely as he saw Ricardo retract his lips in a catlike grin; but the companion of "plain Mr. Jones" didn't alter his comfortable, gossiping attitude.

"Garn! What if he did want to see his money back, like any tame shopkeeper, hash-seller, gin-slinger, or ink-spewer does? Fancy a mud-turtle like you trying to pass an opinion on a gentleman! A gentleman isn't to be sized up so easily. Even I ain't up to it sometimes. For instance, that night, all he did was to waggle his finger at me. The skipper stops his silly chatter, surprised.

"'Eh? What's the matter?' asks he.

"The matter! It was his reprieve—that's what was the matter.

"'Oh, nothing, nothing,' says my gentleman. 'You are perfectly right. A log—nothing but a log.'

"Ha, ha! Reprieve, I call it, because if the skipper had gone on with his silly argument much longer he would have had to be knocked out of the way. I could hardly hold myself in on account of the precious minutes. However, his guardian angel put it into his

head to shut up and go back to his bed. I was ramping mad about the lost time.

"'Why didn't you let me give him one on his silly coconut, sir?' I asks.

"'No ferocity, no ferocity,' he says, raising his finger at me as calm as you please.

"You can't tell how a gentleman takes that sort of thing. They don't lose their temper. It's bad form. You'll never see him lose his temper—not for anybody to see, anyhow. Ferocity ain't good form, either—that much I've learned by this time, and more, too. I've had that schooling that you couldn't tell by my face if I meant to rip you up the next minute—as, of course, I could do in less than a jiffy. I have a knife up the leg of my trousers."

"You haven't!" exclaimed Schomberg incredulously.

Mr. Ricardo was as quick as lightning in changing his lounging, idle attitude for a stooping position, and exhibiting the weapon with one jerk at the left leg of his trousers. Schomberg had just a view of it, strapped to a very hairy limb, when Mr. Ricardo, jumping up, stamped his foot to get the trouser-leg down, and resumed his careless pose with one elbow on the table.

"It's a more handy way to carry a tool than you would think," he went on, gazing abstractedly into Schomberg's wide-open eyes. "Suppose some little difference comes up during a game. Well, you stoop to pick up a dropped card, and come up ready to strike, or with the thing up your sleeve ready to throw. Or you just dodge under the table when there's some shooting coming. You wouldn't believe the damage a fellow with a knife under the table can do to ill-conditioned skunks that want to raise trouble, before they begin to understand what the screaming's about, and make a bolt—those that can, that is."

The roses of Schomberg's cheeks at the roots of his chestnut beard faded perceptibly. Ricardo chuckled faintly.

"There were one hundred and twenty-seven sovereigns and some Mexican dollars in that skipper's cash-box. Hardly enough to knock a man on the head for from behind, I must confess; but that the skipper had a narrow escape the governor himself could not deny afterward.

"'Do you want me to understand, sir, that you mind there being one life more or less on this earth?' I asked him, a few hours after we got away.

"'Certainly not,' says he.

"Well, then, why did you stop me?"

"There's a proper way of doing things. You'll have to learn to be correct. There's also unnecessary exertion. That must be avoided, too—if only for the look of the thing.' A gentleman's way of putting things to you—and no mistake!

"At sunrise we got into a creek, to lie hidden in case the treasure-hunting party had a mind to take a spell hunting for us. And dash me if they didn't! We saw the schooner away out, running to leeward, with ten pairs of binoculars sweeping the sea, no doubt, on all sides. I advised the governor to give her time to beat back again before we made a start. So we stayed up that creek something like ten days, as snug as can be.

"On the seventh day we had to kill a man, though—the brother of this Pedro here. They were alligator-hunters, right enough. We got our lodgings in their hut. Neither the boss nor I could *habla Español*—speak Spanish, you know—much then. Dry bank, nice shade, jolly hammocks, fresh fish, good game, everything lovely. The governor chucked them a few dollars to begin with; but it was like boarding with a pair of savage apes, anyhow. By and by we noticed them talking a lot together. They had twigg'd the cash-box, and the leather portmanteaus, and my bag—a jolly lot of plunder to look at. They must have been saying to each other:

"No one's ever likely to come looking for these two fellows, who seem to have fallen from the moon. Let's cut their throats."

"Why, of course! Clear as daylight. I didn't need to spy one of them sharpening a develish long knife behind some bushes to know what was in the wind. Pedro was standing by, trying the edge of another long knife. They thought we were away on our lookout at the mouth of the river, as was usual with us during the day. Not that we expected to see much of the schooner, but it was just as well to make certain, if possible; and then it was cooler out of the woods, in the breeze. Well, the governor was there, right enough, lying comfortable on a rug, where he could watch the offing, but I had gone back to the hut to get a chew of tobacco out of my bag. I had not broken myself of the habit then, and I couldn't be happy unless I had a lump as big as a baby's fist in my cheek."

At the cannibalistic comparison Schomberg muttered a faint ejaculation. Ricardo hitched himself up in his seat and glanced down his outstretched legs complacently.

"I am tolerably light on my feet, as a general thing," he went on. "Dash me if I don't think I could drop a pinch of salt on a sparrow's tail, if I tried. Anyhow, they didn't hear me. I watched them two brown, hairy brutes not ten yards off. That Pedro has a pelt like a bear. All they had on was white linen drawers rolled up on their thighs. Antonio was down on his thick hams, busy rubbing the steel on a flat stone; Pedro was leaning against a small tree and passing his thumb along the edge of his blade. I got away quieter than a mouse, you bet.

"I didn't say anything to the boss then. He was leaning on his elbow on his rug, and didn't seem to want to be spoken to. He's like that—sometimes that familiar you might think he would eat out of your hand, and at others he would snub you sharper than a devil—but always quiet. Perfect gentleman, I tell you. I didn't bother him then; but I wasn't likely to forget them two fellows, so businesslike with their knives. At that time we had only one revolver between us two—the governor's six-shooter, but loaded only in five chambers; and we had no more cartridges. He had left the box behind in a drawer in his cabin. Awkward! I had nothing but an old clasp-knife—no good at all for anything serious.

"In the evening we four sat round a bit of fire outside the sleeping-shed, eating broiled fish off plantain leaves, with roast yams for bread—the usual thing. The governor and I were on one side, and these two beauties, cross-legged, on the other, grunting a word or two to each other now and then, hardly human speech at all. Presently I began to talk to the boss quietly, just as I am talking to you now, careless like, and I told him all I had observed. He goes on picking up pieces of fish and putting them into his mouth as calm as anything. It's a pleasure to have anything to do with a gentleman. Never looked across at them once.

"And now," says I, yawning on purpose, 'we've got to stand watch at night, turn about, and keep our eyes skinned all day, too, and mind we don't get jumped upon suddenly.'

"It's perfectly intolerable," says the governor. 'And you with no weapon of any sort!'

"I mean to stick pretty close to you, sir, from this on, if you don't mind," says I.

"He just nods the least bit, wipes his fingers on the plantain leaf, puts his hand behind his back, as if to help himself to rise from the ground, snatches his revolver from

under his jacket, and plugs a bullet plumb center into Mr. Antonio's chest. See what it is to have to do with a gentleman. No confounded fuss, and things done out of hand. But he might have tipped me a wink or something. I nearly jumped out of my skin. Scared ain't in it! I didn't even know who had fired. Everything had been so still just before that the bang of the shot seemed the loudest noise I had ever heard. The honorable Antonio pitches forward—they always do, toward the shot; you must have noticed that yourself—yes, he pitches forward onto the embers, and all that lot of hair on his face and head flashes up like a pinch of gunpowder. Greasy, I expect; always scraping the fat off them alligators' hides—"

"Look here," exclaimed Schomberg violently, as if trying to burst some invisible bonds, "do you mean to say that all this happened?"

"No," said Ricardo coolly. "I am making it all up as I go along, just to help you through the hottest part of the afternoon. So down he pitches, his nose on the red embers, and up jumps our handsome Pedro and I at the same time, like two jacks-in-a-box. He starts to bolt away, with his head over his shoulder, and I, hardly knowing what I was doing, spring on his back. I had the sense to get my hands round his neck at once, and it's about all I could do to lock my fingers tight under his jaw. You saw the beauty's neck, didn't you? Hard as iron, too. Down we both went. Seeing this, the governor puts his revolver in his pocket.

"Tie his legs together, sir," I yell. "I'm trying to strangle him."

"There was a lot of their fiber lines lying about. I gave him a last squeeze and then got up.

"I might have shot you," says the governor, quite concerned.

"But you are glad to have saved a carriage, sir," I tell him.

"My jump did save it. It wouldn't have done to let him get away in the dark like that, and have the beauty dodging round in the bushes, perhaps, with the rusty flint-lock gun they had. The governor owned up that the jump was the correct thing.

"But he isn't dead," says he, bending over him.

"Might as well hope to strangle an ox. We made haste to tie his elbows back, and then, before he came to himself, we dragged him to a small tree, sat him up, and bound him to it, not by the waist, but by the neck—some

twenty turns of small line round his throat and the trunk, finished off with a reef-knot under his ear. The next thing we did was to attend to the honorable Antonio, who was making a great smell frizzling his face on the red coals. We pushed and rolled him into the creek, and left the rest to the alligators.

"I was tired. That little scrap took it out of me something awful. The governor hadn't turned a hair. That's where a gentleman has the pull of you. He don't get excited. No gentleman does—or hardly ever. I fell asleep all of a sudden and left him smoking by the fire I had made up, his railway rug round his legs, as calm as if he were sitting in a first-class carriage. We hardly spoke ten words to each other after it was over, and from that day to this we have never talked of the business. I wouldn't have known he remembered it if he hadn't alluded to it when talking with you the other day—you know, with regard to Pedro.

"It surprised you, didn't it? That's why I am giving you this yarn of how he came to be with us, like a sort of dog—dashed sight more useful, though. You know how he can trot around with trays? Well, he could bring down an ox with his fist, at a word from the boss, just as cleverly. And fond of the governor! Oh, my word! More than any dog is of any man."

Schomberg squared his chest.

"Oh, and that's one of the things I wanted to mention to Mr. Jones," he said. "It's unpleasant to have that fellow round the house so early. He sits on the stairs at the back for hours before he is needed here, and frightens people so that the service suffers. The Chinamen—"

Ricardo nodded and raised his hand.

"When I first saw him he was fit to frighten a grizzly bear, let alone a Chinaman. He's become civilized now to what he once was. Well, that morning, first thing on opening my eyes, I saw him sitting there, tied up by the neck to the tree. I didn't look his way all the morning, but the governor went over and had a look at him. We spent the rest of the day watching the sea, and we actually made out the schooner working to windward, which showed that she had given us up. Good! The governor had another steady look at him, which the fellow couldn't dodge, because he couldn't drop his head or turn it away, either. He just blinked.

"All the next night he made no sound. When the sun rose again, I took a squint his way. He wasn't blinking. He was rolling his

eyes, all white one minute and black the next, and his tongue was hanging out a yard. Being tied up short by the neck like this would daunt the arch devil himself—in time—in time, mind! I don't know but that even a real gentleman would find it difficult to keep a stiff lip to the end. Presently we went to work getting our boat ready. I was busying myself setting up the mats, when the governor passes the remark:

"I think he wants to say something."

"I had heard a sort of croaking going on for some time, only I wouldn't take any notice; but then I got out of the boat and went up to him, with some water. His eyes were red—red and black and half out of his head. He drank all the water I gave him, but he hadn't much to say for himself. I walked back to the governor.

"He asks for a bullet in his head before we go," I said. I wasn't at all pleased.

"Oh, that's out of the question altogether," says the governor.

"He was right there. Only four shots left and ninety miles of wild coast to put behind us before coming to the first place where you could expect to buy revolver cartridges.

"Anyhow," I tells him, "he wants to be killed some way or other, as a favor."

"And then I go on setting the boat's mast. I didn't care much for the notion of butchering a man bound hand and foot and fastened by the neck besides. I had a knife then—the honorable Antonio's knife; and that knife is this knife."

Ricardo gave his leg a resounding slap.

"First spoil in my new life," he went on with harsh joviality. "The dodge of carrying it down there I learned later. I carried it stuck in my belt that day. No, I hadn't much stomach for the job; but when you work with a gentleman of the real right sort you may depend on your feelings being seen through your skin. Says the governor suddenly:

"It may even be looked upon as his right—you hear a gentleman speaking there—but what do you think of taking him with us in the boat?"

"And the governor starts arguing that the beggar would be useful in working our way along the coast. We could get rid of him before coming to the first place that was a little civilized. It didn't want much talking over. Out I scrambled from the boat.

"Aye! but will he be manageable, sir?"

"Oh, yes. He's daunted. Go on, cut him loose—I take the responsibility."

"Right you are, sir."

"He sees me come along smartly with his brother's knife in my hand—I wasn't thinking how it looked from his side of the fence, you know—and jiminy, it nearly killed him! He stared like a crazed bullock and began to sweat and twitch all over, something amazing. I was so surprised that I stopped dead short to look at him. The drops were pouring over his eyebrows, down his beard, off his nose—and he gurgled. Then it struck me that he couldn't see what was in my mind. He didn't like to die when it came to it—not in that way, anyhow. When I stepped round to get at the lashing he let out a sort of soft bellow. Thought I was going to stick him from behind, I guess. I cut all the turns with one slash, and he went over on his side, flop, and started kicking with his tied legs.

"Laugh! I don't know what there was so funny about it, but I fairly shouted. What between my laughing and his wriggling I had a job in cutting him free. As soon as he could feel his limbs he makes for the bank, where the governor was standing, crawls up to him on his hands and knees, and embraces his legs. Gratitude, eh? You could see that being allowed to live suited that chap down to the ground. The governor gets his legs away from him gently and just mutters to me:

"Let's be off. Get him into the boat."

"It was not difficult," continued Ricardo, after eying Schomberg fixedly for a moment. "He was ready enough to get into the boat, and here he is. Turned out useful; and all from gratitude. There was never such gratitude. He will watch and work and fight and go without sleep, food or drink. He would let himself be chopped into small pieces—with a smile, mind; with a smile—for the governor! I don't know about him doing that much for me; but pretty near, pretty near. I did the tying up and the untying, but he could see who was the boss. And then he knows a gentleman. A dog knows a gentleman—any dog. It's only some foreigners that don't know—and nothing can teach them, either."

"And you mean to say," asked Schomberg, disregarding what might have been annoying for himself in the emphasis of the final remark, "you mean to say that you left steady employment at good wages for a life like this?"

"There!" began Ricardo quietly. "That's just what a man like you would say. I follow a gentleman. That ain't the same thing as to serve an employer. They give you your paltry wages as they'd fling a bone to a dog, and

they expect you to be grateful. It's worse than slavery."

He mumbled some curses, directed at employers generally, as it seemed, then blazed out:

"Work be darned! I ain't a dog walking on its hind legs for a bone; I am a man who's serving a gentleman. There's a difference which you will never understand, Mr. Tame Schomberg."

He yawned slightly. Schomberg, preserving a military stiffness, reenforced by a slight frown, had allowed his thoughts to stray away. They were limning the picture of a young girl—absent—gone—stolen from him. There was that rascal looking at him insolently. If the girl had not been shamefully decoyed away from him he would not have allowed any one to look at him insolently. He would have made nothing of hitting that rogue between the eyes. He saw himself doing it; and in sympathy with this glorious vision his right arm moved convulsively.

At this moment he came out of his sudden reverie to note with alarm the wide-awake curiosity of Mr. Ricardo's stare.

"And so you go like this about the world, gambling," he remarked inanely, to cover his confusion. "Isn't it very precarious?"

"No, not so bad," Ricardo said. "It's my opinion that men will gamble as long as they have anything to put on a card. Gamble? That's nature. What's life itself? You never know what may turn up. The worst of it is that you never can tell exactly what sort of cards you are holding yourself. What's trumps?—that is the question. See? Any man will gamble if only he's given a chance, for anything or everything. You, too—"

"I haven't touched a card now for twenty years," said Schomberg in an austere tone.

"Well, if you got your living that way you would be no worse than you are now, selling drinks to people—beastly beer and spirits—rotten stuff, fit to make an old he goat yell if you poured it down its throat. Pooh! I can't stand the confounded liquor. Never could. A whiff of neat brandy in a glass makes me feel sick. Always did. I've tried to get over it. I used to see fellows roll about singing, as if the whole world belonged to them. I would hold my breath and try to do like the others. But no go! Never could get properly drunk. And next morning—oh, my word! 'Tain't worth it. If everybody was like me liquor would be going a begging. You think it's funny in a man, don't you?"

Schomberg made a vague gesture of tolera-

tion. Ricardo hitched up in his chair and settled his elbow afresh on the table.

"French sirups I must say I do like. Saigon's the place for them. I see you have sirups in the bar. Hang me if I ain't getting dry, conversing with you! Come, Mr. Schomberg, be hospitable, as the governor says."

Schomberg rose and walked with dignity to the counter. He came back carrying a bottle labeled "sirop de groseille" and a pink and glistening tumbler. Mr. Ricardo had followed his movements with oblique, coyly expectant yellow eyes, like a cat watching the preparation of a saucer of milk; and the satisfied sound after he had drunk might have been a slightly modified form of purring, very soft and deep in his throat.

Meanwhile Schomberg smoked with moody composure. Facing him, Ricardo blinked slowly for a time, then closed his eyes altogether, with the placidity of the domestic cat dozing on the hearth-rug. In another moment he opened them very wide, and seemed surprised to see Schomberg there.

"You're having a very slack time to-day, aren't you?" he observed. "But then this whole town is confoundedly slack, anyhow; and I've never faced such a slack party at a table before. Come eleven o'clock they begin to talk of breaking up. What's the matter with them? Want to go to bed so early, or what?"

"I reckon you don't lose a fortune by their wanting to go to bed," said Schomberg with somber sarcasm.

"No," admitted Ricardo with a grin that stretched his thin mouth from ear to ear, giving a sudden glimpse of his white teeth. "Only, you see, when I once start, I would play for nuts, for parched peas, for any rubbish. But these Dutchmen aren't any good. They never seem to get warmed up properly, win or lose. I've tried them both ways, too. Hang them for a beggarly, bloodless lot of animated cucumbers!"

"And if anything out of the way was to happen, they would be just as cool in locking up you and your gentleman," Schomberg snarled unpleasantly.

"Indeed!" said Ricardo slowly, taking Schomberg's measure with his eyes. "And what about you?"

"You talk mighty big," burst out the hotel-keeper. "You talk of ranging all over the world and doing great things, and taking fortune by the scruff of the neck, but here you stick at this miserable business!"

"It isn't much of a lay—that's a fact," admitted Ricardo unexpectedly.

Schomberg was red in the face with audacity.

"I call it paltry," he spluttered.

"That's how it looks. Can't call it anything else." Ricardo seemed to be in an accommodating mood. "But if you knew the whole circumstances you wouldn't get yourself in a state with me," he continued easily. Then, with something of a confidential manner: "I should be ashamed of it myself, only you see the governor is subject to these fits—"

"Fits!" Schomberg cried out, but in a low tone. "You don't say so! Fits! That's a serious thing, isn't it? You ought to take him to the civil hospital—a lovely place."

Ricardo nodded slightly with a faint grin.

"Serious enough. Regular fits of laziness, I call them. Now and then he lays down on me like this, and there's no moving him. If you think I like it you're a long way out. I don't. I would rather have any crazy notion sprung on me, as has happened more than once. Generally speaking, I can talk him over. I know how to deal with a gentleman. I am no daily-bread slave. But when he has said, 'Martin, I am bored,' then look out! There's nothing to do but to shut up—confound it!"

Schomberg had listened, open-mouthed.

"What's the cause of it?" he asked. "Why is he like this? I don't understand."

"I think I do," said Ricardo. "A gentleman, you know, is not such a simple person as you or I; and not so easy to manage, either. If I only had something to lever him out with!"

He rose noiselessly, stretched himself, supple and stealthy, glanced out of the corners of his eyes in the direction of the door, and finally leaned back against the table, folding his arms on his breast comfortably, in a completely human attitude.

"That's another thing you can tell a gentleman by—his freakishness. A gentleman ain't accountable to nobody, any more than a tramp on the roads. He ain't got to keep time. The governor got like this once in a one-horse Mexican *pueblo* on the uplands, away from everywhere. He lay all day long in a dark room—"

"Drunk?"

"No. That never comes on together with this kind of fit. He just lay there full length on a mat, while a ragged, bare-legged boy that he had picked up in the street sat in the *patio*, near the open door of his room, strumming on a guitar and singing *tristes* to him from morning to night. You know *tristes*—twang, twang, twang, aouh, hoo! Chroo, yah!"

Schomberg raised his hands in distress. This tribute seemed to flatter Ricardo. His mouth twitched grimly.

"Like that—enough to give colic to an ostrich, eh? Well, there was a cook there who loved me—an old, fat negro woman with spectacles. I used to hide in the kitchen and bribe her to make me *dulces*—sweet things, you know, mostly eggs and sugar—to pass the time away. I am like a kid for sweet things. And, by the way, why don't you ever have a pudding at your tablydott, Mr. Schomberg? Nothing but fruit morning, noon, and night. Sickening! What do you think a fellow is—a wasp?"

Schomberg disregarded the injured tone.

"And how long did that fit, as you call it, last?" he asked.

"Weeks, months, years, centuries, it seemed to me," returned Mr. Ricardo with feeling. "Of an evening the governor would stroll out into the *sala* and fritter his life away playing cards with the *juez* of the place—a little dago with a pair of black whiskers—ekarty, you know, a quick French game for small change. And the *comandante*, a one-eyed, half-Indian, flat-nosed ruffian, and I, we had to stand around and bet on their hands. It was awful!"

"Awful!" echoed Schomberg in a throaty tone of despair. "Look here, I want your rooms."

"To be sure! I have been thinking that for some time," said Ricardo indifferently.

"I was mad when I listened to you. This must end!"

"I think you are mad yet," said Ricardo, not even unfolding his arms or shifting his attitude an inch. "And if I thought you had been to the police I would tell Pedro to catch you round the waist and break your fat neck by jerking your head backward—*snap!* I saw him do it to a big buck nigger who was flourishing a razor in front of the governor. You hear a low crack, that's all—and the man drops down like a limp rag!"

XV

SCHOMBERG felt desperation, that lamentable substitute for courage, ooze out of him. It was not so much the threat of death as the weirdly circumstantial manner of its declaration which affected him. A mere, "I'll murder you!" however ferocious in tone and earnest in purpose he could have faced; but before this novel mode of speech and procedure, his imagination being very sensitive to the unusual, he collapsed, as if indeed his moral neck had been broken—*snap!*

"Go to the police? Of course not. Never dreamed of it. Too late now. I've let myself be mixed up in this. You got my consent while I wasn't myself. I explained it to you at the time."

Ricardo's eyes glided gently off Schomberg to stare far away.

"Aye! Some trouble with a girl. But that's nothing to us."

"Naturally. What I say is, what's the good of all that savage talk to me?" A bright argument occurred to him. "It's out of proportion; for even if I were fool enough to go to the police now there's nothing serious to complain about. It would only mean deportation for you. They would put you on board the first west-bound steamer to Singapore."

Ricardo made no comment, and gave no sign of having heard a single word. This discouraged Schomberg, who had looked up hopefully.

"Why do you want to stick here?" he cried. "It can't pay you people to fool around like this. Didn't you worry just now about moving your governor? Well, the police would move him for you; and from Singapore you can go on to the East Coast of Africa."

"I'll be hanged if the fellow isn't up to that silly trick!" was Ricardo's comment, spoken in an ominous tone which recalled Schomberg to the realities of his position.

"No! No!" he protested. "Of course I wouldn't."

"I do think that trouble about the girl has muddled your brains, Mr. Schomberg. Believe me, you had better part friends with us—for you'll be paid off for any nasty dodge you may be hatching in that fat head of yours. Deportation or no deportation, one of us would be back before long to pay you off."

"*Gott im Himmel!*" groaned Schomberg. "Will nothing move him out? Suppose I were to make it worth your while, couldn't you—"

"No," Ricardo interrupted, "I couldn't, unless I had something to lever him out with. I've told you that before."

"An inducement?" muttered Schomberg.

"Aye. The East Coast of Africa isn't good enough. He told me the other day that it will have to wait till he is ready for it; and he may not be ready for a long time, because the East Coast can't run away, and no one is likely to run off with it."

These remarks, whether considered as truisms or as depicting Mr. Jones's mental state, were distinctly discouraging to the long-suffering Schomberg; but there is truth in the well-known saying that places the darkest

hour before the dawn. The sound of words, apart from the context, has its power; and these two words, "run off," had a special affinity to the hotel-keeper's haunting idea. It was always present in his brain, and now it came forward, evoked by a purely fortuitous expression. No, nobody could run off with a continent; but Heyst had run off with the girl!

Ricardo could have had no conception of the cause of Schomberg's changed expression. A sort of sinister dawn had broken upon the hotel-keeper's perplexity.

"I could put you on another track," he said slowly, and stopped, as if suddenly choked by an unholy emotion of intense eagerness combined with fear of failure. Ricardo waited, attentive, yet not without a certain contempt.

"On the track of a man!" Schomberg uttered convulsively, and paused again, consulting his rage and his conscience.

"The man in the moon, eh?" suggested Ricardo in a jeering murmur.

Schomberg shook his head.

"It would be nearly as safe to rook him as if he were the man in the moon. You go and try! It isn't so very far."

He reflected. These men were thieves and murderers as well as gamblers. Their fitness for purposes of vengeance was appallingly complete. He put it to himself that he would be paying Heyst out, and would, at the same time, relieve himself of these men's oppression.

He had the first consoling moment for many, many days. To feel himself so clever somewhat restored his self-respect. It remained now to show himself persuasive.

He raised his eyes and found that he had self-confidence enough to face Ricardo's faintly mocking scrutiny. Letting loose his natural gift for talking scandalously about his fellow-creatures, he poured forth his story, portraying a Heyst fattened by years of private and public rapines, the murderer of Morrison, the swindler of many shareholders, a wonderful mixture of craft and impudence, of deep purposes and simple wiles, of mystery and futility.

"He hung about this part of the world for years, spying into everybody's business; but I am the only one who has seen through him from the first—contemptible, double-faced, stick-at-nothing, dangerous fellow!"

"Dangerous, is he?"

Schomberg came to himself at the sound of Ricardo's voice.

"Well, you know what I mean," he said uneasily. "A lying, circumventing, soft-

spoken, polite, stuck-up rascal! Nothing open about him."

Mr. Ricardo had slipped off the table and was prowling about the room in an oblique, noiseless manner.

"And you say he has been living alone there?"

"Like the man in the moon," answered Schomberg readily. "There's no one that cares a rap what becomes of him. He has been lying low, you understand, after bagging all that plunder."

"Plunder, eh? Why didn't he go home with it?" inquired Ricardo.

Mr. Jones's henchman was beginning to think that this was something worth looking into.

"Go home?" Schomberg retorted fearlessly. "Why don't *you* go home? To hear your talk you must have made a pretty considerable pile going round winning people's money. You ought to be ready by this time."

Ricardo stopped to look at Schomberg with surprise.

"You think yourself very clever, don't you?" he said.

Schomberg just then was so conscious of being clever that the snarling irony left him unmoved. He was in a felicitous vein.

"How do you know that he wasn't thinking of going home? As a matter of fact, he was on his way home."

"And how do I know that you are not amusing yourself by spinning out a blamed fairy tale?" interrupted Ricardo roughly. "I wonder at myself listening to the silly rot!"

Schomberg received this turn of temper unmoved. He did not require to be very subtly observant to notice that he had managed to arouse some sort of feeling, perhaps of greed, in Ricardo's breast.

"You won't believe me? Well, you can ask anybody that comes here if that—that Swede hadn't got as far as this house on his way home. Why should he turn up here if not for that? You ask anybody."

"Ask, indeed!" returned the other. "Catch me asking at large about a man I mean to drop on! Such jobs must be done on the quiet—or not at all."

The peculiar intonation of the last phrase touched the nape of Schomberg's neck with a chill; but it did not stop his eloquence.

"Haven't I got eyes?" he went on. "Haven't I got my common sense to tell me? By the same token he called on the Tesmans. Why did he call on the Tesmans two days running, eh? You can't tell?"

He waited complacently till Ricardo had finished swearing at him for a confounded chatterer, and then went on:

"A fellow doesn't go to a counting-house in business hours for a chat about the weather two days running. Then why? To close his account with them one day and to get his money out the next! Clear what?"

Ricardo, with his trick of looking one way and moving another, approached Schomberg slowly.

"To get his money?" he purred.

"*Gewiss!*" snapped Schomberg with impatient superiority. "What else? That is only the money he had with the Tesmans. What he has buried or put away in some other way on the island the deuce only knows! When you think of the lot of hard cash that passed through that man's hands, for wages and stores and all that—and he's just a cunning thief, I tell you!" Ricardo's hard stare discomposed the hotel-keeper, and he added in an embarrassed tone: "I mean a common, sneaking thief—no account at all. And he calls himself a Swedish baron, too! Tfui!"

"He's a baron, is he? That foreign nobility ain't much," commented Mr. Ricardo seriously. "And then what? He hung about here."

"Yes, he hung about," said Schomberg, making a wry mouth. "He—hung about. That's it. Hung—"

His voice died out. Curiosity was depicted in Ricardo's countenance.

"And then turned about and went back to that island again?"

"And went back to that island again," Schomberg echoed lifelessly, fixing his gaze on the floor.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Ricardo with genuine surprise. "What is it?"

Schomberg, without looking up, made an impatient gesture. His face was crimson, and he kept it lowered. Ricardo went back to the point.

"Well, but how do you account for it? What was his reason? What did he go back to the island for?"

"Honeymoon!" spat out Schomberg viciously.

Perfectly still, his eyes downcast, he suddenly hit the table with his fist a blow which caused the utterly unprepared Ricardo to start violently. The hotel-keeper's soul was raging within him, so that he couldn't trust himself to speak further. The gaze he raised to Ricardo's face was wild and pained, rendering faithfully the discomfort of the inner man.

"Aye, aye!" said the secretary. "I wish I hadn't asked you, or that you had told me a lie. It don't suit me to know that there's a woman mixed up in this affair. What's she like? It's the girl you—"

"Don't!" muttered Schomberg.

"Aye, aye!" Ricardo repeated, more and more enlightened and perplexed. "Can't bear to talk about it—so bad as that? And yet I would bet she isn't a miracle to look at."

Schomberg made a gesture as if he didn't know, as if he didn't care. Then he squared his shoulders and frowned at vacancy.

"Swedish baron—h-m!" Ricardo continued meditatively. "I believe the governor would think that business worth looking up, quite, if I put it to him properly. The governor likes a duel, if you will call it so; but I don't know a man that can stand up to him on the square. Have you ever seen a cat play with a mouse? It's a pretty sight."

Ricardo, with his voluptuously gleaming eyes, looked so much like a cat that Schomberg would have felt all the alarm of a mouse if other feelings had not had complete possession of his breast.

"There are no lies between you and me," he said, more steadily than he thought he could speak.

"What's the good now? He funks women. In that Mexican *pueblo* where we lay grounded on our beef-bones, so to speak, I used to go to dances of an evening. The girls there would ask me if the English *caballero* in the *posada* was a monk in disguise, or if he had taken a vow to the *santissima madre* not to speak to a woman, or whether— You can imagine what fairly free-spoken girls will ask when they come to the point of not caring what they say; and it used to vex me. Yes, the governor funks facing women."

"One woman?" interjected Schomberg in guttural tones.

"One may be more awkward to deal with than two, or two hundred, for that matter. In a place that's full of women you needn't look at them unless you like; but if you go into a room where there is only one woman, young or old, pretty or ugly, you have got to face her. And, unless you are after her, then—the governor is right enough—she's in the way."

"Why notice them?" muttered Schomberg. "What can they do?"

"Make a noise, if nothing else," opined Mr. Ricardo curtly, with the distaste of a man whose path is a path of silence; for, indeed, nothing is more odious than a noise when one

is engaged in a weighty and absorbing card game. "Noise, noise, my friend," he went on forcibly; "confounded screeching about something or other, and I like it no more than the governor does. But with the governor there's something more besides—a good deal more. He can't stand them at all. I'm hanged if I don't think they are to him what liquor is to me. Brandy—pah!"

He made a disgusted face and produced a genuine shudder. Schomberg listened to him in wonder. It looked as if the very scoundrelism of that—that Swede would protect him; the spoil of his iniquity standing between the thief and the retribution.

"That's so, old buck." Ricardo broke the silence after contemplating Schomberg's mute dejection with a sort of sympathy. "I don't think this trick will work. No; I don't think I care to put it before him, sick as I am of staying here."

Ricardo could not be more sick of staying than Schomberg was of seeing him stay.

"It would have been like going to pick up a nugget of a thousand pounds, or two or three times as much, for all I know. No trouble, no—"

"The petticoat's the trouble," Ricardo struck in.

He had resumed his noiseless, feline, oblique prowling, in which an observer would have detected a new character of excitement, such as a wild animal of the cat species, anxious to make a spring, might betray. Schomberg saw nothing. It would probably have cheered his drooping spirits; but in a general way he preferred not to look at Ricardo. Ricardo, however, with one of his slanting, gliding, restless glances, observed the bitter smile on Schomberg's bearded lips—the unmistakable smile of ruined hopes.

"You are a pretty unforgiving sort of chap," he said, stopping for a moment with an air of interest. "Hang me if I ever saw anybody look so disappointed! I bet you would send black plague to that island if you only knew how—eh, what? Plague too good for them? Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't wish any harm to the girl," muttered Schomberg.

"But she did bolt from you? A fair bilk? Come!"

"The deuce only knows what that villainous Swede had done to her—what he promised her, how he frightened her. She couldn't have cared for him, I know." Schomberg's vanity clung to the belief in some atrocious, extraordinary means of seduction employed by

Heyst. "Look how he bewitched that poor Morrison," he murmured.

"Ah! Morrison—got all his money—what?"

"Yes—and his life."

"Terrible fellow that Swedish baron! How is one to get at him?"

Schomberg exploded.

"Three against one! Are you shy? Do you want me to give you a letter of introduction?"

"One would think the fellow lived next door," Ricardo growled impatiently. "Hang it all, can't you understand a plain question? I have asked you the way."

"The way is over the water, of course," said the hotel-keeper. "For people like you three days in a good, big boat is nothing. It's no more than a little outing, a bit of a change. At this season the Java Sea is a pond. I have an excellent, safe boat—a ship's life-boat—carry thirty, let alone three, and a child could handle her. You might call it a pleasure-trip."

"And yet, having this fine boat, you didn't go after her yourself—or after him? Well, you are a fine fellow for a disappointed lover!"

Schomberg gave a start at the suggestion.

"I am not three men," he said sulkily, as the shortest answer of the several he could have given.

"Oh, I know your sort," Ricardo let fall negligently. "You are like most people—or perhaps just a little more peaceable than the rest of the buying and selling gang that bosses this rotten show! Well, well, you respectable citizen," he went on, "let us go thoroughly into the matter."

When Schomberg had been made to understand that Mr. Jones's henchman was ready to discuss, in his own words, "this boat of yours, with courses and distances," and such concrete matters of no good augury to that villainous Swede, he recovered his soldierly bearing, squared his shoulders and asked in his military manner:

"You wish then to proceed with the business?"

Ricardo nodded. He had a great mind to, he said. A gentleman had to be humored as much as possible; but he must be managed, too, on occasions, for his own good. And it was the business of the right sort of "follower" to know the proper time and the proper methods of that delicate part of his duty.

"I've never actually lied to him," said Ricardo, "and I ain't going to now. I shall just say nothing about the girl. He will have to get over the shock the best he can. Too much humoring won't do here."

"Funny thing," Schomberg observed crisply.

"Is it? Aye, you wouldn't mind taking a woman by the throat in some dark corner and nobody by, I bet!"

"And you?" Schomberg defended himself. "Don't you want me to believe you are up to anything?"

"I, my boy? Oh, yes. I am not that gentleman; neither are you. Take 'em by the throat or chuck 'em under the chin is all one to me—almost," affirmed Ricardo, with something obscurely ironical in his complacency. "Now as to this business. A three days' jaunt in a good boat isn't a thing to frighten people like us. You are right so far; but there are other details."

Schomberg was ready enough to enter into details. He explained that he had a small plantation, with a fairly habitable hut on it, on Madura. He proposed that his guests should start from town in his boat, as if going for an excursion to that rural spot. The custom-house people on the quay were used to see his boat go off on such trips.

From Madura, after some repose and on a convenient day, Mr. Jones and party would make the real start. It would all be plain sailing. Schomberg undertook to provision the boat. The greatest hardship the voyagers need apprehend would be perhaps a mild shower of rain. At that season of the year there were no serious thunder-storms.

Under his lieutenant-of-the-reserve exterior Schomberg's heart began to thump as he saw himself nearing his vengeance. His speech was thick but persuasive.

"No risk at all—none whatever!"

Ricardo dismissed these assurances of safety with an impatient gesture. He was thinking of other risks.

"The getting away from here is all right; but we may be sighted at sea, and that may bring awkwardness later on. A ship's boat with three white men in her, knocking about out of sight of land, is bound to make talk. Are we likely to be seen on our way?"

"Only by native craft," said Schomberg.

Ricardo nodded, satisfied. Native craft did not count, of course.

It was an empty, solitary part of the sea. Schomberg expounded further. Only the Ternate mail-boat crossed that region about the 8th of every month, regularly—nowhere near the island, though. Rigid, his voice hoarse, his heart thumping, his mind concentrated on the success of his plan, the hotel-keeper multiplied words, as if to keep as many of them as possible between himself and the murderous aspect of his purpose.

"So, if you gentlemen depart from my plantation quietly at sunset on the 8th—always best to make a start at night, with a land breeze—it's a hundred to one—what am I saying? It's a thousand to one that no human eye will see you on the passage. All you've got to do is to keep her heading north-east, for, say, fifty hours—perhaps not quite so long. There will always be draft enough to keep a boat moving; you may reckon on that; and then—"

Ricardo regarded him steadily with those dry eyes of his shining more like polished stones than living tissue.

"And then what?" he asked.

"And then—why, you will astonish *der herr baron*—ha, ha!"

Schomberg seemed to force the words and the laugh out of himself in a hoarse bass.

"And you believe he has all that plunder by him?" asked Ricardo, rather perfunctorily, because the fact seemed to him extremely probable when looked at all round by his acute mind.

Schomberg raised his hands and lowered them slowly.

"How can it be otherwise? He was going home, he was on his way, in this hotel. Ask people. Was it likely he would leave it behind him?"

Ricardo was thoughtful. Then, suddenly raising his head, he remarked:

"Steer northeast for fifty hours, eh? That's not much of a sailing direction. I've heard of a port being missed before on better information. Can't you say what sort of landfall a fellow may expect? But I suppose you have never seen that island yourself."

Schomberg admitted that he had not seen it in a tone in which a man congratulates himself on having escaped the contamination of an unsavory experience. No, certainly not. He had never had any business to call him there. But what of that? He could give Mr. Ricardo as good a sea-mark as anybody need wish for. He laughed nervously. Miss it! He defied any one that came within forty miles of it to miss the retreat of that villainous Swede.

"What do you think of a pillar of smoke by day and a loom of fire at night? There's a volcano in full blast near that island—enough to guide almost a blind man. What more do you want? An active volcano to steer by!"

These last words he roared out exultingly, then jumped up and glared. The door to the left of the bar had swung open and Mrs.

Schomberg, dressed for duty, stood facing him down the whole length of the room. She clung to the handle for a moment, then came in and glided to her place, where she sat down to stare straight before her, as usual.

XVI

TROPICAL nature had been kind to the failure of the commercial enterprise. The desolation of the headquarters of the Tropical Belt Coal Company had been screened from the side of the sea; from the side where prying eyes—if any were sufficiently interested, either in malice or in sorrow—could have noted the decaying bones of that once sanguine enterprise.

Heyst had been sitting among the bones buried so kindly in the grass of two wet seasons' growth. The silence of his surroundings, broken only by such sounds as a distant roll of thunder, the lash of rain through the foliage of some big trees, the noise of the wind tossing the leaves of the forest, and of the short seas breaking against the shore, favored rather than hindered his solitary meditation.

A meditation is always—in a white man, at least—more or less an interrogative exercise. Heyst meditated in simple terms on the mystery of his actions; and he answered himself with the honest reflection:

"There must be a lot of the original Adam in me, after all."

He reflected, too, with the sense of making a discovery, that this primeval ancestor is not easily suppressed. The oldest voice in the world is just the one that never ceases to speak. If anybody could have silenced its imperative echoes it should have been Heyst's father, with his contemptuous, inflexible negation of all effort; but apparently he could not. There was in the son a lot of that first ancestor who, as soon as he could uplift his muddy frame from the celestial mold, started inspecting and naming the animals of that paradise which he was so soon to lose.

Action—the first thought, or perhaps the first impulse, on earth! The barbed hook, baited with the illusion of progress, to bring out of the lightless void the shoals of unnumbered generations!

"And I, the son of my father, have been caught too, like the silliest fish of them all," Heyst said to himself.

He suffered. He was hurt by the sight of his own life, which ought to have been a masterpiece of aloofness. He remembered always his last evening with his father. He remembered the thin features, the great mass of

white hair, and the ivory complexion. A five-branched candlestick stood on a little table by the side of the easy chair. They had been talking a long time. The noises of the street had died out, one by one, till at last, in the moonlight, the London houses began to look like the tombs of an unvisited, unhonored cemetery of hopes.

He had listened. Then, after a silence, he had asked—for he was really young then:

"Is there no guidance?"

His father was in an unexpectedly soft mood on that night when the moon swam in a cloudless sky over the begrimed shadows of the town.

"You still believe in something, then?" he said in a clear voice, which had been growing feeble of late. "You believe in flesh and blood, perhaps? A full and equable contempt would soon do away with that, too. But since you have not attained to it I advise you to cultivate that form of contempt which is called pity. It is perhaps the least difficult—always remembering that you, too, if you are anything, are as pitiful as the rest, yet never expecting any pity for yourself."

"What is one to do then?" sighed the young man, regarding his father, rigid in the high-backed chair.

"Look on—make no sound," were the last words of the man who had spent his life in blowing blasts upon a terrible trumpet which had filled heaven and earth with ruins, while mankind went on its way unheeding.

That very night he died in his bed, so quietly that they found him in his usual attitude of sleep, lying on his side, one hand under his cheek and his knees slightly bent. He had not even straightened his legs.

His son buried the silenced destroyer of systems, of hopes, of beliefs. He observed that the death of that bitter contemner of life did not trouble the flow of life's stream, where men and women go by thick as dust, revolving and jostling one another like figures cut out of cork and weighted with lead just sufficiently to keep them in their proudly upright posture.

After the funeral Heyst sat alone in the dusk, and his meditation took the form of a definite vision of the stream, of the fatuously jostling, nodding, spinning figures hurried irresistibly along, and giving no sign of being aware that the voice on the bank had been suddenly silenced.

A few slow tears rolled down his face. The rooms, filling with shadows, seemed haunted by a melancholy, uneasy presence which could not express itself. The young man got up

with a strange sense of making way for something impalpable that claimed possession, went out of the house and locked the door. A fortnight later he started on his travels—to "look on and never make a sound."

The humbler denizens of the world, with whom he preferred to associate, called him kindly "a queer, mooning chap." His faintly playful politeness had puzzled and amused all sorts and conditions of men in Brazil, in Tripoli, in all the other stations of his erratic progress toward the islands, where he had remained, enchanted, going round and round like a bit of straw in the eddy of a mill-race. But it did not offend either the simple or the gentle; still they could not guess that below the playfully polite surface he had for gentle and simple, for men and women, for all the opportunities and dangers of the world, and for his own fate in it, that form of contempt which is called pity. For he followed the advice of his pitiless father—given, perhaps, in a moment of secret weakness, or perhaps simply from the malice of age provoked by the innocence of youth.

The elder Heyst had left behind him a little money and a certain quantity of movable objects, such as books, tables, chairs, and pictures, which might have complained of heartless desertion after many years of faithful service; for there is a soul in things. Heyst, our Heyst, had often thought of them, reproachful and mute, shrouded and locked up in those rooms, far away in London. He would never have them sold, or even moved from the places they occupied when he looked upon them last. When he was advised from London that his lease had expired, and that the house, with some others as like it as peas, was to be demolished, he was surprisingly distressed.

He had entered by then the broad, human path of inconsistencies. Already the Tropical Belt Coal Company was in existence. He sent instructions to have some of the things sent out to him at Samburan, just as any ordinary, credulous person would have done. They came, torn out from their long repose—a lot of books, some chairs and tables, his father's portrait in oils, which surprised Heyst by its air of youth, because he remembered his father as a much older man; a lot of small objects, such as candlesticks, inkstands, and statuettes from his father's study, which surprised him because they looked so old and so much worn.

The manager of the Tropical Belt Coal Company, unpacking them on the veranda in

the shade besieged by a fierce sunshine, must have felt like a remorseful apostate before these relics. He handled them tenderly; and it was perhaps their presence there which attached him to the island when he woke up to the failure of his apostasy.

Whatever the decisive reason, Heyst had remained where another would have been glad to be off. The excellent Davidson had discovered the fact without discovering the reason, and took a humane interest in Heyst's strange existence, while at the same time his native delicacy kept him from intruding on the other's whim of solitude. He could not possibly guess that Heyst, alone on the island, felt neither more nor less lonely than in any other place, desert or populous.

Davidson's concern was, if one may express it so, the danger of spiritual starvation; but this was a spirit which had renounced all outside nourishment, and was sustaining itself proudly on its own contempt of the usual coarse aliments which life offers to the common appetites of men.

Neither was Heyst's body in danger of starvation, as Schomberg had so confidently asserted. At the beginning of the company's operations the island had been provisioned in a manner which had outlasted the need. Heyst did not need to fear hunger; and his very loneliness had not been without some alleviation. Of the crowd of imported Chinese laborers, one at least had remained in Samburan, solitary and strange, like a swallow left behind at the migrating season of his flock.

Wang was not a common coolie. He had been a servant to white men before. The agreement between him and Heyst consisted in the exchange of a few words, on the day when the last batch of the mine coolies was leaving Samburan. Heyst, leaning over the balustrade of the veranda, was looking on, as calm in appearance as if he had never departed from the doctrine that this world, for the wise, is nothing but an amusing spectacle.

Wang came round the house, and, standing below, raised up his yellow, thin face.

"All finish?" he asked.

Heyst nodded slightly from above, glancing toward the jetty. A crowd of blue-clad figures was being hustled down into the boats of the chartered steamer lying well out, like a painted ship on a painted sea; painted in crude colors, without shadows, without feeling, with brutal precision.

"You had better hurry up if you don't want to be left behind."

But the Chinaman did not move.

"Me stop," he declared.

Heyst looked down at him for the first time.

"You want to stop here?"

"Yes."

"What were you? What was your work here?"

"Mess-loom boy."

"Do you want to stay with me here as my boy?" inquired Heyst, surprised.

The Chinaman unexpectedly put on a deprecatory expression, and said, after a marked pause:

"Can do."

"You needn't," said Heyst, "unless you like. I propose to stay on here—it may be for a very long time. I have no power to make you go if you wish to remain, but I don't see why you should."

"Got one piecee wife," remarked Wang unemotionally, and marched off, turning his back on the wharf and the great world beyond, represented by the steamer waiting for her boats.

Heyst learned presently that Wang had persuaded one of the women of the Alfuro village on the west shore of the island, beyond the central ridge, into coming over to live with him in a remote part of the company's clearing. It was a curious case.

The Alfuros, having been frightened by the sudden invasion of Chinamen, had blocked the path over the ridge by felling a few trees, and had kept strictly on their own side. The coolies, as a body, mistrusting the manifest mildness of these harmless fisherfolk, had kept to their lines, without attempting to cross the island. Wang was the brilliant exception. He must have been uncommonly fascinating, in a way that was not apparent to Heyst, or else uncommonly persuasive.

The woman's services to Heyst were limited to the fact that she had anchored Wang to the spot by her charms, which remained unknown to the white man, because she never came near the houses. The couple lived at the edge of the forest, and she could sometimes be seen gazing toward the bungalow, shading her eyes with her hand. Even from a distance she appeared to be a shy, wild creature, and Heyst, anxious not to try her primitive nerves unduly, scrupulously avoided that side of the clearing in his strolls.

The day—or rather the first night—after his hermit life began, he was aware of vague sounds of revelry in that direction. Emboldened by the departure of the invading strangers, some Alfuros, the woman's friends and relations, had ventured over the ridge to

attend something in the nature of a wedding-feast. Wang had invited them.

But this was the only occasion when any sound louder than the buzzing of insects had troubled the profound silence of the clearing. The natives were never invited again. Wang not only knew how to live according to conventional proprieties, but had strong personal views as to the manner of arranging his domestic existence.

After a time Heyst perceived that Wang had annexed all the keys. Any key left lying about vanished after Wang had passed that way. Subsequently some of them—those that did not belong to the storerooms and the empty bungalows, and could not be regarded as the common property of this community of two—were returned to Heyst, tied in a bunch with a piece of string. He found them one morning lying by the side of his plate. He had not been inconvenienced by their absence, because he never locked up anything in the way of drawers and boxes.

Heyst said nothing. Wang also said nothing. Perhaps he had always been a taciturn man; perhaps he was influenced by the genius of the locality, which was certainly that of silence. Till Heyst and Morrison had landed in Black Diamond Bay and named it, that side of Samburan had hardly ever heard the sound of human speech. It was easy to be taciturn with Heyst, who had plunged himself into an abyss of meditation over books, and remained in it till the shadow of Wang falling across the page, and the sound of a rough, low voice uttering the Malay word "*makan*," would force him to climb out to a meal.

It is to be presumed that if Wang suffered constraint, he made up for it with the Alfuro woman. He always went back to her at the first fall of dusk, vanishing from the bungalow suddenly at his hour, like a sort of topsyturvy, day-hunting Chinese ghost with a white jacket and a pigtail.

Presently, giving way to a Chinaman's ruling passion, he could be observed breaking the ground near his hut, between the mighty stumps of felled trees, with a miner's pickax. After a time, he discovered a rusty but serviceable spade in one of the empty storerooms, and it is to be supposed that he got on famously; but nothing of it could be seen, because he went to the trouble of pulling to pieces one of the company's sheds in order to get materials for making a high and very close fence round his patch, as if the growing of vegetables were an awful and holy mystery entrusted to the keeping of his race.

Heyst, following from a distance the progress of Wang's gardening—there was nothing else to look at—was amused at the thought that he, in his own person, represented the market for its produce. The Chinaman had found several packets of seeds in the storerooms, and had surrendered to an irresistible impulse to put them in the ground. He would make his master pay for the vegetables that he was raising to satisfy his instinct.

And, looking silently at the silent Wang going about his work in the bungalow in his unhasty, steady way, Heyst envied the Chinaman's obedience to his instincts, the powerful simplicity of purpose which made his existence appear almost automatic in the mysterious precision of its facts.

XVII

DURING his master's absence at Sourabaya, Wang had busied himself with the ground immediately in front of the principal bungalow. Emerging from the fringe of grass growing across the shore end of the coal-jetty, Heyst beheld a broad, clear space, black and level, with one or two clumps of charred twigs, where the flame had swept from the front of his house to the nearest trees of the forest.

"You took the risk of firing the grass?" Heyst asked.

Wang nodded. Hanging on the arm of the white man before whom he stood was the girl called Alma; but neither from the Chinaman's eyes nor from his expression could any one have guessed that he was in the slightest degree aware of the fact.

"He has been tidying the place in this labor-saving way," explained Heyst, without looking at the girl, whose hand rested on his forearm. "He's the whole establishment, you see. I told you I hadn't even a dog to keep me company here."

Wang had marched off toward the wharf.

"He's like those waiters in that place," she said. "That place" was Schomberg's hotel at Sourabaya.

"One Chinaman looks very much like another," Heyst remarked. "We shall find it useful to have him here. This is the house."

They faced, at some distance, the six shallow steps leading up to the veranda. The girl had abandoned Heyst's arm.

"This is the house," he repeated.

She did not offer to budge away from his side, but stood staring fixedly at the steps, as if they had been something unique and impracticable. He waited a little, but she did not move.

"Don't you want to go in?" he asked, without turning his head to look at her. "The sun's too heavy to stand about here." He tried to overcome a sort of fear, a sort of impatient faintness, and his voice sounded rough. "You had better go in," he concluded.

They both moved then, but at the foot of the stairs Heyst stopped, while the girl went on rapidly, as if nothing could stop her now. She crossed the veranda swiftly, and entered the twilight of the big central room opening upon it, and then the deeper twilight of the room beyond. She stood still in the dusk, in which her dazzled eyes could scarcely make out the forms of objects, and sighed a sigh of relief. The impression of sunlight, of sea and sky, remained with her like a memory of a painful trial gone through—done with at last!

Meanwhile Heyst had walked back slowly toward the jetty; but he did not get so far as that.

The practical and automatic Wang had got hold of one of the little trucks that had been used for running baskets of coal alongside ships. He appeared, pushing it before him, loaded lightly with Heyst's bag and the bundle of the girl's belongings, wrapped in Mrs. Schomberg's shawl. Heyst turned about and walked by the side of the rusty rails on which the truck ran. Opposite the house Wang stopped, lifted the bag to his shoulder, balanced it carefully, and then took the bundle in his hand.

"Leave those things on the table in the big room—understand?"

"Me seev," grunted Wang, moving off.

Heyst watched the Chinaman disappear from the veranda. It was not till he had seen Wang come out that he himself entered the twilight of the big room. By that time Wang was out of sight at the back of the house, but by no means out of hearing.

The Chinaman could hear the voice of him who, when there were many people there, was generally referred to as "Number One." Wang was not able to understand the words, but the tone interested him.

"Where are you?" cried Number One.

Then Wang heard, much more faint, a voice he had never heard before—a novel impression which he acknowledged by cocking his head slightly to one side.

"I am here—out of the sun."

The new voice sounded remote and uncertain. Wang heard nothing more, though he waited for some time, very still, the top of his shaven poll exactly level with the floor of

the back veranda. His face meanwhile preserved an inscrutable immobility.

Suddenly he stooped to pick up the lid of a deal candle-box which was lying on the ground by his foot. Breaking it up with his fingers, he directed his steps toward the cook-shed, where, squatting on his heels, he proceeded to kindle a small fire under a very sooty kettle, possibly to make a cup of tea.

Wang had some knowledge of the more superficial rites and ceremonies of white men's existence, otherwise so enigmatically remote to his mind, and containing unexpected possibilities of good and evil, which had to be watched for with prudence and care.

XVIII

THAT morning, as on all the others of the full tale of thirty mornings since his return with the girl to Samburan, Heyst came out on the veranda and spread his elbows on the railing, in an easy attitude of proprietorship.

The bulk of the central ridge of the island cut off the bungalow from sunrises, whether glorious or cloudy, angry or serene. The dwellers therein were debarred from reading early the fortune of the new-born day. It sprang upon them in its fulness with a swift retreat of the great shadow when the sun, clearing the ridge, looked down, hot and dry, with a devouring glare like the eye of an enemy. But Heyst, once the Number One of this locality, while it was comparatively teeming with mankind, appreciated the prolongation of early coolness, the subdued, lingering half light, the faint ghost of the departed night, the fragrance of its dewy, dark soul captured for a moment longer between the great glow of the sky and the intense blaze of the uncovered sea.

It was naturally difficult for Heyst to keep his mind from dwelling on the nature and consequences of this, his latest departure from the part of an unconcerned spectator. Yet he had retained enough of his wrecked philosophy to prevent him from asking himself consciously how it would end. Like the rest of us who act, all he could say to himself, with a somewhat affected grimness, was:

"We shall see!"

This mood of grim doubt intruded on him only when he was alone. There were not many such moments in his day now; and he did not like them when they came.

On that morning he had no time to grow uneasy. Alma came out to join him long before the sun, rising above the Samburan ridge, swept the cool shadow of the early

morning clear off the roof under which they had dwelt for more than thirty days.

She came out as on other mornings. He had heard her light footsteps in the big room—the room where he had unpacked the cases from London—the room now lined with the backs of books half-way up on its three sides. Above the cases the fine matting met the ceiling of tightly stretched white calico. In the dusk and coolness nothing gleamed except the gilt frame of the portrait of Heyst's father, signed by a famous painter, lonely in the middle of a wall.

Heyst did not turn round.

"Do you know what I was thinking of?" he asked.

"No," she said. Her tone betrayed always a shade of anxiety, as if she were never certain how a conversation with him would end. She leaned on the guard-rail by his side. "No," she repeated. "What was it?" She waited. Then, rather with reluctance than shyness, she asked: "Were you thinking of me?"

"I was wondering when you were coming out," said Heyst, still without looking at the girl—to whom, after several experimental essays in combining detached letters and loose syllables, he had given the name of Lena.

She remarked after a pause:

"I was not very far from you."

"Apparently you were not near enough for me."

"You could have called me," she said.

"And I wasn't so long doing my hair."

"Apparently it was too long for me."

"Well, you were thinking of me, anyhow. I am glad of it. Do you know, it seems to me, somehow, that if you were to stop thinking of me I shouldn't be in the world at all!"

He turned round and looked at her. She often said things which surprised him. A vague smile faded away on her lips before his scrutiny.

"What is it?" he asked. "Is it a reproach?"

"A reproach! Why, how could it be?" she defended herself.

"Well, what did it mean?" he insisted.

"What I said—just what I said. Why aren't you fair?"

"Ah, this at least is a reproach!"

She colored to the roots of her hair.

"It looks as if you were trying to make out that I am disagreeable," she murmured. "Am I? You will make me afraid to open my mouth, presently. I shall end by believing I am no good."

Her head drooped a little. He looked at her smooth, low brow, the faintly colored cheeks, and the red lips, parted slightly, with the gleam of her teeth within.

"And then I *won't* be any good," she added with conviction. "That I won't! I can only be what you think I am."

He made a slight movement. She put her hand on his arm, without raising her head, and went on, her voice animated in the stillness of her body:

"It is so. It couldn't be any other way with a girl like me and a man like you. Here we are—we two alone—and I can't even tell where we are."

"A very well-known spot of the globe," Heyst uttered gently. "There must have been at least fifty thousand circulars issued at the time—a hundred and fifty thousand, more likely. My friend was looking after that, and his ideas were large and his belief very strong. Of us two it was he who had the faith. A hundred and fifty thousand, certainly."

"What is it you mean?" she asked in a low tone.

"What should I find fault with you for?" Heyst went on. "For being amiable, good, gracious—and pretty?"

A silence fell. Then she said:

"It's all right that you should think that of me. There's no one here to think anything of us, good or bad."

The rare timbre of her voice gave a special value to what she uttered. The indefinable emotion which certain intonations gave him, he was aware, was more physical than moral. Every time she spoke to him she seemed to abandon to him something of herself—something excessively subtle and inexpressible, to which he was infinitely sensible, which he would have missed horribly if she were to go away.

While he was looking into her eyes she raised her bare forearm out of its short sleeve and held it in the air till he noticed it and hastened to pose his great bronze mustache on the whiteness of the skin. Then they went in.

Wang immediately appeared in front, and, squatting on his heels, began to potter mysteriously about some plants at the foot of the veranda. When Heyst and the girl came out again, the Chinaman had gone in his peculiar manner, which suggested vanishing out of existence rather than out of sight, a process of evaporation rather than of movement. They descended the steps, looking at each other,

and started off smartly across the cleared ground; but they were, not ten yards away when, without perceptible stir or sound, Wang materialized inside the empty room.

The Chinaman stood still with roaming eyes, examining the walls as if for signs, for inscriptions; exploring the floor as if for pitfalls, for dropped coins. Then he cocked his head slightly at the profile of Heyst's father, pen in hand above a white sheet of paper on a crimson table-cloth; and, moving forward noiselessly, began to clear away the breakfast things.

Though he proceeded without haste, the unerring precision of his movements, the absolute soundlessness of the operation, gave it something of the quality of a conjuring trick. And, the trick having been performed, Wang vanished from the scene, to materialize presently in front of the house. He materialized walking away from it, with no visible or guessable intention; but at the end of some ten paces he stopped, made a half turn, and put his hand up to shade his eyes.

The sun had topped the gray ridge of Samburan. The great morning shadow was gone; and far away in the devouring sunshine Wang was in time to see Number One and the woman, two remote white specks against the somber line of the forest. In a moment they vanished. With the smallest display of action, Wang also vanished from the sunlight of the clearing.

Heyst and Lena entered the shade of the forest path which crossed the island, and which, near its highest point, had been blocked by felled trees. But their intention was not to go so far. After keeping to the path for some distance, they left it at a point where the forest was bare of undergrowth, and the trees, festooned with creepers, stood clear of one another in the gloom of their own making. Here and there great splashes of light lay on the ground.

They moved, silent in the great stillness, breathing the calmness, the infinite isolation, the repose of a slumber without dreams. They emerged at the upper limit of vegetation, among some rocks; and in a depression of the sharp slope, like a small platform, they turned about and looked from on high over the sea, lonely, its color effaced by sunshine, its horizon a heat mist, a mere unsubstantial shimmer in the pale and blinding infinity overhung by the darker blaze of the sky.

"It makes my head swim," the girl muttered, shutting her eyes and putting her hand on his shoulder.

Heyst, gazing to the southward, exclaimed:

"Sail ho!"

A moment of silence ensued.

"It must be very far away," he went on. "I don't think you could see it. Some native craft making for the Moluccas, probably. Come, we mustn't stay here."

With his arm round her waist, he led her down a little distance, and they settled themselves in the shade; she seated on the ground, he a little lower, reclining at her feet.

"You don't like to look at the sea from up there?" he said after a time.

She shook her head. That empty space was to her the abomination of desolation. But she only said again:

"It makes my head swim."

"Too big?" he inquired.

"Too lonely. It makes my heart sink, too," she added in a low voice, as if confessing a secret.

"I am afraid," said Heyst, "that you would be justified in reproaching me for these sensations. But what would you have?"

His tone was playful, but his eyes, directed at her face, were serious. She protested.

"I am not feeling lonely with you—not a bit. It is only when we come up to that place, and I look at all that water and all that light—"

"We will never come here again, then," he interrupted her.

She remained silent for a while, returning his gaze till he removed it.

"It seems as if everything that there is had gone under," she said.

"Reminds you of the story of the deluge," muttered the man, stretched at her feet and looking at them. "The vision of a world destroyed," he mused aloud. "Would you be sorry for it?"

"I should be sorry for the happy people in it," she said simply.

His gaze traveled up her figure and reached her face, where he seemed to detect the veiled glow of intelligence, as one gets a glimpse of the sun through the clouds.

"I should have thought it's they specially who ought to have been congratulated. Don't you?"

"Oh, yes—I understand what you mean; but there were forty days before it was all over."

"You seem to be in possession of all the details."

Heyst spoke just to say something rather than to gaze at her in silence. She was not looking at him.

"Sunday-school," she murmured. "I went

regularly from the time I was eight till I was thirteen. We lodged in the north of London, off the Kingsland Road. It wasn't a bad time. Father was earning good money then. The woman of the house used to pack me off in the afternoon with her own girls. She was a good woman. Her husband was in the post-office, sorter or something. Such a quiet man! He used to go off after supper for night duty, sometimes. Then one day they had a row, and broke up the home. I remember I cried when we had to pack up all of a sudden and go into other lodgings. I never knew what it was, though—"

"The deluge," muttered Heyst absently.

He felt intensely aware of her personality, as if this was the first moment of leisure he had found to look at her since they had come together. The peculiar timbre of her voice, with its modulations of audacity and sadness, would have given interest to the most inane chatter. But she was no chatterer. She was rather silent, with a capacity for immobility, an upright stillness, as when resting on the concert platform between the musical numbers, her feet crossed, her hands reposing on her lap.

But even in the intimacy of their life her gray, unabashed gaze forced upon him the sensation of something inexplicable reposing within her; stupidity or inspiration, weakness or force—or simply an abysmal emptiness, reserving itself even in the moments of complete surrender.

During a long pause she did not look at him. Then, suddenly, as if the word "deluge" had stuck in her mind, she asked, looking up at the cloudless sky:

"Does it ever rain here?"

"There is a season when it rains almost every day," said Heyst, surprised. "There are also thunder-storms. We had once a mud-shower."

"Mud-shower?"

"Our neighbor there was shooting up ashes. He sometimes clears his red-hot gullet like that; and a thunder-storm came along at the same time. It was very messy; but our neighbor is generally well-behaved—just smokes quietly, as he did that day when I first showed you the smudge in the sky from the schooner's deck. He's a good-natured, lazy fellow of a volcano."

"I saw a mountain smoking like that before," she said, staring at the slender stem of a tree-fern some dozen feet in front of her. "It wasn't very long after we left home—some few days, though. I was so ill at first

that I lost count of days. A smoking mountain—I can't think what they called it."

"Vesuvius, perhaps," suggested Heyst.

"That's the name."

"I saw it, too, years, ages ago," said Heyst.

"On your way here?"

"No, long before I ever thought of coming into this part of the world. I was yet a boy."

She turned and looked at him attentively, as if seeking to discover some trace of that boyhood in the mature face of the man with the hair thin at the top and the long, thick mustache. Heyst stood the frank examination with a playful smile, hiding the profound effect these veiled gray eyes produced—whether on his heart or on his nerves, whether sensuous or spiritual, tender or irritating, he was unable to say.

"Well, princess of Samburan," he said at last, "have I found favor in your sight?"

She seemed to wake up, and shook her head.

"I was thinking," she murmured very low.

"Thought, action—so many snares! If you begin to think you will be unhappy."

"I wasn't thinking of myself," she declared with a simplicity which took Heyst aback somewhat.

"On the lips of a moralist that would sound like a rebuke," he said, half seriously; "but I won't suspect you of being one. Moralists and I haven't been friends for many years."

She had listened with an air of attention.

"I understood you had no friends," she said. "I am pleased that there's nobody to find fault with you for what you have done. I like to think that I am in no one's way."

Heyst would have said something, but she did not give him time. Unconscious of the movement he made, she went on:

"What I was thinking to myself was, why are you here?"

Heyst let himself sink on his elbow again.

"If by 'you' you mean 'we'—well, you know why we are here."

She bent her gaze down at him.

"No, it isn't that. I meant before—all that time before you came across me and guessed at once that I was in trouble, with no one to turn to. And you know it was desperate trouble, too."

Her voice fell on the last words, as if she would end there; but there was something so expectant in Heyst's attitude as he sat at her feet, looking up at her steadily, that she continued, after drawing a short, quick breath:

"It was, really. I told you I had been worried before by bad fellows. It made me

unhappy, disturbed—angry, too. But oh, how I hated, hated, *hated* that man!”

“That man” was the florid Schomberg with the military bearing, benefactor of white men—“decent food to eat in decent company”—mature victim of belated passion. The girl shuddered. The characteristic harmoniousness of her face became, as it were, decomposed for an instant. Heyst was startled.

“Why think of it now?” he cried.

“It’s because I was cornered that time. It wasn’t as before. I was worse, ever so much. I wished I could die of my fright; and yet it’s only now that I begin to understand what a horror it might have been. Yes, only now, since we—”

Heyst stirred a little.

“Come here,” he finished.

Her tenseness relaxed, her flushed face went gradually back to its normal tint.

“Yes,” she said indifferently, but at the same time she gave him a stealthy glance of passionate appreciation; and then her face took on a melancholy cast, her whole figure drooped imperceptibly. “But you were coming back here anyhow?” she asked.

“Yes. I was only waiting for Davidson. Yes, I was coming back here, to these ruins—to Wang, who perhaps did not expect to see me again. It’s impossible to guess at the way that Chinaman draws his conclusions, and how he looks upon one.”

“Don’t talk about him. He makes me feel uncomfortable. Talk about yourself.”

“About myself? I see you are still busy with the mystery of my existence here; but it isn’t at all mysterious. A man drifts. The most successful men have drifted into their successes. I don’t want to tell you that this is a success. You wouldn’t believe me if I did. It isn’t; neither is it the ruinous failure it looks. It proves nothing, unless perhaps some hidden weakness in my character—and even that is not certain.”

He looked fixedly at her, and with such grave eyes that she felt obliged to smile faintly at him, since she did not understand what he meant. Her smile was reflected, still fainter, on his lips.

“This does not advance you much in your inquiry,” he went on. “And in truth, your question is unanswerable; but facts have a certain positive value, and I will tell you a fact. One day I met a cornered man. I use the word because it expresses the man’s situation exactly, and because you just used it yourself. He would have preferred to be killed outright—that is, to have his soul des-

patched to another world, rather than to be robbed of his substance, his very insignificant substance, in this. I saw that he believed in another world because, being cornered, as I have told you, he went down on his knees and prayed. What do you think of that?”

Heyst paused. She looked at him earnestly.

“You didn’t make fun of him for that?” she said.

Heyst made a brusque movement of protest.

“My dear girl, I am not a ruffian,” he cried. Then, returning to his usual tone: “I didn’t even have to conceal a smile. Somehow it didn’t look a smiling matter. No, it was not funny; it was rather pathetic; he was so representative of all the past victims of the Great Joke. But it is by folly alone that the world moves, and so it is a respectable thing upon the whole. And besides, he was what one would call a good man. I don’t mean especially because he had offered up a prayer. No! He was really a decent fellow, he was quite unfitted for this world, he was a failure, a good man cornered—a sight for the gods; for no decent mortal cares to look at that sort.” A thought seemed to occur to him. He turned his face to the girl. “And you, who have been cornered, too—did you think of offering a prayer?”

Neither her eyes nor a single one of her features moved the least bit. She only let fall the words:

“I am not what they call a good girl.”

“That sounds evasive,” said Heyst after a short silence. “Well, the good fellow did pray, and after he had confessed to it I was struck by the comicality of the situation. No, don’t misunderstand me—I am not alluding to his act, of course. What captivated my fancy was that I, Axel Heyst, the most detached of creatures in this earthly captivity, the veriest tramp on this earth, an indifferent stroller going through the world’s bustle—that I should have been there to step into the situation as an agent of Providence. I got him out of his corner, you know.”

“You saved a man for fun—is that what you mean? Just for fun?”

“Why this tone of suspicion?” remonstrated Heyst. “I suppose the sight of this particular distress was disagreeable to me. What you call fun came afterward, when it dawned on me that I was for him a walking, breathing, incarnate proof of the efficacy of prayer. His gratitude was simply frightful. Funny position, wasn’t it?”

“The boredom came later, when we lived together on board his ship. I had, in a mo-

ment of inadvertence, created for myself a tie. How to define it precisely I don't know. One gets attached in a way to people one has done something for. But is that friendship? I am not sure what it was. I only know that he who forms a tie is lost. The germ of corruption has entered into him."

Heyst's tone was light, with the flavor of playfulness which seasoned all his speeches and seemed to be of the very essence of his thoughts. The girl he had come across, of whom he had possessed himself, to whose presence he was not yet accustomed, with whom he did not yet know how to live; that human being so near and still so strange, gave him a greater sense of his own reality than he had ever known in all his life.

XIX

WITH her knees drawn up, Lena rested her elbows on them and held her head in both her hands.

"Are you tired of sitting here?" Heyst asked.

An almost imperceptible negative movement of the head was all the answer she made.

"Why are you looking so serious?" he pursued, and immediately thought that habitual seriousness, in the long run, was much more bearable than constant gaiety. "However, this expression suits you exceedingly," he added, not diplomatically, but because, by the tendency of his taste, it was a true statement. "And as long as I can be certain that it is not boredom which gives you this severe air, I am willing to sit here and look at you till you are ready to go."

And this was true. He was still under the fresh sortilege of their common life, the surprise of novelty, the flattered vanity of his possession of this woman; for a man must feel that, unless he has ceased to be masculine.

Her eyes moved in his direction, rested on him, then returned to their stare into the deeper gloom at the foot of the straight tree-trunks, whose spreading crowns were slowly withdrawing their shade. The warm air stirred slightly about her motionless head. She would not look at him, from some obscure fear of betraying herself. She felt in her innermost depths an irresistible desire to give herself up to him more completely, by some act of absolute sacrifice.

This was something of which he seemed to have no idea. He was a strange being without needs. She felt his eyes fixed upon her; and as he kept silent, she said uneasily—for she didn't know what his silences might mean:

"And so you lived with that friend—that good man?"

"Excellent fellow," Heyst responded, with a readiness that she did not expect. "But it was a weakness on my part. I really didn't want to, only he wouldn't let me off, and I couldn't explain. He was the sort of man to whom you can't explain anything. He was extremely sensitive, and it would have been a tigerish thing to do to mangle his delicate feelings by the sort of plain speaking that would have been necessary. He was extremely easy to live with; but then he got hold of this coal idea—or, rather, the idea got hold of him. It was going to make his fortune, my fortune, everybody's fortune. In past years, in moments of doubt that will come to a man determined to remain free from the absurdities of existence, I often asked myself, with a momentary dread, in what way would life try to get hold of me? And this was the way! He got it into his head that he could do nothing without me. And was I now, he asked me, to spurn and ruin him? Well, one morning—I wonder if he had gone down on his knees to pray!—one morning I gave in."

Heyst tugged violently at a tuft of dried grass, and cast it away from him with a nervous gesture.

"I gave in," he repeated.

Looking toward him with a movement of her eyes only, the girl noticed the strong feeling on his face with that intense interest which his person awakened in her mind and in her heart. But it soon passed away, leaving only a moody expression.

"It's difficult to resist where nothing matters," he observed. "And perhaps there is a grain of freakishness in my nature. It amused me to go about uttering silly, commonplace phrases. I believe I was never so well thought of in the islands till I began to jabber commercial gibberish like the veriest idiot. Upon my word, I believe that I was actually respected for a time. I was as grave as an owl over it; I had to be loyal to the man. I thought he understood something about coal; and if I had been aware that he knew nothing of it, as in fact he didn't, well—I don't know what I could have done to stop him. In one way or another I should have had to be loyal. Truth, work, ambition, love itself, may be only counters in the lamentable or despicable game of life, but when one takes a hand one must play the game. No, the shade of Morrison needn't haunt me. What's the matter? I say, Lena, why are you staring like that? Do you feel ill?"

Heyst made as if to get on his feet. The girl extended her arm to arrest him, and he remained staring in a sitting posture, propped on one arm, observing her indefinable expression of anxiety, as if she were unable to draw breath.

"What has come to you?" he insisted, feeling strangely unwilling to move, to touch her.

"Nothing." She swallowed painfully. "Of course it can't be. What name did you say? I didn't hear it properly."

"Name?" repeated Heyst dazedly. "I only mentioned Morrison. It's the name of that man of whom I've been speaking. What of it?"

"And you mean to say that he was your friend?"

"You have heard enough to judge for yourself. You know as much of our connection as I know myself. The people in this part of the world went by appearances, and called us friends, as far as I can remember. Appearances—what more, what better can you ask for? In fact, you can't have better. You can't have anything else."

"You are trying to confuse me with your talk," she cried. "You can't make fun of this."

"Can't? Well, no, I can't. It's a pity. Perhaps it would have been the best way," said Heyst, in a tone which for him could be called gloomy. "Unless one could forget the silly business altogether." His faint playfulness of manner and speech returned, like a habit one has schooled oneself into, even before his forehead had cleared completely. "But why are you looking so hard at me? Oh, I don't object, and I shall try not to flinch. Your eyes—"

He was looking straight into them, and as a matter of fact had forgotten all about the late Morrison at that moment.

"No!" he exclaimed suddenly. "What an impenetrable girl you are, Lena, with those gray eyes of yours! Windows of the soul, as some poet has said. The fellow must have been a glazier by vocation. Well, nature has provided excellently for the shyness of your soul."

When he ceased speaking, the girl came to herself with a catch of her breath. He heard her voice, the varied charm of which he thought he knew so well, saying with an unfamiliar intonation:

"And that partner of yours is dead?"

"Morrison? Oh, yes, as I've told you, he—"

"You never told me."

"Didn't I? I thought I did; or, rather, I thought you must know. It seems impossible that anybody with whom I speak should not know that Morrison is dead."

She lowered her eyelids, and Heyst was startled by something like an expression of horror on her face.

"Morrison!" she whispered in an appalled tone. "Morrison!"

Her head drooped.

Unable to see her features, Heyst could tell from her voice that for some reason or other she was profoundly moved by the syllables of that unromantic name. A thought flashed through his head—could she have known Morrison? But the mere difference of their origins made it wildly improbable.

"This is very extraordinary!" he said. "Have you ever heard the name before?"

Her head moved quickly several times in tiny affirmative nods, as if she could not trust herself to speak, or even to look at him. She was biting her lower lip.

"Did you ever know anybody of that name?" he asked.

The girl answered by a negative sign; and then at last she spoke, jerkily, as if forcing herself against some doubt or fear. She had heard of that very man, she told Heyst.

"Impossible!" he said positively. "You are mistaken. You couldn't have heard of him. It's—"

He stopped short, with the thought that to talk like this was perfectly useless; that one doesn't argue against thin air.

"But I did hear of him; only I didn't know then, I couldn't guess, that it was your partner they were talking about."

"Talking about my partner?" repeated Heyst slowly.

"No." Her mind seemed almost as bewildered, as full of incredulity, as his. "No. They were talking of you, really; only I didn't know it."

"Who were they?" Heyst raised his voice. "Tell me, who was talking of me? Talking where?"

With the first question he had lifted himself from his reclining position; at the last he was on his knees before her, their heads on a level.

"Why, in that town, in that hotel. Where else could it have been?" she said.

The idea of being talked about was always novel to Heyst's simplified conception of himself. For a moment he was as much surprised as if he had believed himself to be a mere gliding shadow among men. Besides, he had

in him a half-unconscious notion that he was above the level of island gossip.

"But you said first that it was of Morrison they talked," he remarked to the girl, sinking on his heels, and no longer much interested. "Strange that you should have the opportunity to hear any talk at all! I was rather under the impression that you never saw anybody belonging to the town except from the platform."

"You forget that I was not living with the other girls," she said. "After meals they used to go back to the pavilion, but I had to stay in the hotel and do my sewing, or what not, in the room where they talked."

"I didn't think of that. By the bye, you never told me who *they* were."

"Why, that horrible red-faced beast," she said, with all the energy of disgust which the mere thought of the hotel-keeper provoked in her.

"Oh, Schomberg!" Heyst murmured carelessly.

"He talked to the boss—to Zangiaco, I mean. I had to sit there. That devil-woman sometimes wouldn't let me go away. I mean Mrs. Zangiaco."

"I guessed," murmured Heyst. "She liked to torment you in a variety of ways. But it is really strange that the hotel-keeper should talk of Morrison to Zangiaco. As far as I can remember, he saw very little of Morrison professionally. He knew many others much better."

The girl shuddered slightly.

"That was the only name I ever overheard. I would get as far away from them as I could, to the other end of the room; but when that beast started shouting, I could not help hearing. You don't seem to want to know what he was saying."

"About poor Morrison? It couldn't have been anything bad, for the poor fellow was innocence itself. And then, you know, he is dead, and nothing can possibly matter to him now."

"But I tell you that it was of *you* he was talking!" she cried. "He was saying that Morrison's partner first got all there was to get out of him, and then, and then—well, as good as murdered him—sent him out to die somewhere!"

"You believed that of me?" said Heyst, after a moment of perfect stillness.

"I didn't know it had anything to do with you. Schomberg was talking of some Swede. How was I to know? It was only when you began telling me about how you came here—"

"And now you have my version." Heyst forced himself to speak quietly. "So that's how the business looked from outside!" he muttered bitterly.

"I remember him saying that everybody in these parts knew the story," the girl added breathlessly.

"Strange that it should hurt me!" mused Heyst to himself; "yet it does. I seem to be as much of a fool as those everybodies who know the story—and no doubt believe it. Can you remember any more?" he addressed the girl in a grimly polite tone. "I've often heard of the moral advantages of seeing oneself as others see one. Let us investigate further. Can't you recall something else that everybody knows?"

"Oh! Don't laugh!" she cried.

"Did I laugh? I assure you I was not aware. I won't ask you whether you believe the hotel-keeper's version. Surely you must know the value of human judgment."

She unclasped her hands, moved them slightly, and twined her fingers as before. Protest? Assent? Was there to be nothing more? He was relieved when she spoke in that warm and wonderful voice which in itself comforted and fascinated one's heart, which made her lovable.

"I heard this before you and I ever spoke to each other. It went out of my memory afterward. Everything went out of my memory then; and I was glad of it. It was a fresh start for me, with you—and you know it. I wish I had forgotten who I was—that would have been best for me; and I very nearly did forget."

He was moved by the vibrating quality of the last words. She seemed to be talking low of some wonderful enchantment, in mysterious terms of special significance. He thought that if she only could talk to him in some unknown tongue, she would enslave him altogether by the sheer beauty of the sound, suggesting infinite depths of wisdom and feeling.

"But," she went on, "the name stuck in my head, it seems; and when you mentioned it—"

"It broke the spell," muttered Heyst in angry disappointment, as if he had been deceived in some hope.

The girl, from her position a little above him, surveyed with still eyes the abstracted silence of the man on whom she now depended with a completeness of which she had not been vividly conscious before, because, till then, she had never felt herself swinging between the abyss of earth and heaven in the

hollow of his arm. What if he should grow weary of the burden?

"And, moreover, nobody had ever believed that tale!"

Heyst came out with an abrupt burst of sound which made her open her steady eyes wider, with an effect of immense surprise. It was a purely mechanical effect, because she was neither surprised nor puzzled. In fact, she could understand him better then than at any moment since she first set eyes on him.

He laughed scornfully.

"What am I thinking of?" he cried. "As if it could matter to me what anybody had ever said or believed, from the beginning of the world till the crack of doom!"

"I never heard you laugh till to-day," she observed. "This is the second time."

He scrambled to his feet and towered above her.

"That's because, when one's heart has been broken into in the way you have broken into mine, all sorts of weaknesses are free to enter in as well—shame, anger, stupid indignation, stupid fears—and stupid laughter, too. I wonder what interpretation you are putting on it, Lena?"

"It wasn't gay, certainly," she said. "But why are you angry with me? Are you sorry you took me away from those beasts? I told you who I was. You could see it."

"Heavens!" he muttered. He had regained his command of himself. "I assure you I could see much more than you could tell me. I could see quite a lot that you don't even suspect yet; but you can't be seen quite through."

He sank to the ground by her side and took her hand. She asked gently:

"What more do you want from me?"

He made no sound for a time.

"The impossible, I suppose," he said very low, as one makes a confidence, and pressing the hand he grasped.

It lay motionless in his, and did not return the pressure. He shook his head as if to drive away the thought of this, and added in a louder, light tone:

"Nothing less. And it isn't because I think little of what I've got already. Oh, no! It is because I think so much of this possession of mine that I can't have it complete enough. I know it's unreasonable. You can't hold back anything—now."

"Indeed I couldn't," she whispered, letting her hand lie passive in his tight grasp. "I only wish I could give you something more, or better, or whatever it is you want."

He was touched by the sincere accent of these simple words.

"I tell you what you can do—you can tell me whether you would have gone with me like this if you had known of whom that abominable idiot of a hotel-keeper was speaking. A murderer—no less!"

"But I didn't know you at all then," she cried. "And I had the sense to understand what he was saying. It wasn't murder, really. I never thought it was."

"What made him invent such an atrocity?" Heyst exclaimed. "He seems a stupid animal. He is stupid. How did he manage to hatch that pretty tale? Have I a particularly vile countenance? Is black selfishness written all over my face? Or is that sort of thing so universally human that it might be said of anybody?"

"It wasn't murder," she insisted earnestly.

"I know. I understand. It was worse. As to killing a man, which would be a comparatively decent thing to do, well—I have never done that."

"Why should you do it?" she asked in a frightened voice.

"My dear girl, you don't know the sort of life I have been leading in unexplored countries, in the wilds; it's difficult to give you an idea. There are men who haven't been in such tight places as I have found myself in who have had to—to shed blood, as the saying is. Even the wilds hold prizes which tempt some people; but I had no schemes, no plans—and not even great firmness of mind to make me unduly obstinate. I was simply moving on, while the others, perhaps, were going somewhere. An indifference as to roads and purposes makes one meeker, as it were. And I may say truly, too, that I never did care, I won't say for life—I had scorned what people call by that name from the first—but for being alive. I don't know if that is what men call courage, but I doubt it very much."

"You! You have no courage?" she protested.

"I really don't know. Not the sort that always itches for a weapon, for I have never been anxious to use one in the quarrels that a man gets into in the most innocent way sometimes. I won't say that I have never been in danger. On the contrary, I have, and fairly often, too; but when it came from my fellow creatures, whether through carelessness, or impudence, or natural aversion from bloodshed, I have never jumped to sudden conclusions. I let the danger develop; and when one has the sense to do that, it often

passes away. The differences for which men murder one another are, like everything else they do, the most contemptible, the most pitiful things to look back upon. No, I've never killed a man or loved a woman—not even in my thoughts, not even in my dreams.”

He raised her hand to his lips, and let them rest on it for a space, during which she moved a little closer to him. After the lingering kiss he did not relinquish his hold.

“To slay, to love—the great enterprises of life for man! And I have no experience of either. You must forgive me anything that may have appeared to you awkward in my behavior, inexpressive in my speeches, untimely in my silences.”

He moved uneasily, a little disappointed by her silence, but indulgent to it, and feeling, in this moment of perfect quietness, that in holding her surrendered hand he had found a closer communion than they had ever achieved before. But even then there still lingered in him a sense of incompleteness not altogether overcome—which, it seemed, nothing ever would overcome—the fatal imperfection of all the gifts of life, which makes of them a delusion and a snare.

All of a sudden he squeezed her hand angrily.

“I! I to do a deadly wrong to my poor Morrison!” he cried. “I, who could not bear to hurt his feelings! I, who respected his very madness! Yes, this madness, the wreck of which you can see lying about the jetty of Black Diamond Bay. What else could I do? He insisted on regarding me as his savior; he was always restraining the eternal obligation on the tip of his tongue, till I was burning with shame at his gratitude. What could I do? He was going to repay me with this infernal coal, and I had to join him as one joins a child's game in a nursery. One would no more have thought of humiliating him than one would think of humiliating a child. What power there must be in words, only imperfectly heard—for you did not listen with particular care, did you? What were they, I wonder? What evil effort of invention drove them into that idiot's mouth out of his lying throat? If you were to try to remember, they would perhaps convince me, too.”

“I didn't listen,” she protested. “What was it to me what they said of anybody? He was saying that there never were such loving friends to look at as you two; that you couldn't live without Morrison; and then, when you got all you wanted out of him and

got thoroughly tired of him, too, you kicked him out to go home and die.”

Indignation, with an undercurrent of some other feeling, rang in these quoted words, uttered in her pure and enchanting voice. She ceased abruptly and lowered her long, dark lashes, as if mortally weary, sick at heart.

“Of course, why shouldn't you get tired of that or any other—company? You aren't like any one else, and—and the thought of it made me unhappy suddenly; but indeed, I did not believe anything bad of you. I—”

A brusque movement of his arm, flinging her hand away, stopped her short. Heyst had again lost control of himself. He would have shouted, if shouting had been in his character.

“No, this earth must be the appointed hatching planet of calumny enough to furnish the whole universe! I feel a disgust at my own person, as if I had tumbled into some filthy hole. Pah! And you—all you can say is that you won't judge me; that you—”

She raised her head at this attack, though indeed he had not turned to her.

“I don't believe anything bad of you,” she repeated. “I couldn't.”

He made a gesture as if to say:

“That's sufficient.”

In his soul and in his body he experienced a nervous reaction from tenderness. All at once, without transition, he detested her. But only for a moment. He remembered that she was pretty, and, more, that she had a special grace in the intimacy of life. She had the secret of individuality which excites—and escapes.

He scrambled to his feet briskly, and began to walk to and fro. Presently his hidden fury fell into dust within him, like a crazy structure, leaving behind emptiness, desolation, regret. His resentment was not against the girl, but against life itself—that commonest of snares, in which he felt himself caught, seeing clearly the plot of plots and unconsoled by the lucidity of his mind.

He swerved in his rapid tramp, and, stepping up to her, sank to the ground by her side. Before she could make a movement, or even turn her head his way, he took her in his arms and kissed her on the heavy, well-shaped lips within which the teeth shone with a peculiar light. He drank on them the moisture of a tear fallen there—a drop of sorrow whose bitterness surprised him, because he had not noticed that she had been crying.

He had never seen her cry. It was like another appeal to his tenderness—and a new seduction. The girl glanced at him, moved

suddenly away, and averted her face. With her hand she signed imperiously to him to leave her alone—a command which Heyst did not obey. He found no resistance.

XX

WHEN she opened her eyes at last and sat up, Heyst scrambled quickly to his feet and went to pick up her cork helmet, which had rolled a little way off. Meanwhile she busied herself in doing up her hair, plaited on the top of her head in two heavy, dark tresses, which had come loose.

He tendered her the helmet in silence, and waited a while, as if unwilling to hear the sound of his own voice.

"We had better go down now," he suggested in a low tone.

He extended his hand to help her up. While doing this, he had the intention to smile, but abandoned it at the nearer sight of her still face, in which was depicted infinite lassitude.

On their way to regain the forest path they had to pass through the spot from which the view to the westward could be obtained. The flaming abyss of emptiness, the liquid, undulating glare, the tragic brutality of the light, made her long for the friendly night, with its stars stilled by an austere spell; for the velvety dark sky and the mysterious great shadow of the sea, conveying peace to the day-weary heart.

She put her hand to her eyes. Behind her back Heyst spoke gently.

"Let us get on, Lena."

She walked ahead in silence. Heyst remarked that they had never been out before during the hottest hours. It would do her no good, he feared.

His solicitude pleased and soothed her. She felt more and more like herself—a poor London girl playing in an orchestra, and snatched out from the humiliations, the squalid dangers of a miserable existence, by a man like whom there was not, there could not be, another in this world. She felt this with elation, with uneasiness, with an intimate pride—and with a peculiar sinking of the heart.

"I am not easily knocked out by any such thing as heat," she said decisively.

"Yes, but I don't forget that you're not a tropical bird."

"You weren't born in these parts, either."

"No, and perhaps I haven't even your physique. I am a transplanted being. Transplanted! I ought to call myself uprooted—an unnatural state of existence; but a man is supposed to stand anything."

She looked back at him and received a smile. He told her to keep in the shelter of the forest path, which was very still and close, full of heat if free from glare. Now and then they had glimpses of the company's old clearing, blazing with light, in which the black stumps of trees stood charred, without shadows, miserable and sinister.

They crossed the open in a direct line for the bungalow. On the veranda they fancied they had a glimpse of a vanishing Wang, though the girl was not at all sure that she had seen anything move. Heyst had no doubts.

"Wang has been looking out for us. We are late!"

"Was he? I thought I saw something white for a moment, and then I did not see it any more."

"That's it—he vanishes. It's a very remarkable gift in that Chinaman."

"Are they all like that?" she asked with naive curiosity and uneasiness.

"Not in such perfection," said Heyst, amused.

He noticed with approval that she was not heated by the walk. The drops of perspiration on her forehead were like dew on the cool, white petal of a flower. He looked at her figure of grace and strength, solid and supple, with an ever-growing appreciation.

"Go in and rest yourself for a quarter of an hour; and then Mr. Wang will give us something to eat," he said.

They had found the table laid. When they came together again and sat down to it, Wang materialized without a sound, unheard, uncalled, and did his office. Which being accomplished, at a given moment he was not.

A great silence brooded over Samburan—the silence of the great heat that seems pregnant with fatal issues, like the silence of ardent thought. Heyst remained alone in the big room. The girl, seeing him take up a book, had retreated to her chamber.

Heyst sat down under his father's portrait; and the abominable calumny crept back into his recollection. The taste of it came on his lips, nauseating and corrosive like some kinds of poison. He was tempted to spit on the floor, naively, in sheer unsophisticated disgust of the physical sensation.

He shook his head, surprised at himself. He was not used to receive his intellectual impressions in that way—reflected in movements of carnal emotion. He stirred impatiently in his chair, and raised the book to his eyes with both hands.

It was one of his father's. He opened it haphazard, and his eyes fell on the middle of the page. The elder Heyst had written of everything—of space and of time, of animals and of stars; analyzing ideas and actions, the laughter and the frowns of men, and the grimaces of their agony. The son read, shrinking into himself, composing his face as if under the author's eye, with a vivid consciousness of the portrait on his right hand, a little above his head; a wonderful presence in its heavy frame on the flimsy wall of mats, looking exiled and at home, out of place and masterful, in the painted immobility of profile.

Of the stratagems of life, the most cruel is the consolation of love—the most subtle, too; for the desire is the bed of dreams.

He turned the pages of the little volume, "Storm and Dust," glancing here and there at the broken text of reflections, maxims, short phrases, enigmatical sometimes and sometimes eloquent. It seemed to him that he was hearing his father's voice, speaking and ceasing to speak again.

Startled at first, he ended by a smile. There was a charm in the illusion. He abandoned himself to the half-belief that something of his father dwelt yet on earth—a ghostly voice, audible to the ear of his own flesh and blood. With what strange serenity, mingled with terrors, had that man considered the universal nothingness! He had plunged into it headlong, perhaps to render death, the answer that faced one at every inquiry, more supportable.

Heyst stirred, and the ghostly voice ceased; but his eyes followed the words on the last page of the book:

Men of tormented conscience, or of a criminal imagination, are aware of much that minds of a peaceful, resigned cast do not even suspect. It is not poets alone who dare descend into the abyss of infernal regions, or even who dream of such a descent. The most inexpressive of human beings must have said to himself, at one time or another:

"Anything but this!"

We all have our instants of clairvoyance. They are not very helpful. The character of the scheme does not permit that or anything else to be helpful.

Clairvoyance or no clairvoyance, men love their captivity. To the unknown force of negation they prefer the miserably tumbled bed of their servitude. Man alone can give one the disgust of pity; yet I find it easier to believe in the misfortune of mankind than in its wickedness.

These were the last words. Heyst lowered

the book to his knees. Lena's voice spoke above his drooping head:

"You sit there as if you were unhappy."

"I thought you were asleep," he said.

"I was lying down, right enough, but I never closed my eyes."

"The rest would have done you good after our walk. Didn't you try?"

"I was lying down, I tell you, but sleep I couldn't."

"And you made no sound? What want of sincerity! Or did you want to be alone for a time?"

"I—alone!" she murmured.

He noticed her eying the book, and got up to put it back in the bookcase. When he turned round, he saw that she had dropped into the chair—it was the one she always used—and looked as if her strength had suddenly gone from her, leaving her only her youth, which seemed very pathetic, very much at his mercy. He moved quickly toward the chair.

"Tired, are you? It's my fault, taking you up so high and keeping you out so long. Such a windless day, too!"

She watched his concern, her pose languid, her eyes raised to him, but as unreadable as ever. He avoided looking into them for that very reason. He forgot himself in the contemplation of those passive arms, of these defenseless lips, and—yes, one had to go back to them—of these wide-open eyes. Something wild in their stare made him think of sea-birds in the cold murkiness of high latitudes.

He started when she spoke, all the charm of physical intimacy revealed suddenly in that voice.

"You should try to love me!" she said.

Heyst made a slight movement of astonishment.

"Try!" he muttered. "But it seems to me—" He broke off with a confused sensation of anger, while at the same time he was saying to himself that if he loved her, he had never told her so in so many words. Simple words! They died on his lips. "What makes you say that?" he asked.

She lowered her eyelids and turned her head a little.

"I have done nothing," she said in a low voice. "It's you who have been good, helpful, and tender to me. Perhaps you love me for that—just for that; or perhaps you love me for company, and because—well! But sometimes it seems to me that you can never love me for myself, only for myself, as people do love each other when it is to be forever." Her head hung low. "Forever," she breathed

out again; then, still more faintly, she added an entreating: "Do try!"

These last words went straight to his heart—the sound of them more than the sense. He did not know what to say, either from want of practise in dealing with women, or simply from his innate honesty of thought. All his defenses were broken now. Life had him fairly by the throat. But he managed a smile, though she was not looking at him; yes, he did manage it—the well-known Heyst smile of playful courtesy, so familiar to all sorts and conditions of men in the islands.

"My dear Lena," he said, "it looks as if you were trying to pick a very unnecessary quarrel with me—of all people!"

She made no movement. With his elbows spread out, he was twisting the ends of his long mustache, very masculine and perplexed, enveloped in the atmosphere of femininity as in a cloud, suspecting pitfalls, and as if afraid to move.

"I must admit, though," he added, "that there is no one else; and I suppose a certain amount of quarreling is necessary for existence in this world."

He stopped, struck afresh by the physical and moral sense of the imperfection of their relations—a sense which made him desire her constant nearness, before his eyes; under his hand, and which, when she was out of his sight, made her so vague, so illusive and illusory, a promise that could not be embraced and held.

"No," he began again. "It's possible that I may be really capable of that which they say I have done. The point is that I haven't done it. But it is an unpleasant subject to me. I ought to be ashamed to confess it—but it is! Let us forget it. There's that in you, Lena, which can console me for worse things, for uglier passages. And if we forget, there are no voices here to remind us."

She had raised her head before he paused.

"Nothing can break in on us here," he went on.

As if there had been an appeal or a provocation in her upward glance, he bent down and took her under the arms, raising her straight out of the chair into a sudden and close embrace. Her alacrity to respond, which made her seem as light as a feather, warmed his heart at that moment more than closer caresses had done before. He had not expected that ready impulse toward himself which had been dormant in her passive attitude.

He had just felt the clasp of her arms round

his neck when, with a slight exclamation—"He's here!"—she disengaged herself and bolted away into her room.

XXI

HEYST was astounded. Looking all round, as if to take the whole room to witness of this outrage, he became aware of Wang materialized in the doorway.

The intrusion was as surprising as anything could be, in view of the strict regularity with which Wang made himself visible. Heyst was tempted to laugh at first. This practical comment on his affirmation that nothing could break in on them relieved the strain of his feelings. He was a little vexed, too.

The Chinaman preserved a profound silence.

"What do you want here?" asked Heyst sternly.

"Boat out there," said the Chinaman.

"Where? What do you mean? Boat adrift in the straits?"

Some subtle change in Wang's bearing suggested his being out of breath; but he did not pant, and his voice was steady.

"No—row."

It was Heyst now who was startled and raised his voice.

"Malay man, eh?"

Wang made a slight negative movement with his head.

"Do you hear, Lena?" Heyst called out. "Wang says there is a boat in sight—somewhere near, apparently. Where's the boat, Wang?"

"Round the point," said Wang, leaping into Malay unexpectedly, and in a loud voice. "White men. Three."

"So close as that?" exclaimed Heyst, moving out on the veranda, followed by Wang. "White men? Impossible!"

Over the clearing the shadows were already lengthening. The sun hung low; a ruddy glare lay on the burned black patch in front of the bungalow, and slanted on the ground between the straight, tall, mastlike trees soaring a hundred feet or more without a branch. The growth of bushes cut off all view of the jetty from the veranda. Far away to the right Wang's hut, or rather its dark roof of mats, could be seen above the bamboo fence which insured the privacy of the Alfuro woman.

The Chinaman looked that way swiftly. Heyst paused, and then stepped back a pace into the room.

"White men, Lena, apparently. What are you doing?"

"I am just bathing my eyes a little," the girl's voice said from the inner room.

"Oh, yes; all right!"

"Do you want me?"

"No. You had better—I am going down to the jetty. Yes, you had better stay in. What an extraordinary thing!"

It was so extraordinary that nobody could possibly appreciate how extraordinary it was but himself. His mind was full of mere exclamations, while his feet were carrying him swiftly in the direction of the jetty. He followed the line of the rails, escorted by Wang.

"Where were you when you first saw the boat?" he asked over his shoulder.

Wang explained in Malay that he had gone to the shore end of the wharf, to get a few lumps of coal from the big heap, when, happening to raise his eyes from the ground, he saw the boat—a white man's boat, not a canoe. He had good eyes. He had seen the boat, with the men at the oars; and here Wang made a particular gesture over his eyes, as if his vision had received a blow. He had turned at once and run to the house to report.

"No mistake, eh?" said Heyst, moving on.

At the very outer edge of the belt he stopped, short. Wang halted behind him on the path, till the voice of Number One sharply called the Chinaman forward into the open. He obeyed.

"Where's that boat?" asked Heyst forcibly.

Nothing whatever was to be seen between the point and the jetty. The stretch of Black Diamond Bay was like a piece of purple shadow, lustrous and empty. Clear of the land, the open sea lay blue and opaque under the sun. Heyst's eyes swept all over the offing till they met, far off, the dark cone of the volcano, with its faint plume of smoke broadening and vanishing everlastingly at the top, without altering its shape, in the glowing transparency of the evening.

"The fellow has been dreaming," he muttered to himself.

He looked hard at the Chinaman. Wang seemed turned into stone. Suddenly, as if he had received a shock, he started, flung his arm out with a pointing forefinger, and made guttural noises to the effect that there, there, there, he had seen a boat.

Heyst shrugged his shoulders. Wang's finger was pointing at nothing. It was very uncanny. Heyst thought of some strange hallucination. Unlikely enough; but that a boat with three men in it should have sunk between the point and the jetty, suddenly, like a stone, without leaving as much on the surface as a

floating oar, was still more unlikely. The theory of a phantom boat would have been more credible than that.

"Confound it!" he muttered to himself.

He was unpleasantly affected by this mystery; but now a simple explanation occurred to him. He hastily stepped out on the wharf. The boat, if it had existed and had retreated, could perhaps be seen from the far end of the long jetty.

Nothing was to be seen. Heyst let his eyes roam idly over the sea. He was so absorbed in his perplexity that a hollow sound, as of somebody falling down in a boat, with a clatter of oars and spars, failed to make him move for a moment. It reached his ears plainly enough, but he had failed to understand it at first.

When his mind seized its meaning, he had no difficulty in locating the sound. It had come from below—from under the jetty!

He ran back for a dozen yards or so, and then looked over. His sight plunged straight into the stern-sheets of a big boat, the greater part of which was hidden from him by the planking of the jetty. His eyes fell on the thin back of a man doubled up over the tiller in a queer, uncomfortable attitude of drooping sorrow. Another man, more directly below Heyst, sprawled on his back from gunwale to gunwale, half off the after thwart, his head lower than his feet. This second man glared wildly upward, struggled to raise himself, but to all appearances was much too drunk to succeed.

The visible part of the boat contained also a flat, leather trunk, on which the first man's long legs were nervelessly tucked up. A large earthenware jar, with its wide mouth uncorked, rolled out on the bottom boards from under the sprawling man.

Heyst had never been so much astonished in his life. He stared in dumb wonder at the strange boat's crew. From the first he was positive that these men were not sailors. They wore the white drill suit of tropical civilization; but their apparition in a boat Heyst could not connect with anything plausible. The civilization of the tropics could have had nothing to do with it. It was more like the myths, current in Polynesia, of amazing strangers who arrive at an island, gods or demons, bringing good or evil to the innocence of the inhabitants—gifts of unknown things, words never heard before.

Heyst noticed a cork helmet floating alongside the boat, evidently fallen from the head of the man doubled over the tiller, who dis-

played a dark, bony poll. An oar, too, had been knocked overboard, probably by the sprawling man, who was still struggling between the thwarts.

By this time Heyst regarded the visitation no longer with surprise, but with the sustained attention demanded by a difficult problem. With one foot posed on the string-piece, and leaning on his raised knee, he instinctively abstained from speaking. His quiet gaze was taking in everything.

The sprawling man rolled off the thwart, collapsed, and, most unexpectedly, got on his feet. He swayed dizzily, spreading his arms out, and uttered faintly a hoarse, as if dreamy, "Hello!"

His upturned face was swollen, red, peeling all over the nose and cheeks. His stare was irrational. Heyst perceived stains of dried blood all over the front of his dirty white coat, and also on one sleeve.

"What's the matter? Are you wounded?"

The other glanced down, reeled—one of his feet was inside a large pith hat—and, recovering himself, let out a dismal, grating sound in the manner of a laugh.

"Blood—not mine. Thirst's the matter. Exhausted's the matter. Done up. Water, man! Give us water!"

Thirst was in the very tone of his words, alternating a broken croak and a faint, throaty rustle which just reached Heyst's ears. The man in the boat raised his hands to be helped up on the jetty, whispering:

"I tried. I am too weak. I tumbled down."

Wang was coming along the jetty slowly, with intent, straining eyes.

"Run back and bring a crowbar here. There's one lying by the coal-heap," Heyst shouted to him.

The man standing in the boat sat down on the thwart behind him. A horrible coughing laugh came through his swollen lips.

"Crowbar? What's that for?" he mumbled, and suddenly his head dropped on his chest.

Meantime Heyst, as if he had forgotten the boat, was busy kicking hard at a large brass tap projecting above the planks. To accommodate ships that came for coal and happened to need water as well, a stream had been tapped in the interior and an iron pipe led along the jetty. It terminated with a curved end almost exactly where the strangers' boat had been driven between the piles; but the tap was set fast.

"Hurry up!" Heyst yelled to the China-

man, who was running with the crowbar in his hand.

Heyst snatched it from him, and, obtaining a leverage against the string-piece, wrung the stiff tap round with a mighty jerk.

"If only that pipe hasn't got choked!" he muttered to himself.

It hadn't; but it did not yield a strong gush, as he expected. The sound of a thin stream, partly breaking on the gunwale of the boat and partly splashing alongside, became at once audible. It provoked a cry of inarticulate and savage joy.

Heyst knelt on the string-piece and peered down. The man who had spoken was already holding his open mouth under the bright trickle. His face, with closed eyes, had an air of ecstasy. Water ran over his eyelids and over his nose, gurgled down his throat, flowed over his chin.

Then some obstruction in the pipe gave way, and a sudden, thick jet broke on his face. In a moment his shoulders were soaked, the front of his coat inundated; he streamed and dripped; water ran into his pockets, down his legs, into his shoes; but he had clutched the end of the pipe, and, hanging on with both hands, swallowed, spluttered, choked, snorted with the noises of a swimmer.

Suddenly a curious dull roar reached Heyst's ears. Something hairy and black flew from under the jetty. A disheveled head, coming on like a cannon-ball, took the man at the pipe in flank with such force as to tear his grip loose and fling him headlong into the stern-sheets. He fell upon the folded legs of the man at the tiller, who, roused by the commotion in the boat, was sitting up, silent, rigid, and very much like a corpse. His eyes were but two black patches, and his teeth glistened with a death's-head grin between his retracted lips, which were no thicker than blackish parchment glued over his gums.

From him Heyst's eyes wandered to the creature who had replaced the first man at the end of the water-pipe. Enormous brown paws clutched it desperately; the wild, big head hung back, and in a face covered with a wet mass of hair there gaped crookedly a wide mouth full of fangs. The water filled it, welled up in hoarse coughs, ran down on each side of the jaws and down the hairy throat, soaked the black pelt of the enormous chest, which was naked under a torn check shirt, and which heaved convulsively with a play of massive muscles carved in red mahogany.

As soon as the second man had recovered the breath knocked out of him by the apelike

monster's irresistible charge, a scream of mad cursing issued from the stern-sheets. With a rigid, angular crooking of the elbow the man at the tiller put his hand back to his hip.

"Don't shoot him, Mr. Jones!" yelled the second man. "Wait! Let me have that tiller. I will teach him to shove himself in front of a *caballero!*"

Martin Ricardo flourished the heavy piece of wood, leaped forward with astonishing vigor, and brought it down on Pedro's head with a crash that resounded all over the quiet sweep of Black Diamond Bay.

A crimson patch appeared on the matted hair; red veins appeared in the water flowing all over his face, and it dripped in rosy drops off his head. But the man hung on. Not till a second furious blow descended did the hairy paws let go their grip and the squirming body sink limply. Before it could touch the bottom boards a tremendous kick in the ribs from Ricardo's foot shifted it forward out of sight, whence came the noise of a heavy thud, a clatter of spars, and a pitiful grunt.

Ricardo stooped to look under the jetty.

"Aha, dog! That will teach you to keep back where you belong, you murdering brute, you slaughtering savage, you! You infidel, you robber of churches! Next time I will rip you open from neck to heel, you carrion-eater! *Esclavo!*"

He straightened himself up.

"I don't mean it really," he remarked to Heyst, whose steady eyes met his from above. He ran aft briskly. "Come along, sir. It's your turn. I oughtn't to have drunk first. In truth, I forgot myself! A gentleman like you will overlook that, I know." As he made these apologies Ricardo extended his hand. "Let me steady you, sir."

Slowly Mr. Jones unfolded himself in all his slenderness, rocked, staggered, and caught Ricardo's shoulder. His henchman assisted him to the pipe, which went on gushing a clear stream of water, sparkling exceedingly against the black piles and the gloom under the jetty.

"Catch hold, sir," Ricardo advised solicitously. "All right?"

He stepped back, and, while Mr. Jones reveled in the abundance of water, he addressed himself to Heyst with a sort of justificatory speech, the tone of which, reflecting his feelings, partook of purring and spitting. He wanted to be propitiatory, but he could not help his native ferocity piercing through the diplomatic envelope.

They had been thirty hours pulling that brute of a boat, he explained, and they had

been more than forty hours without a drop of water. No, that was not exact. The night before they had had the felicity of licking the dew off the gunwales.

Ricardo did not explain to Heyst how it happened. At that precise moment he had no explanation ready for the man on the wharf, who, he guessed, must be wondering much more at the presence of his visitors than at their plight.

XXII

THE explanation lay in these two simple facts—that the light winds and strong currents of the Java Sea had drifted the boat about until they partly lost their bearings; and that by some extraordinary mistake one of the two jars put into the boat by Schomberg's man contained salt water. But of all this, though bursting with rage against the hotel-keeper, Ricardo could not speak. Only his eyes flashed fury now and then as he tried to put some pathos into his tones while enlarging on his party's sufferings.

Pulling for thirty hours with eighteen-foot oars! And the sun! Ricardo relieved his feelings by cursing the sun. They had felt their hearts and lungs shrivel within them. And then, as if all that hadn't been trouble enough, he complained bitterly, he had had to waste his fainting strength by beating their servant about the head with a stretcher. The fool wanted to drink salt water and wouldn't listen to reason. There was no stopping him otherwise. It was better to beat him into insensibility than to have him go crazy in the boat, and be obliged to shoot him. The preventive, administered with enough force to brain an elephant, boasted Ricardo, had to be applied on two occasions—the second time all but in sight of the jetty.

"You have seen the beauty," Ricardo went on expansively, hiding his lack of some sort of probable story under this loquacity. "I had to hammer him again from the spout—to open afresh all the old, broken spots on his head. You saw how hard I had to hit. He has no restraint, no restraint at all. If it wasn't that he can be made useful in one way or another, I would just as soon have let the governor shoot him."

He smiled up at Heyst in his peculiar lip-retracting manner, and added by way of afterthought:

"That's what will happen to him in the end, if he doesn't learn to restrain himself. But I've taught him to mind his manners for a while, anyhow!"

And again he addressed his quick grin up to the man on the wharf. His round eyes had never left Heyst's face since he began to deliver his account of the voyage.

"So that's how he looks!" Ricardo was saying to himself.

He had not expected Heyst to be like this. He had formed for himself a conception containing the helpful suggestion of a vulnerable point. These solitary men were often tipplers. But no—this was not a drinking man's face; nor could he detect the weakness of alarm, or even the weakness of surprise, on these features, in these steady eyes.

"We were too far gone to climb out," Ricardo went on. "I heard you walking along, though. I thought I shouted; I tried to. You didn't hear me shout?"

Heyst made an almost imperceptible negative sign, which the greedy eyes of Ricardo—greedy for all signs—did not miss.

"Throat too parched. We didn't even care to whisper to each other lately. Thirst chokes one. We might have died there under this wharf before you found us."

"I couldn't think where you had gone to." Heyst was heard at last, directly addressing the newcomers from the sea. "You were seen as soon as you cleared that point."

"We were seen, eh?" grunted Mr. Ricardo. "We pulled like machines—daren't stop. The governor sat at the tiller, but he couldn't speak to us. She drove in between the piles till she hit something, and we all tumbled off the thwarts as if we had been drunk. Drunk—ha, ha! Too dry, by George! We fetched in here with the very last of our strength, and no mistake. Another mile would have done for us. When I heard your footsteps above I tried to get up and I fell down."

"That was the first sound I heard," said Heyst.

Mr. Jones, the front of his soiled white tunic soaked and plastered against his breast-bone, staggered away from the water-pipe. Steadying himself on Ricardo's shoulder, he drew a long breath, raised his dripping head, and produced a smile of ghastly amiability, which was lost upon the thoughtful Heyst.

Behind his back the sun, touching the water, was like a small disk of iron cooled to a dull red glow, ready to start rolling round the circular steel plate of the sea, which, under the darkening sky, looked more solid than the high ridge of Samburan; more solid than the point, whose long, outlined slope melted into its own unfathomable shadow, blurring the dim sheen on the bay.

The forceful stream from the pipe broke like shattered glass on the boat's gunwale. Its loud, fitful, and persistent splashing revealed the depth of the world's silence.

"Great notion to lead the water out here," pronounced Ricardo appreciatively.

Water was life. He felt now as if he could run a mile, scale a ten-foot wall, sing a song. Only a few minutes ago he was next door to a corpse, done up, unable to stand, to lift a hand; unable to groan. A drop of water had done that miracle.

"Didn't you feel life itself running and soaking into you, sir?" he asked his principal with deferential but rather forced vivacity.

Without a word Mr. Jones stepped off the thwart and sat down in the stern-sheets.

"Isn't that man of yours bleeding to death in the bows under there?" inquired Heyst.

Ricardo ceased his ecstasies over the life-giving water and answered in a tone of innocence:

"He? You may call him a man, but his hide is a jolly sight tougher than the toughest alligator he ever skinned in the good old days. You don't know how much he can stand; I do. We have tried him long time ago. *Ola*, there! Pedro! Pedro!" he yelled with a force of lung testifying to the regenerative virtues of water.

A weak "*Señor?*" answered from under the wharf.

"What did I tell you?" said Ricardo triumphantly. "Nothing can hurt him. He's all right. But, I say, the boat's getting swamped. Can't you turn this water off before you sink her under us? She's half full already."

At a sign from Heyst Wang hammered at the brass tap on the wharf, then stood behind Number One, crowbar in hand, motionless as before. Ricardo was perhaps not so certain of Pedro's toughness as he affirmed—for he stooped, peering under the wharf, then moved forward out of sight.

The gush of water ceasing suddenly made a silence which became complete when the after-trickle stopped. Afar the sun was reduced to a red spark, glowing very low in the breathless immensity of twilight. Purple gleams lingered on the water all round the boat. The spectral figure in the stern-sheets spoke in a languid tone:

"That—er—companion—er—secretary of mine is a queer chap. I am afraid we aren't presenting ourselves in a very favorable light."

It was something which could not be answered, and Heyst said nothing. The other went on:

"Traveling as I do I find a man of his sort extremely useful. He has his little weaknesses, no doubt."

"Indeed!" Heyst was provoked into speaking. "Weakness of the arm is not one of them; neither is an exaggerated humanity, as far as I can judge."

"Defects of temper," explained Mr. Jones from the stern-sheets.

The subject of this dialogue, coming out just then from under the wharf into the visible part of the boat, made himself heard in his own defense, in a voice full of life, and with nothing languid in his manner. On the contrary, it was brisk, almost joyous.

He begged pardon for contradicting. He was never out of temper with "our Pedro." The fellow was a dago of immense strength and of no understanding whatever. This combination made him dangerous, and he had to be treated accordingly, in a manner which he could understand. Reasoning was beyond him.

"And so"—Ricardo addressed Heyst with animation—"you mustn't be surprised if—"

"I assure you," Heyst interrupted, "that my wonder at your arrival in your boat here is so great that it leaves no room for minor astonishment. But hadn't you better land?"

"That's the talk, sir!"

Ricardo began to bustle about the boat, talking all the time. Finding himself unable to "size up" this man he was inclined to credit him with extraordinary powers of penetration, which, it seemed to him, would be favored by silence. Also, he feared some pointblank question.

He had no ready-made story to tell. He and his patron had put off considering that rather important detail too long. For the last two days the horrors of thirst, coming on them unexpectedly, had prevented consultation. They had had to pull for dear life. But the man on the wharf, were he in league with the devil himself, would pay for all their sufferings, thought Ricardo with an unholly joy.

Meantime, splashing in the water which covered the bottom boards, Ricardo congratulated himself aloud on the luggage being out of the way of the wet. He had piled it up forward. He had roughly tied up Pedro's head. Pedro really had nothing to grumble about. On the contrary, the creature ought to be mighty thankful to him, Ricardo, for being alive at all.

"Well, now, let me give you a leg up, sir," he said cheerily to his motionless principal in the stern-sheets. "All our troubles are over, for a time, anyhow. Ain't it lucky to find a

white man on this island? I would have just as soon expected to meet an angel from heaven—eh, Mr. Jones? Now then—ready, sir? One, two, three, up you go!"

Helped from below by Ricardo, and from above by the man more unexpected than an angel, Mr. Jones scrambled up and stood on the wharf by the side of Heyst. He swayed like a reed. The night, descending on Samburan, turned into dense shadow the point of land and the wharf itself, and gave a dark solidity to the unshimmering water extending to the last faint trace of light away to the west.

Heyst stared at the guests whom the renounced world had sent him thus at the end of the day. The only other vestige of light left on earth lurked in the hollows of the thin man's eyes. They gleamed, mobile and languidly evasive. The eyelids fluttered.

"You are feeling weak," said Heyst.

"For a moment, a little," confessed the other.

With loud panting Ricardo scrambled on his hands and knees upon the wharf, energetic and unaided. He rose up at Heyst's elbow and stamped his feet on the planks with a sharp, provocative, double beat, such as is heard sometimes in fencing-schools before the adversaries engage their foils.

Not that the renegade seaman Ricardo knew anything of fencing. What he called "shoot-ing-irons" were his weapons, or the still less aristocratic knife, such as was even then ingeniously strapped to his leg. He thought of it at that moment. A swift, stooping motion, then, on the recovery, a ripping blow, a shove off the wharf, and no noise except a splash in the water that would scarcely disturb the silence. Heyst would have no time for a cry. It would be quick and neat, and immensely in accord with Ricardo's humor.

But he repressed this gust of savagery. The job was not such a simple one. This piece had to be played to another tune, and in much slower time. He returned to his note of talkative simplicity.

"Aye; and I, too, don't feel as strong as I thought I was when the first drink set me up. Great wonder-worker water is! And to get it right here on the spot! It was heaven—hey, sir?"

Mr. Jones, being directly addressed, took up his part in the concerted piece:

"Really, when I saw a wharf on what might have been an uninhabited island, I couldn't believe my eyes. I doubted its existence. I thought it was a delusion till the boat actually

drove between the piles, as you see her lying now."

While he was speaking faintly, in a voice which did not seem to belong to the earth, his henchman, in extremely loud and terrestrial accents, was fussing about their belongings in the boat, addressing himself to Pedro.

"Come, now—pass up the dunnage there! Move yourself, *hombre*, or I'll have to get down again and give you a tap on those bandages of yours, you growling bear, you!"

Helped by the talkative Ricardo, Pedro scrambled up on the wharf, where he remained for some time on all fours, swinging to and fro his shaggy head, tied up in white rags. Then he got up clumsily, like a bulky animal in the dusk, balancing itself on its hind legs.

Mr. Jones began to explain languidly to Heyst that they were in a pretty bad state that morning, when they caught sight of the smoke of the volcano. It nerved them to make an effort for their lives. Soon afterward they made out the island.

"I had just wit enough left in my baked brain to alter the direction of the boat," the ghostly voice went on. "As to finding assistance here, a wharf, a white man—nobody would have dreamed of such things. Simply preposterous!"

"That's what I thought when my Chinaman came and told me he had seen a boat with white men pulling up," said Heyst.

"Most extraordinary luck," interjected Ricardo, standing by, with anxious attention to every word. "Seems a dream," he added. "A lovely dream!"

A silence fell on that group of three, as if every one had become afraid to speak in an obscure sense of an impending crisis. A light draft of air, tepid enough in the thickening twilight after the scorching day, struck a chill into Mr. Jones in his soaked clothes.

"I may infer, then, that there is a settlement of white people here?" he murmured, shivering visibly.

Heyst roused himself.

"Oh, abandoned, abandoned! I am alone here—practically alone; but several empty houses are still standing. No lack of accommodation. We may just as well—here, Wang, go back to the shore and run the trolley out here."

The last words having been spoken in Malay, he explained courteously that he had given directions for the transport of the luggage. Wang had melted into the night in his soundless manner.

"My word! Rails laid down and all!" ex-

claimed Ricardo softly, in a tone of admiration. "Well, I never!"

"We were working a coal-mine here," said the late manager of the Tropical Belt Coal Company. "These are only the ghosts of things that have been."

Mr. Jones's teeth were suddenly started chattering by another faint puff of wind, a mere sigh from the west, when Venus cast her rays on the dark edge of the horizon like a bright lamp hung above the grave of the sun.

"We might be moving on," proposed Heyst. "The Chinaman and that—ah—ungrateful servant of yours, with the broken head, can lead the things and come along after us."

The suggestion was accepted without words. Moving toward the shore the three men met the trolley, a mere metallic rustle which whisked past them, the shadowy Wang running noiselessly behind.

"I am prevented from offering you a share of my own quarters," said Heyst. The distant courtliness of this beginning arrested the other two suddenly, as if amazed by some manifest incongruity. "I should regret it more," he went on, "if I were not in a position to give you the choice of those empty bungalows for a temporary home."

He turned round and plunged into the narrow track, the two others following in single file.

"Queer start!" Ricardo took the opportunity for whispering as he fell behind Mr. Jones, who swayed in the gloom, enclosed by the stalks of tropical grass, almost as slender as a stalk of grass himself.

In this order they emerged into the open space kept clear of vegetation by Wang's judicious system of periodic firing. The shapes of buildings, unlighted, high-roofed, looked mysteriously extensive and featureless against the increasing glitter of the stars.

Heyst was pleased at the absence of light in his bungalow. It looked as uninhabited as the others. He continued to lead the way, inclining to the right. His equable voice was heard:

"This one would be the best. It was our counting-house. There's some furniture in it yet. I am pretty certain that you'll find a couple of camp bedsteads in one of the rooms."

The high-pitched roof of the bungalow towered up very close, eclipsing the sky.

"Here we are. Three steps. As you see, there's a wide veranda. Sorry to keep you waiting for a moment; the door is locked, I think."

He was heard trying it. Then he leaned against the rail, saying:

"Wang will get the keys."

The others waited, two vague shapes nearly mingled together in the darkness of the veranda, from which issued a sudden chattering of Mr. Jones's teeth, directly suppressed, and a slight shuffle of Ricardo's feet. Their guide and host, his back against the rail, seemed to have forgotten their existence. Suddenly he moved and murmured:

"Ah, here's the trolley!"

Then he raised his voice in Malay, and was answered, "*Ya tuan,*" from an indistinct group that could be made out in the direction of the track.

"I have sent Wang for the key and a light," he said in a voice that came out without any particular direction—a peculiarity which disconcerted Ricardo.

Wang did not tarry long on his mission. Very soon from the distant recesses of obscurity appeared the swinging lantern he carried. It cast a fugitive ray on the arrested trolley with the uncouth figure of the wild Pedro drooping over the load; then it moved toward the bungalow and ascended the stairs.

After working at the stiff lock Wang applied his shoulder to the door. It came open with explosive suddenness, as if in a passion at being thus disturbed after two years' repose. From the dark slope of a tall stand-up desk a solitary sheet of paper flew up and settled gracefully on the floor.

Wang and Pedro came and went through the offended door, bringing the things off the trolley, one fitting swiftly in and out, the other staggering heavily. Later, directed by a few quiet words from Number One, Wang made several journeys with the lantern to the store-rooms, bringing in blankets, provisions in tins, coffee, sugar, and even a packet of candles. He lighted one of these last, and stuck it on the ledge of the stand-up desk.

Meantime Pedro, being introduced to some kindling-wood and a bundle of dry sticks, had busied himself outside in lighting a fire, on which he placed a ready-filled kettle handed to him by Wang impassively, at arm's length, as if across a chasm.

Having received the thanks of his guests, Heyst wished them good night and withdrew, leaving them to their repose.

XXIII

HEYST walked away slowly. There was still no light in his bungalow, and he thought that perhaps it was just as well.

By this time he was much less perturbed. He had seen many different kinds of men, and was familiar with a great variety of manner and conduct. The only peculiarity which arrested his thoughts unpleasantly was a sort of underhand elation in Ricardo's bustling manner. But he was not thinking much of these strangers. His thoughts had been with Lena almost all the time.

Wang had preceded him with the lantern, as if in a hurry to get away from the two white men and their hairy attendant. The light was not dancing along any more; it was standing perfectly still by the steps of the veranda.

Heyst, glancing back casually, saw behind him still another light—the light of the strangers' open fire. A black, uncouth form, stooping over it monstrosly, staggered away into the outlying shadows. The kettle had boiled, probably.

With that weird vision of something questionably human impressed upon his senses, Heyst moved on a pace or two. What could the people be who had such a creature for their familiar attendant?

He stopped. He had felt a blow struck within his breast, an inward and arresting shock, the consciousness of fears and hopes outside of himself and bound up with his actions. The vague apprehension of a distant future, in which he saw Lena unavoidably separated from him by profound and subtle differences, was now replaced by the immediate concern of responsibility for the girl's safety. That skeptical carelessness which had accompanied every one of his attempts at action, like a secret reserve of his soul, fell away from him. He no longer belonged to himself alone. There was a call far more imperious and august.

He came up to the bungalow, and was on the point of calling her by name when, at the very limit of the lantern's light, on the top step, he saw her feet and the bottom part of her dress. The rest of her person was suggested dimly as high as her waist. She sat on a chair, and the gloom of the low eaves descended upon her head and shoulders. She didn't stir.

"You haven't gone to sleep here?" he asked.

"Oh, no! I was waiting for you—in the dark."

Heyst, on the top step, leaned against a wooden pillar, after moving the lantern to one side.

"I have been thinking that it is just as well you had no light. But wasn't it dull for you to sit in the dark?"

"I don't need a light to think of you," she said simply.

Her charming voice gave a value to the banal answer, which had also the merit of truth. Heyst laughed a little, and said that he had had a curious experience. She made no remark.

He tried to figure to himself the outlines of her easy pose. A spot of dim light here and there hinted at the unfailing grace of attitude which was one of the girl's natural possessions.

She had thought of him, but not in connection with the strangers. She had admired him from the first; she had been attracted by his warm voice, his gentle eye, but she had felt him too wonderfully difficult to know. He had given to life a savor, a movement, a promise mingled with menace, which she had not suspected were to be found in it—or, at any rate, not by a girl wedded to misery as she was. She said to herself that she must not be irritated because he seemed too self-contained, and as if shut up in a world of his own.

When he took her in his arms she felt that his embrace had a great and compelling force, that he was moved deeply, and that perhaps he would not get tired of her so very soon. She thought that he had opened to her the feelings of delicate joy, that the very uneasiness he caused her was delicious in its sadness, and that she would try to hold him as long as she could—till her fainting arms, her sinking soul, could cling to him no more.

"Wang's not here, of course?" Heyst said suddenly.

She answered as if in her sleep.

"He put this light down here without stopping and ran."

"Ran, did he? H-m! Well, it's considerably later than his usual time to go home to his Alfuro wife; but to be seen running is a sort of degradation for Wang, who has mastered the art of vanishing. Do you think he was startled out of his perfection by something?"

"Why should he be startled?"

Her voice remained dreamy, a little uncertain.

"I have been startled," Heyst said.

She was not listening to him. The lantern at their feet threw the shadows of her face upward. Her eyes glistened, as if frightened and attentive, above a lighted chin and a very white throat.

"Upon my word," mused Heyst, "now that I don't see them I can hardly believe that those fellows exist!"

"And what about me?" she asked so swiftly that he made a backward movement like somebody pounced upon from an ambush. "When you don't see me do you believe that I really exist?"

"Exist? Most charmingly! My dear Lena, you don't know your own advantages. Why, your voice alone would be enough to make you unforgettable!"

"Oh, I didn't mean forgetting in that way! I dare say, if I were to die, you would remember me right enough. And what good would that be to anybody? It's while I am alive that I want—"

A heavy spoke of shadow from the frame of the lantern lay between them, broadening out into the night on the farther end of the veranda—a ray of darkness cutting in two the plane of light at their feet. Heyst strode over it, and, stooping, kissed her eyes, which she had closed when he moved. She did not open them. She remained inert, but the man felt subtly that within her she was responsive to his caress.

For a moment he stood by her chair—a stalwart figure imperfectly lighted. The broad shoulders, the martial face that was like a disguise of his disarmed soul, were lost in the gloom above the plane of light in which his feet were planted. He glanced along the veranda in the direction of the other bungalow. The fire of sticks in front of it had gone out. No faint glow of embers, not the slightest thread of light in that direction hinted at the presence of strangers. The darker shapes in the obscurity, the dead silence, betrayed nothing of that strange intrusion.

The peace of Samburan asserted itself as on any other night. Everything was as before, except—Heyst became aware of it suddenly—that for a whole minute, perhaps, with his hand on the back of the girl's chair and within a foot of her person, he had lost the sense of her existence, for the first time since he had brought her over to share that invincible, that undefiled peace.

He picked up the lantern, and this act made a silent stir all along the veranda. A spoke of shadow swung swiftly across her face, and the strong light rested on the stillness of her features, as of a woman looking at a vision. Her eyes were very wide open, her lips serious. Her dress, open at the neck, stirred slightly to her even breathing.

"We had better go in, Lena," said Heyst, very low, as if breaking a spell cautiously.

She rose without a word. Heyst followed her indoors. As they passed through the liv-

ing-room he left the lantern burning on the center-table.

XXIV

THAT night the girl woke up, for the first time in her new experience, with the sensation of having been abandoned to her own devices. She woke up from a painful dream of separation brought about in a way which she could not understand and missed the relief of the waking instant. The desolate feeling of being alone persisted.

She was really alone. A night-light made it plain enough in the dim, mysterious manner of a dream; but this was reality. It startled her exceedingly.

In a moment she was at the curtain that hung in the doorway, and raised it with a steady hand. The conditions of their life in Samburan would have made peeping absurd; nor was such a thing in her character. This was not a movement of curiosity, but of down-right alarm—the continued distress and fear of the dream.

The night could not have been very far advanced. The light in the lantern was burning strongly, yet striping the floor and the walls of the room with thick black bands. She hardly knew whether she expected to see Heyst or not; but she saw him at once, standing by the table in his sleeping-suit, his back to the doorway.

She stepped in noiselessly with her bare feet and let the curtain fall behind her. Something characteristic in Heyst's attitude made her say, almost in a whisper:

"You are looking for something."

He could not have heard her before; but he didn't start at the unexpected whisper. He only pushed the drawer of the table in and, without even looking over his shoulder, asked quietly, accepting her presence as if he had been aware of all her movements:

"I say, are you certain that Wang didn't go through this room this evening?"

"Wang? When?"

"After leaving the lantern, I mean."

"Oh, no! He ran on. I watched him."

"Or before, perhaps—while I was with these boat people? Do you know? Can you tell?"

"I hardly think so. I came out as the sun went down and sat outside till you came back to me."

"He could have popped in for an instant through the back veranda."

"I heard nothing in here," she said. "What is the matter?"

"Naturally you wouldn't hear. He can be as quiet as a shadow when he likes. I believe he could steal the pillows from under our heads. He might have been here ten minutes ago."

"What woke you up? Was it a noise?"

"Can't say that. Generally one can't tell; but is it likely, Lena? You are, I believe, the lighter sleeper of us two. A noise loud enough to wake me up would have awakened you, too. I tried to be as quiet as I could. What roused you?"

"I don't know—a dream, perhaps! I woke up crying!"

"What was the dream?"

Heyst, with one hand resting on the table, had turned in her direction, his round, close-cropped head set on a fighter's muscular neck. She left his question unanswered, as if she had not heard it.

"What is it you have missed?" she asked, in her turn very grave.

Her dark hair, drawn smoothly back, was done in two thick tresses for the night. Heyst noticed the good form of her forehead, the dignity of its width, its unshining whiteness. It was a sculptural forehead. He had a moment of acute appreciation intruding upon another order of thoughts. It was as if there could be no end of his discoveries about that girl at the most incongruous moments.

She had on nothing but a hand-woven cotton sarong—one of Heyst's few purchases, years ago, in Celebes, where they are made. He had forgotten all about it till she came, and then had found it in the bottom of an old sandalwood trunk dating back to pre-Morrison days. She had quickly learned to wind it up under her armpits with a safe twist, as Malay village girls do when going down to bathe in a river.

Her shoulders and arms were bare; one of her tresses, hanging forward, looked almost black against the white skin. As she was taller than the average Malay woman, the sarong ended a good way above her ankles. She stood poised firmly, like a statue, half-way between the table and the curtained doorway, the insteps of her bare feet gleaming like marble on the overshadowed matting of the floor.

The fall of her lighted shoulders, the strong and fine attachment of her arms hanging down her sides, her immobility, too, had something statuesque, the charm of art tense with life. She was not very big—Heyst used to think of her at first as "that poor little girl"—but revealed free from the shabby banality of a

white platform dress, in the simple drapery of the sarong, there was that in her form and in the proportions of her body which suggested a reduction from a heroic size.

She moved forward a step.

"What is it you have missed?" she asked again.

Heyst turned his back altogether on the table. The black spokes of darkness over the floor and the walls, joining up on the ceiling in a patch of shadow, were like the bars of a cage about them. It was his turn to ignore a question.

"You woke up in a fright?" he said.

She walked up to him, exotic yet familiar, with her white woman's face and shoulders above the Malay sarong, as if it were an airy disguise; but her expression was serious.

"No!" she replied. "It was distress, rather. You see, you weren't there, and I couldn't tell why you had gone away from me. A nasty dream—the first I've had, too, since—"

"You don't believe in dreams, do you?" asked Heyst.

"I once knew a woman who did. Leastwise, she used to tell people what dreams meant, for a shilling."

"Would you go now and ask her what this dream means?" inquired Heyst jocularly.

"She lived in Camberwell. She was a nasty old thing!"

Heyst laughed a little uneasily.

"Dreams are madness, my dear! It's things that happen in the waking world, while one is asleep, that one would be glad to know the meaning of."

"You have missed something out of this drawer," she said positively.

"This or some other. I have looked into every single one of them and came back to this again, as people do. It's difficult to believe the evidence of my own senses; but it isn't there. Now, Lena, are you sure that you didn't—"

"I have touched nothing in the house but what you have given me."

"Lena!" he cried.

He was painfully affected by this disclaimer of a charge which he had not made. It was what a servant might have said—an inferior open to suspicion—or, at any rate, a stranger. He was angry at being so wretchedly misunderstood; disenchanted at her not being instinctively aware of the place he had secretly given her in his thoughts.

"After all," he said to himself, "we are strangers to each other."

And then he felt sorry for her. He spoke calmly:

"I was about to say, are you sure you have no reason to think that the Chinaman has been in this room to-night?"

"You suspect him?" she asked, knitting her eyebrows.

"There is no one else to suspect. You may call it a certitude."

"You don't want to tell me what it is?" she inquired in the equable tone in which one takes a fact into account.

Heyst only smiled faintly.

"Nothing very precious, as far as value goes," he replied.

"I thought it might have been money," she said.

"Money!" exclaimed Heyst, as if the suggestion had been altogether preposterous. She was so visibly surprised that he hastened to add: "Of course, there is some money in the house—there, in that writing-desk, the drawer on the left. It's not locked. You can pull it right out. There is a recess, and the board at the back pivots; a very simple hiding-place, when you know the way to it. I discovered it by accident, and I keep our store of sovereigns in there. The treasure, my dear, is not big enough to require a cavern!"

He paused, laughed very low, and returned her steady stare.

"The loose silver, some guilders and dollars, I have always kept in that unlocked left drawer. I have no doubt Wang knows what there is in it; but he isn't a thief, and that's why I— No, Lena, what I've missed is not gold or jewels; and that's what makes the fact interesting—which a mere theft of money cannot be."

She took a long breath, relieved to hear that it was not money. A great curiosity was depicted on her face, but she refrained from pressing him with questions. She only gave him one of her deep-gleaming smiles.

"It isn't me, so it must be Wang. You ought to make him give it back to you."

Heyst said nothing to that naive and practical suggestion.

XXV

THE object that Heyst missed from the drawer was his revolver.

It was a heavy weapon which he had owned for many years and had never used in his life. Ever since the London furniture had arrived in Samburan it had been reposing in the drawer of the table. The real dangers of life, for him, were not those which could be repelled by swords or bullets. On the other hand, neither his manner nor his appearance

looked sufficiently inoffensive to expose him to light-minded aggression.

He could not have explained what had induced him to go to the drawer in the middle of the night. He had started up suddenly—which was very unusual with him. He had found himself sitting up and extremely wide awake all at once, with the girl reposing by his side, lying with her face away from him, a vague, characteristically feminine form in the dim light. She was perfectly still.

At that season of the year there were no mosquitoes in Samburan, and the sides of the mosquito-net were looped up. Heyst swung his feet to the floor, and found himself standing there, almost before he had become aware of his intention to get up. Why he did this he did not know. He didn't wish to wake her up, and the slight creak of the broad bedstead had sounded very loud to him. He turned round apprehensively and waited for her to move; but she did not stir.

While he looked at her he had a vision of himself lying there too, also fast asleep, and—it occurred to him for the first time in his life—very defenseless. This quite novel impression of the dangers of slumber made him think suddenly of his revolver. He left the bedroom with noiseless footsteps. The lightness of the curtain he had to lift as he passed out, and the outer door, wide open on the blackness of the veranda—for the roof eaves came down low, shutting out the starlight—gave him a sense of having been dangerously exposed, he could not have said to what.

He pulled the drawer open. Its emptiness cut his train of self-communion short. He murmured to the assertive fact:

"Impossible! Somewhere else!"

He tried to remember where he had put the thing; but those provoked whispers of memory were not encouraging. Foraging in every receptacle and nook big enough to contain a revolver he came to the conclusion that it was not in that room. Neither was it in the other.

The whole bungalow consisted of the two rooms and a profuse allowance of veranda all round. Heyst stepped out on the veranda.

"It's Wang, beyond a doubt," he thought, staring into the night. "He has got hold of it for some reason."

There was nothing to prevent that ghostly Chinaman from materializing suddenly at the foot of the stairs, or anywhere, at any moment, and toppling him over with a dead-sure shot. The danger was so irremediable that it was not worth worrying about, any more than the general precariousness of human life.

Heyst speculated on this added risk. How long had he been at the mercy of a slender yellow finger on the trigger? That is, if that was the fellow's reason for purloining the revolver.

"Shoot and inherit," thought Heyst. "Very simple!"

Yet there was in his mind a marked reluctance to regard the domesticated grower of vegetables in the light of a murderer.

"No, it wasn't that. For Wang could have done it any time these last twelve months or more."

Heyst's mind had worked on the assumption that Wang had possessed himself of the revolver during his own absence from Samburan; but at that period of his speculation his point of view changed. It struck him with the force of manifest certitude that the revolver had been taken only late in the day, or on that very night. Wang, of course! But why?

So there had been no danger in the past. It was all ahead.

"He has me at his mercy now!" thought Heyst, without particular excitement.

The sentiment he experienced was curiosity. He forgot himself in it; it was as if he were considering somebody else's strange predicament. But even that sort of interest was dying out when, looking at his left, he saw the accustomed shapes of the other bungalows looming in the night, and remembered the arrival of the thirsty company in the boat. Wang would hardly risk such a crime in the presence of other white men. It was a peculiar instance of the "safety in numbers" principle, which somehow was not much to Heyst's taste.

He went in gloomily and stood over the empty drawer in deep and unsatisfactory thought. He had just made up his mind that he must breathe nothing of this to the girl, when he heard her voice behind him. She had taken him by surprise, but he resisted the impulse to turn round under the impression that she might read his trouble in his face.

Yes, she had taken him by surprise; and for that reason the conversation which began was not exactly as he would have conducted it if he had been prepared for her pointblank question. He ought to have said at once: "I've missed nothing." It was a deplorable thing that he should have let it come so far as to have her ask what it was he missed.

He closed the conversation by saying lightly:

"It's an object of very small value. Don't worry about it—it isn't worth while. The best

you can do is to go and lie down again, Lena."

Reluctantly she turned away, and only in the doorway asked:

"And you?"

"I think I shall smoke a cheroot on the veranda. I don't feel sleepy for the moment."

"Well, don't be long."

He made no answer. She saw him standing there, very still, with a frown on his brow, and slowly dropped the curtain.

Heyst did really light a cheroot before going out again on the veranda. He glanced up from under the low eaves, to see by the stars how the night went on. It was going very slowly. Why it should have irked him he did not know; for he had nothing to expect from the dawn; but everything round him had become unreasonable, unsettled, and vaguely urgent, laying him under an obligation, but giving him no line of action.

He felt contemptuously irritated with the situation. The outer world had broken upon him; and he did not know what wrong he had done to bring this on himself, any more than he knew what he had done to provoke the horrible calumny about his treatment of poor Morrison.

For he could not forget this. It had reached the ears of one who needed to have the most perfect confidence in the authority of his conduct.

"And she only half disbelieves it," he thought, with hopeless humiliation.

This moral stab in the back seemed to have taken some of his strength from him, as a physical wound would have done. He had no desire to do anything—neither to bring Wang to terms in the matter of the revolver, nor to find out from the strangers who they were, and how their predicament had come about.

He flung his glowing cigar away into the night. But Samburan was no longer a solitude wherein he could indulge all his moods. The fiery, parabolic trail the cast-out stump traced in the air was seen from another veranda at a distance of some twenty yards. It was noted as a symptom of importance by an observer with his faculties greedy for signs, and in a state of alertness tense enough almost to hear the grass grow.

XXVI

THE observer was Martin Ricardo. To him life was not a matter of passive renunciation, but of a particularly active warfare. He was not mistrustful of it, he was not disgusted with it, still less was he inclined to be

suspicious of its disenchantments; but he was vividly aware that it held many possibilities of failure. Though very far from being a pessimist, he was not a man of foolish illusions.

He did not like failure; not only because of its unpleasant and dangerous consequences, but also because of its damaging effect upon his own appreciation of Martin Ricardo. And this was a special job, of his own contriving, and of considerable novelty. It was not, so to speak, in his usual line of business—except, perhaps, from a moral standpoint, about which he was not likely to trouble his head. For these reasons Martin Ricardo was unable to sleep.

Mr. Jones, after repeated shivering fits, and after drinking much hot tea, had apparently fallen into deep slumber. He had very peremptorily discouraged attempts at conversation on the part of his faithful follower.

Ricardo listened to his regular breathing. It was all very well for the governor. He looked upon it as a sort of sport. A gentleman naturally would. But this ticklish and important job had to be pulled off at all costs, both for honor and for safety.

Ricardo arose quietly, and made his way on the veranda. He could not lie still. He wanted to go out for air; and he had a feeling that by the force of his eagerness even the darkness and the silence could be made to yield something to his eyes and ears.

He noted the stars, and stepped back again into the dense darkness. It comforted him. It was impenetrable. He was hidden in it as if in ambush. He stood erect against the wall, confident that no one in the open could see that he was there. He strained his eyes and his ears, but the darkness and the silence would give no sign.

He resisted the growing impulse to go out and steal toward the other bungalow. It would have been madness to go prowling in the dark on unknown ground. And for what end? He kept his objectless vigil, though convinced that he would neither hear nor see anything. The man of the island was keeping quiet.

It was at that moment that Ricardo's eyes caught the vanishing red trail of light made by the cigar—a startling revelation of the other man's wakefulness. He could not suppress a low "Hello!" and began to sidle along toward the door, with his shoulders rubbing the wall. For all he knew, the other man might have been out in front by this time, observing the veranda.

As a matter of fact, after flinging away the cheroot, Heyst had gone in with the feeling

of a man who gives up an unprofitable occupation. But Ricardo fancied he could hear faint footfalls on the open ground. Being close to the door, he quietly dodged into the room. There he drew breath, and meditated in the dark for a while.

His next step was to feel for the matches on the tall desk, and to light the candle. He had to communicate to his governor views and reflections of such importance that it was absolutely necessary for him to watch their effect on the very countenance of the hearer. At first he had thought that these matters could have waited till daylight; but the other man's wakefulness, disclosed in that startling way, made him feel suddenly certain that there could be no sleep for him that night.

He said as much to his governor. When the little daggerlike flame had done its best to dispel the darkness, Mr. Jones was dimly to be seen reposing on a camp bedstead, in a distant part of the room. A railway rug concealed his spare form up to his very head, which lay on the other railway rug rolled up for a pillow.

Ricardo plumped himself down cross-legged on the floor, very close to the low bedstead; so that Mr. Jones—who perhaps had not been so very profoundly asleep—on opening his eyes found them conveniently leveled at the face of his secretary.

"Eh? What is it you say? No sleep for you to-night? But why can't you let me sleep? Confound your fussiness!"

"Because that there fellow can't sleep—that's why. Dash me if he hasn't been doing a think just now! What business has he to think in the middle of the night?"

"How do you know?"

"He was out, sir—up in the middle of the night. My own eyes saw it."

"But how do you know that he was up to think?" inquired Mr. Jones. "It might have been anything—toothache, for instance. And you may have dreamed it for all I know. Didn't you try to sleep?"

"No, sir. I didn't even try to go to sleep."

Ricardo informed his patron of his vigil on the veranda, and of the revelation which put an end to it. He concluded that a man up with a cigar in the middle of the night must be doing a think.

Mr. Jones had raised himself on his elbow. This sign of interest comforted his faithful henchman.

"Seems to me it's time we did a little think ourselves," added Ricardo, with more assurance.

"You are always making a fuss," remarked Mr. Jones in a tolerant tone.

"Aye, but not for nothing, am I? You can't say that, sir. Mine may not be a gentleman's way of looking round a thing, but it isn't a fool's way, either. You've admitted that much yourself at odd times."

Ricardo was growing warmly argumentative. Mr. Jones interrupted him without heat.

"You haven't roused me to talk about yourself, I presume."

"No, sir." Ricardo remained silent for a minute, with the tip of his tongue peeping between his lips. "I don't think I could tell you anything about myself that you don't know," he continued. There was a sort of amused satisfaction in his tone which changed completely as he went on. "It's that man, over there, that's got to be talked over. I don't like him!"

He failed to observe the flicker of a ghastly smile on his governor's lips.

"Don't you?" murmured Mr. Jones, whose face, as he reclined on his elbow, was on a level with the top of his follower's head.

"No, sir," said Ricardo emphatically. The candle from the other side of the room threw his monstrous black shadow on the wall. "He—I don't know how to say it—he isn't hearty like."

Mr. Jones agreed languidly in his own manner:

"He seems to be a very self-possessed man."

"Aye, that's it. Self—" Ricardo choked with indignation. "I would soon let out some of his self-possession through a hole between his ribs, if this weren't a special job!"

Mr. Jones had been making his own reflections, for he asked:

"Do you think he is suspicious?"

"I don't see very well what he can be suspicious of," pondered Ricardo. "Yet there he was, doing a think. And what could be the object of it? What made him get out of his bed in the middle of the night? 'Tain't fleas, surely."

"Bad conscience, perhaps," suggested Mr. Jones jocularly.

His faithful secretary suffered from irritation, and did not see the joke. In a fretful tone he declared that there was no such thing as conscience. There was such a thing as funk; but there was nothing to make that fellow funky in any special way. He admitted, however, that the man might have been uneasy at the arrival of strangers, because of all that plunder of his put away somewhere.

Ricardo glanced here and there, as if he were afraid of being overheard by the heavy shadows that the dim light cast all over the room. His patron, very quiet but without any assumption of nonchalance, spoke in a calm whisper:

"And perhaps that hotel-keeper has been lying to you about him. He may be a very poor devil indeed."

Ricardo shook his head slightly. The Schombergian theory of Heyst had become in him a profound conviction, which he had absorbed as naturally as a sponge takes up water. His patron's doubts outraged him as a wanton denying of what is self-evident; but his voice remained as before, a soft purring with a snarling undertone.

"I am sup-prised at you, sir! It's the very way them tame ones—the common 'yporcrites of the world—get on. When it comes to plunder drifting under one's very nose, there's not one of them that would keep his hands off it. And I don't blame them. It's the way they do it that sets my back up. Just look at the story of how he got rid of that pal of his! Send a man home to croak of a cold on the chest—that's one of your tame tricks. And d'you mean to say, sir, that a man that's up to it wouldn't bag whatever he could lay his hands on in his 'yporcritical way? What was all that coal business? Tame citizen dodge; 'yporcricisy—nothing else. No, no, sir! The thing is to extract it from him as neatly as possible. That's the job; and it isn't so simple as it looks. I reckon you have looked at it all round, sir, before you took up the notion of this trip."

"No." Mr. Jones was hardly audible, staring far away from his couch. "I didn't think about it much. I was bored."

"Aye, that you were—bad. I was feeling pretty desperate that afternoon when that bearded softy of a landlord got talking to me about this fellow here. Quite accidentally, it was. Well, sir, here we are after a mighty narrow squeak. I feel all limp yet; but never mind—his swag will pay for the lot!"

"He's all alone here," remarked Mr. Jones in a hollow murmur.

"Ye-es, in a way. Yes, alone enough. Yes, you may say he is."

"There's that Chinaman, though."

"Aye, there's the think," assented Ricardo rather absent-mindedly.

He was debating in his mind the advisability of making a clean breast of his knowledge of the girl's existence. Finally he concluded he wouldn't. The enterprise was difficult

enough without complicating it with an upset to the sensibilities of the gentleman with whom he had the honor of being associated. Let the discovery come of itself, he thought, and then he could swear that he had known nothing of that offensive presence.

He did not need to lie. He had only to hold his tongue.

"Yes," he muttered reflectively, "there's that think, certainly."

At bottom he felt a certain ambiguous respect for his governor's exaggerated dislike of women. He did not pretend to understand it. All he knew was that he himself was differently inclined, and that it did not make him any happier or safer.

Foreseeing many difficulties of a material order, Mr. Jones's henchman decided to keep the girl out of the governor's knowledge; out of his sight, too, for as long a time as it could be managed. That, alas, seemed to be at most a matter of a few hours; whereas Ricardo feared that to get the affair properly going would take some time. Once well started, he was not afraid of his gentleman failing him. As is often the case with lawless natures, Ricardo's faith in any given individual was of a simple, unquestioning character. For man must have some support in life.

Cross-legged, his head drooping a little and perfectly still, he might have been meditating in a bronzelike attitude upon the sacred syllable "Om." It was a striking illustration of the untruth of appearances, for his contempt for the world was of a severely practical kind. There was nothing Oriental about Ricardo but the amazing quietness of his pose.

Mr. Jones was also very quiet. He had let his head sink on the rolled-up rug, and lay stretched out on his side with his back to the light. In that position the shadows gathered in the cavities of his eyes made them look perfectly empty. When he spoke, his ghostly voice had only to travel a few inches straight into Ricardo's left ear.

"Why don't you say something, now that you've got me awake?"

"I wonder if you were sleeping as sound as you are trying to make out, sir," said the unmoved Ricardo.

"I wonder," repeated Mr. Jones. "At any rate, I was resting quietly."

"Come, sir!" Ricardo's whisper was alarmed. "You don't mean to say you're going to be bored?"

"No."

"Quite right!" The secretary was very much relieved. "There's no occasion to be,

I can tell you, sir," he whispered earnestly. "Anything but that! If I didn't say anything for a bit, it ain't because there isn't plenty to talk about. Aye, more than enough."

"What's the matter?" breathed out his patron. "Are you going to turn pessimist?"

"Me turn? No, sir! I ain't of those that turn. You may call me hard names, if you like, but you know very well that I ain't a croaker." Ricardo changed his tone. "If I said nothing for a while, it was because I was meditating over the chink, sir."

"You were? Waste of time, my Martin. A Chinaman is unfathomable."

Ricardo admitted that this might be so. Anyway, a chink was neither here nor there, as a general thing, unfathomable as he could be; but a Swedish baron wasn't—couldn't be! The woods were full of such barons.

"I don't know that he is so tame," was Mr. Jones's remark, in a sepulchral undertone.

"How do you mean, sir? He ain't a rabbit, of course. You couldn't hyptonize him, as I saw you do to more than one dago, and other kinds of tame citizens, when it came to the point of holding them down to a game."

"Don't you reckon on that," murmured plain Mr. Jones seriously.

"No, sir, I don't; though you have a wonderful power of the eye. It's a fact."

"I have a wonderful patience," remarked Mr. Jones.

A dim smile flitted over the lips of the faithful Ricardo, who never raised his head.

"I don't want to try you too much, sir; but this is like no other job we ever turned our minds to."

"Perhaps not. At any rate, let us think so."

A weariness with the monotony of life was reflected in the tone of this qualified assent. It jarred on the nerves of the sanguine Ricardo.

"Let us think of the way to go to work," he retorted a little impatiently. "He's a deep one. Just look at the way he treated that chum of his. Did you ever hear of anything so low? And the artfulness of the beast—the dirty, tame artfulness!"

"Don't you start moralizing, Martin," said Mr. Jones warningly. "As far as I can make out the story that German hotel-keeper told you, it seems to show a certain amount of character; an independence from common feelings which is not usual. It's very remarkable, if true."

"Aye, aye! Very remarkable. It's mighty low down, all the same," muttered Ricardo

obstinately. "I must say I am glad to think he will be paid off for it in a way that 'll surprise him!"

The tip of his tongue appeared lively for an instant, as if trying for the taste of that ferocious retribution on his compressed lips. For Ricardo was sincere in his indignation before the elementary principle of loyalty to a chum violated in cold blood, slowly, in a patient duplicity of years.

"Aye, he's deep—he's artful," he mumbled between his sharp teeth.

"Confound you!" Jones's calm whisper crept into his ear. "Come to the point."

Obedient, the secretary shook off his thoughtfulness. There was a similarity of mind between these two—one the outcast of his vices, the other inspired by a spirit of scornful defiance, the aggressiveness of a beast of prey looking upon all the tame creatures of the earth as its natural victims. Both were astute enough, however, and both were aware that they had plunged into this adventure without a sufficient scrutiny of detail.

The feeling voiced by the henchman in his own way—"We don't seem much forwarder now we are here"—was acknowledged by the silence of the patron. It was easy enough to rip a fellow up or drill a hole in him, whether he was alone or not, Ricardo reflected in low, confidential tones, but—

"He isn't alone," Mr. Jones said faintly, in his attitude of a man composed for sleep. "Don't forget that Chinaman."

Ricardo started slightly.

"Oh, aye—the chink!"

Ricardo had been on the point of confessing about the girl; but no! He wanted his governor to be unperturbed and steady. Vague thoughts, which he hardly dared to look in the face, were stirring in his brain in connection with that girl. She couldn't be much account, he thought. She could be frightened. And there were also other possibilities. The chink, however, could and ought to be considered.

"What I was thinking about it, sir," he went on earnestly, "is this—here we've got a man. He's nothing. If he won't be good, he can be made quiet. That's easy. But then there's his plunder. He doesn't carry it in his pocket."

"I hope not," breathed Mr. Jones.

"Same here. It's too big, you know; but if he were alone, he would not feel worried about it overmuch—I mean the safety of the pieces. He would just put the lot into any box or drawer that was handy."

"Would he?"

"Yes, sir. He would keep it under his eye, as it were. Why not? It is natural. A fellow doesn't put his swag underground, unless there's a very good reason for it."

"A very good reason, eh?"

"Yes, sir. What do you think a fellow is—a mole?"

From his experience, Ricardo declared that man was not a burrowing beast. Even the misers very seldom buried their hoards, unless for exceptional reasons. In the given situation of a man alone on an island, the company of a chink was a very good reason. Drawers would not be safe, nor boxes, either, from a prying, slant-eyed chink. No, sir; unless a safe—a proper office safe. But the safe was there in the room.

"Is there a safe in this room? I didn't notice it," whispered Mr. Jones.

That was because of the thing being painted white, like the walls of the room; and besides, it was tucked away in the shadows of a corner. Mr. Jones had been too tired to observe anything on his first coming ashore; but Ricardo had very soon spotted the characteristic form. He only wished he could believe that the plunder of treachery, duplicity, and all the moral abominations of Heyst had been there. But no; the blamed thing was open.

"It might have been there at one time or another," he commented gloomily, "but it isn't there now."

"The man did not elect to live in this house," remarked Mr. Jones. "And by the bye, what could he have meant by speaking of circumstances which prevented him lodging us in the other bungalow? You remember what he said, Martin? Sounded cryptic."

Martin, who remembered and understood the phrase as directly motivated by the existence of the girl, waited a little before saying:

"Some of his artfulness, sir; and not the worst of it, either. That manner of his to us, this asking no questions, is some more of his artfulness. A man's bound to be curious, and he is; yet he goes on as if he didn't care. He does care—or else what was he doing up with a cigar in the middle of the night, doing a think? I don't like it!"

"He may be outside, observing the light here, and saying the very same thing to himself of our own wakefulness," gravely suggested Ricardo's governor.

"He may be, sir; but this is too important to be talked over in the dark. And the light is all right. It can be accounted for. There's a light in this bungalow in the middle of the night because—why, because you are not well.

Not well, sir—that's what's the matter; and you will have to act up to it."

This consideration had suddenly occurred to the faithful henchman, in the light of a felicitous expedient to keep his governor and the girl apart as long as possible. Mr. Jones received the suggestion without the slightest stir, even in the deep sockets of his eyes, where a steady, faint gleam was the only thing telling of life and attention in his attenuated body. But Ricardo, as soon as he had enunciated his happy thought, perceived in it other possibilities more to the point and of greater practical advantage.

"With your looks, sir, it will be easy enough," he went on evenly, as if no silence had intervened, always respectful, but frank, with perfect simplicity of purpose. "All you got to do is just to lie down quietly. I noticed him looking sort of surprised at you on the wharf, sir."

At these words, a naive tribute to the aspect of his physique, even more suggestive of the grave than of the sick-bed, a fold appeared on that side of the governor's face which was exposed to the dim light—a deep, shadowy, semicircular fold from the side of the nose to bottom of the chin—a silent smile. By a side glance Ricardo had noted this play of features. He smiled, too, appreciative, encouraged.

"And you as hard as nails all the time," he went on. "Hang me if anybody would believe you aren't sick, if I were to swear myself black in the face! Give us a day or two to look into matters and size up that 'yporcrite.'"

Ricardo's eyes remained fixed on his crossed shins. The chief, in his lifeless accents, approved.

"Perhaps it would be a good idea."

"The chink, he's nothing. He can be made quiet any time."

One of Ricardo's hands, reposing palm upward on his folded legs, made a swift thrusting gesture, repeated by the enormous darting shadow of an arm very low on the wall. It broke the spell of perfect stillness in the room.

The secretary moodily eyed the wall from which the shadow had gone. Anybody could be made quiet, he pointed out. It was not anything that the chink could do; no, it was the effect that his company must have produced on the conduct of the doomed man. A man! What was a man? A Swedish baron could be ripped up, or else holed by a shot, as easily as any other creature; but that was exactly what was to be avoided, till one knew where he had hidden his plunder.

"I shouldn't think it would be some sort

of a hole in his bungalow," argued Ricardo with real anxiety.

No. A house can be burned—set on fire accidentally, or on purpose, while a man's asleep. Under the house—or in some crack, cranny, or crevice? Something told him it wasn't that. The anguish of mental effort contracted Ricardo's brow. The skin of his head seemed to move in this travail of vain and tormenting suppositions.

"What did you think a fellow is, sir—a baby?" he said, in answer to Mr. Jones's objections. "I am trying to find out what I would do myself. He wouldn't be likely to be cleverer than I am."

"And what do you know about yourself?"

Mr. Jones seemed to watch his follower's perplexities with amusement concealed in a deathlike composure.

Ricardo disregarded the question. The material vision of the spoil absorbed all his faculties. A great vision! He seemed to see it. A few small canvas bags tied up with thin cord, their distended rotundity showing the inside pressure of the dislike forms of coins—gold, solid, heavy, eminently portable. Perhaps steel cash-boxes with a chased design on the covers; or perhaps a black and brass box with a handle on the top, and full of goodness knows what. Bank-notes? Why, not? The fellow had been going home; so it was surely something worth going home with.

"And he may have put it anywhere outside—anywhere!" cried Ricardo in a deadened voice. "In the forest—"

That was it! A temporary darkness replaced the dim light of the room. The darkness of the forest at night, and in it the gleam of a lantern, by which a figure is digging at the foot of a tree-trunk. As likely as not another figure holding that lantern—ha, feminine! The girl!

The prudent Ricardo stifled a picturesque and profane exclamation, partly joy, partly dismay. Had the girl been trusted or mistrusted by that man? Whatever it was, it was bound to be wholly! With women there could be no half-measures. He could not imagine a fellow half-trusting a woman in that relation to himself, and in those particular circumstances of conquest and loneliness.

In nine cases out of ten the woman would be trusted. But, trusted or mistrusted, was her presence a favorable or unfavorable condition of the problem? That was the question!

The temptation to consult his chief, to talk over the weighty fact and get his opinion on it, was great indeed. Ricardo resisted it; but

the agony of his solitary mental conflict was extremely sharp. A woman in a problem is an incalculable quantity, even if you have something to go upon in forming your guess. How much more so when you haven't even once caught sight of her!

Swift as were his mental processes, he felt that a longer silence was inadvisable. He hastened to speak:

"And do you see, sir, you and I, with a couple of spades having to tackle this whole confounded island?"

He allowed himself a slight movement of the arm. The shadow enlarged it into a sweeping gesture.

"This seems rather discouraging, Martin," murmured the unmoved governor.

"We mustn't be discouraged—that's all," retorted his henchman. "Something's sure to turn up to give us a hint; only this job can't be rushed. You may depend on me to pick up the least little bit of a hint; but you, sir—you've got to play him very gently. For the rest you can trust me."

"Yes; but I ask myself what you are trusting to."

"Our luck," said the faithful Ricardo. "Don't say a word against that. It might spoil the run of it."

"You are a superstitious beggar. No, I won't say anything against it!"

"That's right, sir. Don't you even think lightly of it. Luck's not to be played with."

"Yes, luck's a delicate thing," assented Mr. Jones in a dreamy whisper.

A short silence ensued, which Ricardo ended in a discreet and tentative voice.

"Talking of luck, I suppose he could be made to take a hand with you, sir—two-handed picket or ekkarty, you being seedy and keeping indoors—just to pass the time. For all we know, he may be one of them hot ones once they start—"

"Is it likely?" came coldly from the principal. "Considering what we know of his history—say with his partner."

"True, sir. He's a cold-blooded beast; a cold-blooded, inhuman—"

"And I'll tell you another thing that isn't likely. He would not be likely to let himself be stripped bare. We haven't to do with a young fool that can be led on by chaff or flattery, and in the end simply overawed. This is a calculating man."

Ricardo recognized that clearly. What he had in his mind was something on a small scale, just to keep the enemy busy while he, Ricardo, had time to nose around a bit.

"You could even lose a little money to him, sir," he suggested.

"I could."

Ricardo was thoughtful for a moment.

"He strikes me, too, as the sort of man to start prancing when one didn't expect it. What do you think, sir? Is he a man that would prance? More likely to prance than to run—what?"

The answer came at once, because Mr. Jones understood the peculiar idiom of his faithful follower.

"Oh, without doubt! Without doubt!"

"It does me good to hear that you think so. He's a prancing beast, and so we mustn't startle him—not till I have located the stuff. Afterward—"

Ricardo paused, sinister in the stillness of his pose. Suddenly he got up with a swift movement and gazed down at his chief in moody abstraction. Mr. Jones did not stir.

"There's one thing that's worrying me," began Ricardo in a subdued voice.

"Only one?" was the faint comment from the motionless body on the bedstead.

"I mean more than all the others put together."

"That's grave news."

"Aye, grave enough. It's this—how do you feel in yourself, sir? Are you likely to get bored? I know them fits comes on you suddenly; but surely you can tell—"

"Martin, you are an ass."

The moody face of the secretary cleared somewhat.

"Really, sir? Well, I am quite content to be on these terms—I mean as long as you don't get bored. It wouldn't do, sir."

For coolness, Ricardo had thrown open his shirt and rolled up his sleeves. He moved stealthily across the room, barefooted, toward the candle, the shadow of his head and shoulders growing bigger behind him on the opposite wall, to which the face of plain Mr. Jones was turned. With a feline movement, Ricardo glanced over his shoulder at the thin back of the specter reposing on the bed, and then blew out the candle.

"In fact, I am rather amused, Martin," Mr. Jones said in the dark.

He heard the sound of a slapped thigh and the jubilant exclamation of his henchman:

"Good! That's the way to talk, sir!"

XXVII

RICARDO advanced prudently by short darts from one tree-trunk to another, more in the manner of a squirrel than a cat.

The sun had risen some time before. Already the sparkle of open sea was encroaching rapidly on the dark, cool, early-morning blue of Black Diamond Bay; but the deep gloom lingered yet under the mighty pillars of the forest, between which the secretary dodged.

He was watching Number One's bungalow with an animal-like patience, if with a very human complexity of purpose. This was the second morning of such watching. The first one had not been rewarded by success. Well, strictly speaking, there was no hurry.

The sun, swinging above the ridge, all at once inundated with light the space of burned grass in front of Ricardo and the face of the bungalow, on which his eyes were fixed, leaving only the one dark spot of the doorway. To his right, to his left, and behind him, splashes of gold appeared in the deep shade of the forest, thinning the gloom under the ragged roof of leaves.

This was not a very favorable circumstance for Ricardo's purpose. He did not wish to be detected in his patient occupation. For what he was watching for was a sight of the girl—that girl! Just a glimpse across the burned patch to see what she was like.

He had excellent eyes, and the distance was not so great. He would be able to distinguish her face quite easily if she only came out on the veranda; and she was bound to do that sooner or later. He was confident that he could form some opinion about her—which, he felt, was very necessary, before venturing on some steps to get in touch with her behind that Swedish baron's back. She couldn't be much. He knew that sort!

By protruding his head a little he commanded, through the foliage of a festooning creeper, a view of the three bungalows, irregularly disposed along a flat curve. Over the veranda rail of the farthest one hung a dark rug of a tartan pattern, amazingly conspicuous. Ricardo could see the very checks.

A brisk fire of sticks was burning on the ground in front of the steps, and in the sunlight the thin, fluttering flame had paled almost to invisibility—a mere rosy stir under a faint wreath of smoke. He could see the white bandage on the head of Pedro bending over it, and the wisps of black hair sticking up weirdly. He had wound that bandage himself, after breaking that shaggy and enormous head. The creature balanced it like a load, staggering toward the steps. Ricardo could see a small, long-handled saucepan at the end of a great, hairy paw.

Yes, he could see all that there was to be

seen, far and near. Excellent eyes! The only thing they could not penetrate was the dark oblong of the doorway on the veranda under the low eaves of the bungalow's roof. And that was vexing. It was an outrage. Ricardo was easily outraged.

Surely she would come out presently! Why didn't she? Surely the fellow did not tie her up to the bed-post before leaving the house!

Nothing appeared. Ricardo was as still as the leafy cables of creepers depending in a convenient curtain from the mighty limb sixty feet above his head. His very eyelids were still, and this unblinking watchfulness gave him the dreamy air of a cat posed on a hearth-rug, contemplating the fire.

Was he dreaming? There, in plain sight, he had before him a white, blouselike jacket, short blue trousers, a pair of bare yellow calves, a pigtail, long and slender—

"The confounded chink!" he muttered, astounded.

He was not conscious of having looked away; and yet right there, in the middle of the picture, without having come round the right-hand corner or the left-hand corner of the house, without falling from the sky or surging up from the ground, Wang had become visible, as large as life, and engaged in the young-ladyish occupation of picking flowers.

Step by step, stooping repeatedly over the flower-beds at the foot of the veranda, the startlingly materialized Chinaman passed off the scene in a very commonplace manner, by going up the steps and disappearing in the darkness of the doorway.

Only then the yellow eyes of Martin Ricardo lost their intent fixity. He understood that it was time for him to be moving. That bunch of flowers going into the house in the hand of a Chinaman was for the breakfast-table. What else could it be for?

"I'll give you flowers!" he muttered threateningly. "You wait!"

Another moment, just for a glance toward the Jones bungalow, whence he expected Heyst to issue on his way to that breakfast so offensively decorated, and Ricardo began his retreat. His impulse, his desire, was for a rush into the open, face to face with the appointed victim, for what he called a "ripping up," visualized greedily, and always with the swift, preliminary, stooping movement on his part—the forerunner of certain death to his adversary.

This was his impulse; and as it was, so to speak, constitutional, it was extremely difficult to resist when his blood was up. What

could be more trying than to have to skulk and dodge and conceal oneself mentally and physically, when one's blood was up?

Mr. Secretary Ricardo was being severely tried as he began his retreat from his post of observation behind a tree opposite Heyst's bungalow, using great care to remain unseen. His proceedings were made easier by the declivity of the ground, which sloped sharply to the water's edge. There, his feet feeling the warmth of the island's rocky foundation already heated by the sun, through the thin soles of his straw slippers, he was, as it were, sunk out of sight of the houses.

A short scramble of some twenty feet brought him up again to the upper level, at the place where the jetty had its root in the shore. He leaned his back against one of the uprights which still held up the Tropical Belt Coal Company's sign-board above the mound of derelict coal. Nobody could have guessed how much his blood was up. To contain himself, he folded his arms tightly on his breast.

What exasperated him just now was his inability to understand Heyst. Ricardo was human enough to suffer from the discovery of his limitations. No, he couldn't size him up. He could kill him with extreme ease—a growl and a spring—but that was forbidden!

He moved on, his head swimming a little with the repressed desire of violence, and came out openly in front of the bungalows, as if he had just been down to the jetty to look at the boat. The sunshine enveloped him, very brilliant, very still, very hot. The three buildings faced him. The one with the rug on the balustrade was the most distant; next to it was the empty bungalow; the nearest, with the flower-beds at the foot of its veranda, contained that bothersome girl, who had managed so provokingly to keep herself invisible.

Ricardo could not hang about openly much longer; but, like a concealed magnet, the girl exercised her attraction. As he went on, he deviated toward the bungalow. Though his movements were deliberate, his feral instincts had such sway that if he had seen Heyst walking toward him, he would have had to satisfy his need of violence.

But he saw nobody. Wang was at the back of the house, keeping the coffee hot against Number One's return for breakfast. Even the simian Pedro was out of sight, no doubt crouching on the door-step, his eyes fastened with animal-like devotion on Mr. Jones, who was in discourse with Heyst in the other bungalow—the conversation of an evil specter with a disarmed man, watched by an ape.

His will having very little to do with it, Ricardo, darting swift glances in all directions, found himself at the steps of the Heyst bungalow. Once there, falling under an uncontrollable force of attraction, he mounted them with a savage and stealthy action of his limbs, and paused for a moment under the eaves to listen to the silence. Presently he advanced one leg over the threshold—it seemed to stretch itself, like a limb of india-rubber—planted his foot within, brought up the other swiftly, and stood inside the room, turning his head from side to side.

To his eyes, brought in there from the dazzling sunshine, all was gloom for a moment. His pupils, like a cat's, dilating swiftly, he distinguished an enormous quantity of books. He was amazed; and he was put off, too. He was vexed in his astonishment. Though every muscle of his body quivered with savage excitement, he kept all his wits about him. He had meant to note the aspect and nature of things, and hoped to draw some useful inference, some hint as to the man. But what guess could one make out of a multitude of books?

He didn't know what to think; and he formulated his bewilderment in the mental exclamation:

"What the deuce has this fellow been trying to set up here—a school?"

He gave a prolonged stare to the portrait of Heyst's father, that severe profile ignoring the vanities of this earth. His eyes gleamed sidewise at the heavy silver candlesticks—signs of opulence. He prowled as a stray cat entering a strange place might do; for if Ricardo had not Wang's miraculous gift of materializing and vanishing, rather than coming and going, he could be nearly as noiseless in his less elusive movements.

He noted the back door standing just ajar; and all the time his slightly pointed ears, at the utmost stretch of watchfulness, kept in touch with the profound silence outside enveloping the absolute stillness of the house.

He had not been in the room two minutes when it occurred to him that he must be alone in the bungalow. The woman, most likely, had sneaked out, and was walking about somewhere in the grounds at the back. She had probably been ordered to keep out of sight. Why? Because the fellow mistrusted his guests; or was it because he mistrusted her?

For some time he had been looking at a closed door on the other side of the room. He would look into that other room, and per-

haps see something more informing than a confounded lot of books. As he crossed over, he thought recklessly:

"If the beggar comes in suddenly, and starts to prance, I'll rip him up and be done with it!"

He laid his hand on the handle, and felt the door come unlatched. Before he pulled it open, he listened again to the silence. He felt it all about him, complete, without a flaw.

The necessity of prudence had exasperated his self-restraint. A mood of ferocity woke up in him, and, as always at such times, he became physically aware of the sheeted knife strapped to his leg.

He pulled at the door with fierce curiosity. It came open without a squeak of hinge, without a rustle, with no sound at all; and he found himself glaring at the opaque surface of some rough blue stuff, like serge. A curtain was fitted inside, heavy enough and long enough not to stir.

A curtain! This unexpected veil, baffling his curiosity, checked his brusqueness. He did not fling it aside with an impatient movement; he only looked at it closely, as if its texture had to be examined before his hand could touch such stuff.

In this interval of hesitation he seemed to detect a flaw in the perfection of the silence, the faintest possible rustle, which his ears caught and instantly, in the effort of conscious listening, lost again. No! Everything was still inside and outside the house, but he had no longer the sense of being alone there.

When he put out his hand toward the motionless folds, it was with extreme caution, and only to push the stuff aside a little, advancing his head at the same time to peep within. A moment of complete immobility ensued. Then, without anything else of him stirring, his head shrank back on his shoulders and his arm descended slowly to his side. He had seen a woman in there. The very woman!

In that room, lighted dimly by the reflection of the outer glare, she loomed up strangely big and shadowy at the other end of the narrow room. With her back to the door, she was doing her hair with her bare arms uplifted. One of them gleamed pearly white; the other detached its perfect form in black against the unshuttered, uncurtained square of window. She was there, her fingers busy with her dark hair, utterly unconscious, exposed and defenseless—and tempting.

Ricardo drew back one foot and pressed his

elbows close to his sides; his chest started heaving convulsively, as if he were wrestling or running a race; his body began to sway gently back and forth. The self-restraint was at an end; his psychology must have its way. The instinct for the feral thing could no longer be denied. Ravish or kill—it was all one to him, as long as by the act he liberated the repressed soul of savagery which had suffered within him for so long.

After a quick glance back over his shoulder, which hunters of big game tell us no lion or tiger omits to give before charging home, Ricardo charged, head first, straight at the curtain. The stuff, tossed violently upward by his rush, settled itself with a slow, floating motion into vertical folds, motionless, without a shudder even in the still, warm air.

XXVIII

THE clock—which once upon a time had measured the hours of philosophic meditation—could not have ticked away more than five seconds when Wang materialized within the living-room. His concern primarily was with the delayed breakfast, but at once his slanting eyes became immovably fixed upon the unstirring curtain. For it was behind it that he had located the strange, deadened, scuffling sounds which filled the empty room.

The slanting eyes of his race could not achieve a round, amazed stare; but they became still, dead still, and his impassive yellow face grew all at once care-worn and lean with the sudden strain of intense, doubtful, frightened watchfulness. Contrary impulses swayed his body, rooted to the floor-mats. He even went so far as to extend his hand toward the curtain. He could not reach it as he stood, and he didn't make the necessary step forward.

The mysterious struggle was going on with a quick thumping of bare feet, as in a wrestling-match. It was a mute fierceness of contest; no human sound, hiss, groan, murmur, or exclamation coming through the curtain.

A chair fell over in there, not with a crash, but lightly, as if just grazed, and a faint metallic ring of the tin bath succeeded. Finally the tense silence, as of two adversaries locked in a deadly grip, was ended by the heavy, dull thud of a soft body flung against the inner partition of planks. It seemed to shake the whole bungalow.

By that time, walking backward, his eyes, his very throat, strained with fearful excitement, his extended arm still pointing at the curtain, Wang had disappeared through the

back door. Once out in the compound, he bolted round the end of the house. Emerging innocently between the two bungalows, he lingered and lounged in the open, where anybody issuing from any of the dwellings was bound to see him—a self-possessed Chinaman idling there, with nothing but perhaps an unserved breakfast on his mind.

It was at this time that Wang made up his mind to give up all connection with Number One, a man not only disarmed but already half vanquished. Till that morning he had had doubts as to his course of action, but this overheard scuffle decided the question. Number One was a doomed man—one of those beings whom it is unlucky to help.

Even as he walked about with a fine air of unconcern, Wang wondered that no sound of any sort was to be heard inside the house. For all he knew, the white *mem* might have been scuffling in there with an evil spirit, which had, of course, killed her. For nothing visible came out of the house as he watched out of the slanting corner of his eye. The sunshine and the silence outside the bungalow reigned undisturbed.

But in the house the silence of the big room would not have struck an acute ear as perfect. It was troubled by a stir so faint that it could hardly be called a ghost of whispering from behind the curtain.

Ricardo, feeling his throat with tender care, breathed out admiringly:

"You have fingers like steel. Jiminy! You have muscles like a giant!"

Luckily for the girl, Ricardo's onset had been so sudden—she was winding her two heavy tresses round her head—that she had no time to lower her arms. This, which saved them from being pinned to her sides, gave her a better chance to resist.

His spring had nearly thrown her down. Luckily, again, she was standing so near the wall that, though she was driven against it headlong, yet the shock was not heavy enough to knock all the breath out of her body. On the contrary, it helped her first instinctive attempt to drive her assailant backward.

After the first gasp of a surprise that was really too overpowering for a cry, she was never in doubt of the nature of the danger. She defended herself in the full, clear knowledge of it, from the force of instinct which is the true source of every great display of energy, and with a determination which could hardly have been expected from a girl who, cornered in a dim corridor by the red-faced, stammering Schomberg, had trembled with

shame, disgust, and fear; had drooped, terrified, before mere words spluttered odiously by a man who had never in his life laid his big paw on her.

This new enemy's attack was simple, straightforward violence. It was not the slimy, underhand plotting to deliver her up like a slave which had sickened her heart and had made her feel in her loneliness that her oppressors were too many for her. She was no longer alone in the world now. She resisted without a moment of faltering, because she was no longer deprived of moral support; because she was a human being who counted; because she was no longer defending herself for herself alone; because of the faith that had been born in her—the faith in the man of her destiny, and perhaps in the Heaven which had sent him so wonderfully to cross her path.

She had defended herself principally by gripping Ricardo's windpipe with her fingers, till she felt a slight relaxation of the terrific hug in which he stupidly and ineffectually persisted to hold her. Then, with a supreme effort of her arms and of her suddenly raised knee, she sent him flying against the partition. The cedar-wood chest stood in the way, and Ricardo, with a thump which boomed hollow through the whole bungalow, fell on it in a sitting posture, half strangled, and exhausted not so much by the efforts as by the emotions of the struggle.

With the recoil of her exerted strength, she, too, staggered back a little, and sat on the edge of the bed. Her legs crossed, breathing quickly, but calm and unabashed, she busied herself in readjusting under her arms the brown and yellow figured Celebes sarong, the tuck of which had come undone during the fight. Then, folding her bare arms tightly on her breast, she leaned forward on them, determined and without fear.

Ricardo, leaning forward too, his nervous force gone, crestfallen, like a beast of prey that has missed its spring, met her big gray eyes looking at him—wide open, observing, mysterious—from under the dark arches of her courageous eyebrows. Their faces were not a foot apart.

He ceased feeling about his aching throat, and dropped the palms of his hands heavily on his knees. He was not looking at her bare shoulders, at her strong arms; he was looking down at the floor. He had lost one of his straw slippers. A chair with a white dress on it had been overturned. These, with splashes of water from a misplaced sponge-bath, were the only traces of the struggle.

Ricardo swallowed twice consciously, as if to make sure of his throat, before he spoke again:

"All right. I never meant to hurt you—though I am no joker when it comes to it."

He pulled up the leg of his pajamas to exhibit the strapped knife. She glanced at it without moving her head, and murmured, with scornful bitterness:

"Ah, yes—with that stuck in my side. Never otherwise!"

He shook his head with a sort of horror.

"Listen! I am quiet now. Straight—I am. I don't need to explain why—you know how it is. And I can see, now, this wasn't the way with you."

She made no sound. Her still, upward gaze had a patient mournfulness which troubled him like a suggestion of an inconceivable depth. He added doubtfully:

"You are not going to make a noise about this silly try of mine?"

She moved her head the least bit.

"Jee-miny! You are a wonder," he murmured earnestly, relieved more than she could have guessed.

Of course, if she had attempted to run out, he would have stuck the knife between her shoulders, to stop her screaming; but all the fat would have been in the fire, the business utterly spoiled, and the rage of the governor—especially when he learned the cause—boundless.

A woman that does not make a noise after an attempt of that kind has tacitly condoned the offense. Clearly, if she would pass it over like this, then he could not be so utterly repugnant to her. He already felt almost tender toward the girl—that plucky, fine girl who had not tried to run screaming from him.

"We shall be friends yet. I don't give you up. Don't think it. Friends as friends can be!" he whispered confidently. "Jee-miny! You aren't a tame one. Neither am I. You will find that out before long."

He could not know that if she had not run out, it was because that morning, under the stress of growing uneasiness at the presence of the incomprehensible visitors, Heyst had confessed to her that it was his revolver he had been looking for in the night; that it was gone; that he was a disarmed, defenseless man. She had hardly comprehended the meaning of his confession. Now she better understood what it meant.

The effort of her self-control, her stillness, impressed Ricardo. Suddenly she spoke:

"What are you after?"

He did not raise his eyes. His hands reposing on his knees, his drooping head, something reflective in his pose, suggested the weariness of a simple soul, the fatigue of a mental rather than physical contest. He answered the direct question by a direct statement, as if he were too tired to dissemble:

"After the swag."

The word was strange to her. The veiled ardor of her gray gaze from under the dark eyebrows never left Ricardo's face.

"A swag?" she murmured quietly. "What's that?"

"Why, swag, plunder—what your gentleman has been pinching right and left for years—the pieces. Don't you know? This!"

Without looking up, he made a motion as if counting money into the palm of his hand. She lowered her eyes slightly to observe this bit of pantomime, but returned them to his face at once. Then, in a mere breath:

"How do you know anything about him?" she asked, concealing her puzzled alarm. "What has it got to do with you?"

"Everything," was Ricardo's concise answer, in a low, emphatic whisper.

He reflected that this girl was really his best hope. Out of the unfaded impression of past violence there was growing the sort of sentiment which prevents a man being indifferent to a woman he has once held in his arms—if even against her will—and still more so if she has pardoned the outrage. It becomes then a sort of bond.

"It's a game of grab—see?" he went on, with a new inflection of intimacy in his murmur. He was looking straight at her now. "That fat, tame slug of a gin-slinger, Schomberg, put us up to it."

So strong is the impression of helpless and persecuted misery, that the girl who had fought down a man without faltering could not completely repress a shudder at the mere sound of that abhorred name.

Ricardo became more rapid and confidential:

"He wants to pay him off—pay both of you, at that; so he told me. He was hot after you. He would have given all he had into those hands of yours that have nearly strangled me. But you couldn't, eh? Nohow—what?" He paused. "So, rather than—you followed a gentleman?"

He noticed a slight movement of her head.

"Same here—rather than be a wage-slave. Only these foreigners aren't to be trusted. You're too good for him. A man that will rob his best chum!" She raised her head. He went on, well pleased with his progress, whis-

pering hurriedly: "Yes. I know all about him. So you may guess how he's likely to treat a woman after a bit!"

He did not know that he was striking terror into her breast now. Still the gray eyes remained fixed on him unmovably, watchful, as if sleepy, under the white forehead. She was beginning to understand. His words conveyed a definite, dreadful meaning to her mind, which he proceeded to enlighten further in a convinced murmur.

"You and I are made to understand each other. Born alike, bred alike, I guess. You are not tame. Same here! You have been chucked out into the world. Same here!"

Her stillness, her appalled stillness, wore to him an air of friendly attention. He asked brusquely:

"Where is it?"

She made an effort to breathe out:

"Where's what?"

His tone expressed excited secrecy.

"The swag—plunder—pieces. It's a game of grab. We must have it; but it isn't easy, and so you must lend a hand. Come! Is it kept in the house?"

As often with women, her wits were sharpened by the very terror of the glimpsed menace. She shook her head negatively.

"No."

"Sure?"

"Sure," she said.

"Aye! Thought so. Does your gentleman trust you?"

Again she shook her head.

"Blamed 'yporcrite," he said feelingly, and then reflected: "He's one of the tame ones, ain't he?"

"You had better find out for yourself," she said.

"You trust me. I don't want to die before you, and I have made friends." This was said with a strange air of feline gallantry. Then, tentatively: "But he could be brought to trust you, couldn't he?"

"Trust me?" she said, in a tone which bordered on despair, but which he mistook for derision.

"Stand in with us," he urged. "Give the chuck to all this blamed 'yporcristy. Perhaps, without being trusted, you have managed to find out something already, eh?"

"Perhaps I have," she uttered with lips that seemed to her to be freezing.

Ricardo now looked at her calm face with something like respect. He was even a little awed by her stillness, by her economy of words.

Womanlike, she felt the effect she had produced, the effect of knowing much and of keeping all her knowledge in reserve. So far, somehow, this had come about of itself. Thus encouraged, directed in the way of duplicity, the refuge of the weak, she made a heroically conscious effort and forced her stiff, cold lips into a smile.

Duplicity—the refuge of the weak and the cowardly, but of the disarmed, too! Nothing stood between the enchanted dream of her existence and a cruel catastrophe but her duplicity.

It seemed to her that the man sitting there before her was an unavoidable presence which she had known all her life. He was the embodied evil of the world. She was not ashamed of her duplicity. With a woman's frank courage, as soon as she saw that opening she threw herself into it without reserve, with only one doubt—that of her own strength.

She was appalled by the situation; but already all her aroused femininity—understanding that whether Heyst loved her or not she loved him, and feeling that she had brought this on his head—faced the danger with a passionate desire to defend him.

XXIX

To Ricardo the girl had been so unforeseen that he was unable to bring down upon her the light of his critical faculties. Her smile appeared to him to be full of promise. He had not expected her to be what she was. Who, from the talk he had heard, could expect to meet a girl like this?

She was a blooming miracle, he said to himself, familiarly, yet with a tinge of respect. She was no meat for the likes of that tame, respectable gin-slinger. Ricardo grew hot with indignation. Her courage, her physical strength, demonstrated at the cost of his discomfort, commanded his sympathy. He felt himself drawn to her by the proofs of her amazing spirit. Such a girl! She had a strong soul; and her reflective disposition to throw over her connection proved that she was no hypocrite.

"Is your gentleman a good shot?" he said, looking down on the floor again, as if indifferent.

She hardly understood the phrase; but in its form it suggested some accomplishment. It was safe to whisper an affirmative.

"Mine, too—and better than good," Ricardo murmured, and then, in a confidential burst: "I am not so good at it, but I carry a pretty deadly thing about me, all the same!"

He tapped his leg. She was past the stage of shudders now. Stiff all over, unable even to move her eyes, she felt an awful mental tension which was like blank forgetfulness. Ricardo tried to influence her in his own way.

"And my gentleman is not the sort that would drop me. He ain't no foreigner; whereas you, with your baron, you don't know what's before you—or, rather, being a woman, you know only too well. Much better not to wait for the chuck. Pile in with us and get your share—of the plunder, I mean. You have some notion about it already."

She felt that if she as much as hinted by word or sign that there was no such thing on the island, Heyst's life wouldn't be worth half an hour's purchase; but all power of combining words had vanished in the tension of her mind. Words themselves were too difficult to think of—all except the word "yes." The saving word!

She whispered it with not a feature of her face moving. To Ricardo the faint and concise sound seemed to prove a cool, reserved assent, more worth having from that amazing mistress of herself than a thousand words from any other woman. He thought with exultation that he had come upon one in a million—in ten million! His whisper became frankly entreating.

"That's good! Now all you've got to do is to make sure where he keeps his swag. Only do be quick about it! I can't stand much longer this crawling-on-the-stomach business so as not to scare your gentleman. What do you think a fellow is—a reptile?"

She started without seeing any one, as a person in the night sits staring and listens to deadly sounds, to evil incantations. And always in her head there was that tension of the mind trying to get hold of something, of a saving idea which seemed to be so near and could not be captured.

Suddenly she seized it. Yes—she had to get that man out of the house. At that very moment, raised outside, not very near, but heard distinctly, Heyst's voice uttered the words:

"Have you been looking out for me, Wang?"

With a convulsive movement she sat up straight, but had no power to rise. Ricardo, on the contrary, was on his feet on the instant, as noiseless as a cat. His yellow eyes gleamed, gliding here and there; but he, too, seemed unable to make another movement. Only his mustache stirred visibly, like the feelers of some animal.

Wang's answer, "*Ya tuan*," was heard by the two in the room, but more faintly. Then Heyst again:

"All right! You may bring the coffee in. Mem Putih out in the room yet?"

To this question Wang made no answer.

Ricardo's and the girl's eyes met, utterly without expression, all their faculties being absorbed in listening for the first sound of Heyst's footsteps, for any sound outside which would mean that Ricardo's retreat was cut off. Both understood perfectly well that Wang must have gone round the house, and that he was now at the back, making it impossible for Ricardo to slip out unseen that way before Heyst came in at the front.

A darkling shade settled on the face of the devoted secretary. Here was the business utterly spoiled! It was the gloom of anger, and even of apprehension.

He would perhaps have made a dash for it through the back door, if Heyst had not been heard ascending the front steps. He climbed them slowly, very slowly, like a man who is discouraged or weary—or simply thoughtful; and Ricardo had a mental vision of his face, with his martial mustache, the lofty forehead, the impassive features, and the quiet, meditative eyes.

Trapped! Confound it! After all, perhaps the governor was right. Women had to be shunned. Fooling with this one had apparently ruined the whole business. For, trapped as he was, he might just as well kill, since, anyhow, to be seen was to be unmasked. But he was too fair-minded to be angry with the girl.

Heyst had paused on the veranda or in the very doorway.

"I shall be shot down like a dog if I ain't quick," Ricardo muttered audibly.

He stooped swiftly, to get hold of his knife; and the next moment he would have hurled himself out through the curtain, nearly as prompt and fully as deadly to Heyst as an unexpected thunderbolt. The feel more than the strength of the girl's hand, clutching at his shoulder, checked him. He swung round, crouching with a yellow, upward glare. Ah! Was she turning against him?

He would have stuck his knife into the hollow of her bare throat if he had not seen her other hand pointing to the window. It was a long opening, high up, close under the ceiling, almost, with a single pivoting shutter.

While he was still looking at it, she moved noiselessly away, picked up the overturned chair, and placed it against the wall. Then she looked round; but he didn't need to be

beckoned to. In two long, tiptoeing strides he was at her side.

"Be quick!" she gasped.

He seized her hand and wrung it with all the force of his dumb gratitude, as a man does to a chum when there is no time for words. Then he mounted the chair.

Ricardo was short—too short to get over without a noisy scramble. He hesitated an instant; she, watchful, bore rigidly on the seat with her beautiful bare arms, while, light and sure, he used the back of the chair as a ladder. The masses of her brown hair fell all about her face.

Footsteps resounded in the next room, and Heyst's voice, not very loud, called her by name.

"Lena!"

"Yes! In a minute," she answered in a clear tone which she knew would most likely prevent Heyst from coming it at once.

When she looked up, Ricardo had vanished, letting himself down outside so lightly that she had not heard the slightest noise. She stood up then, bewildered, frightened, as if awakened from a drugged sleep, with heavy, downcast, unseeing eyes, her fortitude tired out, her imagination as if dead within her and unable to keep her fear alive.

Heyst moved about aimlessly in the other room. This sound roused her exhausted wits. At once she began to think, hear, see; and what she saw—or rather recognized, for her eyes had been resting on it all the time—was Ricardo's straw slipper, lost in the scuffle, lying near the bath. She had just time to step forward and plant her foot on it when the curtain shook, and, pushed aside, disclosed Heyst in the doorway.

Out of the appeased enchantment of the senses she had found with him, like a sort of bewitched state, his danger brought a sensation of warmth to her breast. She felt something stir in there, something profound, like a new sort of life—the revelation of her love for him.

The room was in partial darkness, Ricardo having accidentally swung the pivoted shutter as he went out of the window. Heyst peered from the doorway.

"Why, you haven't done your hair yet," he said.

"I won't stop to do it now. I sha'n't be long," she replied steadily, and remained still, feeling Ricardo's slipper under her foot.

Heyst, with a movement of retreat, let the curtain drop slowly. On the instant she stooped for the slipper, and, with it in her

hand, spun round wildly, looking for some hiding-place; but there was no such spot in the bare room. The chest, the leather trunk, a dress or two of hers hanging on pegs—there was no place where the merest hazard might not guide Heyst's hand at any moment.

Her wildly roaming eyes were caught by the half-closed window. She ran to it, and by raising herself on her toes was able to reach the shutter with her finger-tips. She pushed it square, stole back to the middle of the room, and, turning about, swung her arm, regulating the force of the throw so as not to let the slipper fly too far and hit the edge of the overhanging eaves. It was a task of the nicest judgment for the muscles of those round arms, still quivering from the deadly wrestle with a man, for that brain, tense with the excitement of the situation.

At last the slipper left her hand. As soon as it passed the opening, it was out of her sight. She listened. She did not hear it strike anything; it just vanished, as if it had wings to fly on through the air. Not a sound! It had gone clear.

Her valiant arms hanging close against her sides, she stood as if turned into stone. A faint whistle reached her ears. The forgetful Ricardo, becoming very much aware of his loss, had been hanging about in great anxiety, which was relieved by the appearance of the slipper flying from under the eaves; and now, thoughtfully, he had ventured a whistle to put her mind at ease.

Suddenly the girl reeled forward. She saved herself from a fall only by embracing with both arms one of the tall, rudely carved posts holding the mosquito-net above the bed. For a long time she clung to it, with her forehead leaning against the wood.

One side of her loosened sarong had slipped down as low as her hip. The long, brown tresses of her hair hung down in wisps, lank, as if wet, looking almost black against her white body. Her uncovered flank, damp with the sweat of anguish and fatigue, gleamed coldly with the immobility of polished marble in the hot, diffused light falling through the window above her head—a dim reflection of the consuming, passionate blaze of sunshine outside, all aquiver with the effort to set the earth on fire, to burn it to ashes.

XXX

Heyst, seated at the table with his chin on his breast, raised his head at the faint rustle of Lena's dress. He was startled by the dead pallor of her cheeks, by something lifeless in

her eyes, which looked at him strangely, without recognition. But to his anxious inquiries she answered reassuringly, in a very low voice, that there was nothing the matter with her, really. She had felt giddy on rising. She had even had a moment of faintness after her bath. She had to sit down to wait for it to pass. This had made her late dressing.

"I didn't try to do my hair. I didn't want to keep you waiting any longer," she said.

He was unwilling to press her with questions about her health, since she seemed to make light of this indisposition. She had not done her hair, but she had brushed it, and had tied it with a ribbon behind. With her forehead uncovered, she looked very young, almost a child, a care-worn child; a child with something on its mind.

What surprised Heyst was the non-appearance of Wang. The Chinaman had always materialized at the precise moment of his service, neither too soon nor too late. This time the usual miracle failed. What was the meaning of this?

Heyst raised his voice—a thing he disliked doing. It was promptly answered from the compound:

"Ada tuan!"

Lena, leaning on her elbow, with her eyes on her plate, did not seem to hear anything. When Wang entered with a tray, his narrow eyes, tilted inward by the prominence of salient cheek-bones, kept her under stealthy observation all the time. Neither the one nor the other of that white couple paid the slightest attention to him, and he withdrew without having heard them exchange a single word.

He squatted on his heels on the back veranda. His Chinaman's mind, very clear but not far-reaching, was made up according to the plain reason of things, such as it appeared to him in the light of his simple feeling for self-preservation, untrammelled by any notions of romantic honor or tender conscience. His yellow hands, lightly clasped, hung idly between his knees. The graves of Wang's ancestors were far away, his parents were dead, his elder brother was a soldier in the yamun of some mandarin away in Formosa. No one near by had a claim on his veneration or his obedience. He had been for years a laboring, restless vagabond. His only tie in the world was the Alfuro woman in exchange for whom he had given away some considerable part of his hard-earned substance; and his duty, in reason, could be to no one but himself.

The scuffle behind the curtain was a thing of bad augury for that Number One for

whom the Chinaman had neither love nor dislike. He had been awed enough by that development to hang back with the coffee-pot till at last the white man was induced to call him in. Wang went in with curiosity.

Certainly, the white woman looked as if she had been wrestling with a spirit, which had managed to tear half her blood out of her before letting her go. As to the man, Wang had long looked upon him as being in some sort bewitched; and now he was doomed.

He heard their voices in the room. Heyst was urging the girl to go and lie down again. He was extremely concerned. She had eaten nothing.

"The best thing for you. You really must!"

She sat listless, shaking her head from time to time negatively, as if nothing could be any good. But he insisted; she saw the beginning of wonder in his eyes, and suddenly gave way.

"Perhaps I had better."

She did not want to arouse his wonder, which would lead him straight to suspicion. He must not suspect!

Already, with the consciousness of her love for this man, of that something rapturous and profound going beyond the mere embrace, there was born in her a woman's innate mistrust of masculinity, of that seductive strength allied to an absurd, delicate shrinking from the recognition of the naked necessity of facts, which never yet frightened a woman worthy of the name.

She had no plan; but her mind, quieted down somewhat by the very effort to preserve outward composure for his sake, perceived that her behavior had secured, at any rate, a short period of safety. Perhaps, because of the similarity of their miserable origin in the dregs of mankind, she had understood Ricardo perfectly. He would keep quiet for a time now.

In this momentarily soothing certitude her bodily fatigue asserted itself, the more overpoweringly since its cause was not so much the demand on her strength as the awful suddenness of the stress she had had to meet. She would have tried to overcome it from the mere instinct of resistance, if it had not been for Heyst's alternate pleadings and commands. Before this eminently masculine fussing she felt the woman's need to give way, the sweetness of surrender.

"I will do anything you like," she said.

Getting up, she was surprised by a wave of languid weakness that came over her, embracing and enveloping her like warm water, with a noise in her ears as of a breaking sea.

"You must help me along," she added quickly.

While he put his arm round her waist—not by any means an uncommon thing for him to do—she found a special satisfaction in the feeling of being thus sustained. She abandoned all her weight to that encircling and protecting pressure, while a thrill went through her at the sudden thought that it was she who would have to protect him, to be the defender of a man who was strong enough to lift her bodily, as he was doing even then in his two arms.

For Heyst had done this as soon as they had crept through the doorway of the room. He thought it was quicker and simpler to carry her the last step or two. He had grown really too anxious to be aware of the effort. He lifted her high and gently deposited her on the bed, as one lays a child on its side in a cot. Then he sat down on the edge, masking his concern with a smile which obtained no response from the dreamy immobility of her eyes.

But she sought his hand, seized it eagerly; and while she was pressing it with all the force of which she was capable, the sleep she needed overtook her suddenly, overwhelmingly, as it overtakes a child in a cot, with her lips parted for a safe, endearing word which she had thought of but had no time to utter.

The usual flaming silence brooded over Samburan.

"What in the world is this new mystery?" murmured Heyst to himself, contemplating her deep slumber.

It was so deep, this enchanted sleep, that when some time afterward he gently tried to open her fingers and free his hand, he succeeded without provoking the slightest stir.

"There is some very simple explanation, no doubt," he thought, as he stole out into the living-room.

Absent-mindedly, he pulled a book out of the top shelf, and sat down with it; but even after he had opened it on his knee, and had been staring at the pages for a time, he had not the slightest idea of what it was about. He stared and stared at the crowded, parallel lines. It was only when, raising his eyes for no particular reason, he saw Wang standing motionless on the other side of the table, that he regained complete control of his faculties.

"Oh, yes," he said, as if suddenly reminded of a forgotten appointment of a not particularly welcome sort.

He waited a little, and then, with reluctant curiosity, forced himself to ask the silent

Wang what he had to say. He had some idea that the matter of the vanished revolver would come up at last; but the guttural sounds which proceeded from the Chinaman did not refer to that delicate subject. His speech was concerned with cups, saucers, plates, forks, and knives. All those had been put away in the cupboards on the back veranda, where they belonged, perfectly clean, "all plover."

Heyst wondered at the scrupulosity of a man who was about to abandon him; for he was not surprised to hear Wang conclude the account of his stewardship with the words:

"I go now."

"Oh! You go now?" said Heyst, leaning back, his book on his knee.

"Yes. Me no likee. One man, two man, three man—no can do! Me go now."

"What's frightening you away like this?" asked Heyst, while through his mind flashed the hope that something enlightening might come from that being so unlike himself, taking contact with the world with a simplicity and directness of which his own mind was not capable. "Why?" he went on. "You are used to white men. You know them well."

"Yes. Me savee them," assented Wang inscrutably. "Me savee plenty."

All that he really knew was his own mind. He had made it up to withdraw himself and the Alfuro woman from the uncertainties of the relations which were going to establish themselves between those white men.

It was Pedro who had been the first cause of Wang's suspicion and fear. The Chinaman had seen wild men. He had penetrated, in the train of a Chinese pedler, up one or two of the Bornean rivers into the country of the Dyaks. He had also been in the interior of Mindanao, where there are people who live in trees—savages, no better than animals; but a hairy brute like Pedro, with his great fangs and ferocious growls, was altogether beyond his conception of anything that could be looked upon as human.

The strong impression made on him by Pedro was the prime inducement that led Wang to purloin the revolver. Reflection on the general situation, and on the insecurity of Number One, came later, after he had obtained possession of the revolver and of the box of cartridges out of the table drawer in the living-room.

"Oh, you savee plenty about white men," Heyst went on in a slightly bantering tone, after a moment of silent reflection in which he had confessed to himself that the recovery

of the revolver was not to be thought of, either by persuasion or by some more forcible means. "You speak that fashion, but you are frightened of those white men over there!"

"Me no flightened," protested Wang raucously, throwing up his head—which gave to his throat a more strained, anxious appearance than ever. "Me no likee," he added in a quieter tone. "Me velly sick."

He put his hand over the region under the breast-bone.

"That," said Heyst, serenely positive, "belong one piecee lie. That isn't proper man-talk at all. And after stealing my revolver, too!"

He had suddenly decided to speak about it, because this frankness could not make the situation much worse than it was. He did not suppose for a moment that Wang had the revolver anywhere about his person; and after having thought the matter over, he had arrived at the conclusion that the Chinaman never meant to use the weapon against him.

After a slight start, because the direct charge had taken him unawares, Wang tore open the front of his jacket with a convulsive show of indignation.

"No hab got. Look—see!" he mouthed in pretended anger.

He slapped his bare chest violently; he uncovered his very ribs, all astir with the panting of outraged virtue; his smooth stomach heaved with indignation. He started his wide, blue breeches flapping about his yellow calves. Heyst watched him quietly.

"I never said you had it on you," he observed, without raising his voice; "but the revolver is gone from where I kept it."

"Me no savee levolver," Wang said obstinately.

The book lying open on Heyst's knee slipped suddenly, and he made a sharp movement to catch it up. Wang was unable to see the reason of this because of the table, and leaped away from what seemed to him a threatening symptom. When Heyst looked up, the Chinaman was already at the door facing the room, not frightened, but alert.

"What's the matter?" asked Heyst.

Wang nodded his shaven head significantly at the curtain closing the doorway of the bedroom.

"Me no likee," he repeated.

"What the deuce do you mean?" Heyst was genuinely amazed. "Don't like what?"

Wang pointed a long, lemon-colored finger at the motionless folds.

"Two," he said.

"Two what? I don't understand."

"Suppose you savee, you no like that fashion. Me savee plenty. Me go now."

Heyst had risen from his chair, but Wang kept his ground in the doorway for a little while longer. His almond-shaped eyes imparted to his face an expression of soft and sentimental melancholy. The muscles of his throat moved visibly while he uttered a distinct and guttural "Good-by," and vanished from Number One's sight.

Too perplexed to be able to think, Heyst paced heavily across the room. A situation must have a side by which the mind can get hold of it; but this thing of surmises and hints had no tangible shape. It was as if the air of Samburan, that refuge from life, had been poisoned—a sort of thing against which there was no defense, from which there could be no escape.

Again he tramped across the room from end to end, and then with lighter steps passed within the curtain, where awaited him the conjoint mysteries of sleep and femininity.

He contemplated them, united in that reclining and motionless body. He fastened his attention on it. The light breathing did not perceptibly stir this form of grace draped in white, its eyes closed, its hair tossed loose, the pale face transfigured by the aloofness of dreams and slumber, which are like the veils of the great beyond. Everything around, and the stillness itself, appeared so deathlike that Heyst felt an impulse to break the silence with some useless words; but there is that in us which at certain moments becomes dumb.

He went on looking at her. The sleep-oblivion of this world, where wakeful faces carry in sorrow the degrading marks of the past, allowed him to perceive the wonder of her native distinction. Feeling deeply all the charm she had for him, he became saddened, as if by a cruel reminder of his lost independence. At the same time he was moved by a strange compassion for her. He sighed and went out of the room with hushed footsteps.

He was no sooner alone in the outer room than, very naturally, he thought of the absconding Wang. The Chinaman's departure altered the situation. Heyst reflected on what would be best to do in view of that fact. For a long time he hesitated; then, shrugging his shoulders wearily, he walked out on the veranda, down the steps, and continued at a steady gait, with a thoughtful mien, in the direction of his guests' bungalow.

He wanted to make an important communi-

cation, and he had no other object—least of all to give them the shock of a surprise call. Nevertheless, their brutish henchman not being on watch, it was Heyst's fate to startle Mr. Jones and his secretary by his sudden appearance in the doorway. Their conversation must have been very interesting to prevent them from hearing the visitor's approach.

In the dim room—the shutters were kept constantly closed against the heat—Heyst saw them start apart. It was Mr. Jones who spoke:

"Ah, here you are again! Come in, come in!"

Heyst, taking his hat off in the doorway, entered the room.

XXXI

WAKING up suddenly, Lena looked, without raising her head from the pillow, at the room in which she was alone.

The mysterious, wordless whispers heard in her slumbers were now replaced by the silence of a complete wakeful recollection. She got up quickly, as if to counteract the awful sinking of her heart by the vigorous use of her limbs. But this sinking was only momentary. Mistress of herself from pride, from love, from necessity, and also because of a woman's vanity in self-sacrifice, she met Heyst, returning from the strangers' bungalow, with a clear glance and a smile. The smile he managed to answer; but, noticing that he avoided her eyes, she composed her lips and lowered her gaze.

For the same reason she hastened to speak to him in a tone of indifference, which she put on without effort, as if she had grown adept in duplicity since sunrise.

"You have been over there again?"

"I have. I thought—but you had better know first that we have lost Wang for good."

She repeated "For good?" as if she had not understood.

"For good or evil—I shouldn't know which if you were to ask me. He has dismissed himself. He's gone."

"You expected him to go, though, didn't you?"

Heyst sat down on the other side of the table.

"Yes. I expected it as soon as I discovered that he had annexed my revolver. He says he hasn't taken it. That's of course. A Chinaman would not see the sense of confessing under any circumstances. To deny any charge is a principle of right conduct; but he hardly expected to be believed. He

did not have it on him, of that I am certain—at least, not while he was talking to me in this room. He lied with fine indignation. Perhaps he was amused to see me before him without arms and without force; and perhaps not. He was a little enigmatic at the last, Lena. He startled me."

Heyst paused. The girl, in profile, kept her eyelids lowered, and in her quietness seemed absorbed in her own thoughts.

"He startled me," repeated Heyst. She noted the anxiety in his tone, and turned her head slightly to look at him across the table.

"It must have been something—to startle you," she said. In the depths of her parted lips, like a ripe pomegranate, there was a gleam of white teeth.

"It was only a single word—and some of his gestures. He had been making a good deal of noise. I wonder we didn't wake you up. How soundly you can sleep! I say, do you feel all right now?"

"As fresh as can be," she said, treating him to another deep gleam of a smile. "I heard no noise, and I'm glad of it. The way he talks in his harsh voice frightens me. I don't like all these foreign people."

"It was just before he went away—bolted out, I should say. He nodded and pointed at the curtain of our room. He knew you were there, of course. He seemed to think—he seemed to try to give me to understand that you were in special—well, danger. You know how he talks."

She said nothing; she made no sound, only the faint color ebbed out of her cheek.

"Yes," Heyst went on. "He seemed to try to warn me. That must have been it. Did he imagine I had forgotten your existence? The only word he said was 'two.' It sounded so, at least. Yes, 'two'—and that he didn't like it."

"What does that mean?" she whispered.

"We know what the word two means, don't we, Lena? We are two. Never were such a lonely two out of the world, my dear! He might have tried to remind me that he himself has a woman to look after. Why are you so pale, Lena?"

"Am I pale?" she asked negligently.

"You are." Heyst was really anxious.

"Well, it isn't from fright," she protested truthfully.

Indeed, what she felt was a sort of horror which left her absolutely in the full possession of all her faculties; more difficult to bear, perhaps, for that reason, but not paralyzing to her fortitude.

Heyst, in his turn, smiled at her.

"I really don't know that there is any reason to be frightened."

"I mean I am not frightened for myself."

"I believe you are very plucky," he said. The color had returned to her face. "I," continued Heyst, "am so rebellious to outward impressions that I can't say that much about myself. I don't react with sufficient distinctness." His tone changed. "You know I want to see those men first thing this morning."

"I know. Be careful!" she murmured.

"I wonder how one can be careful! I had a long talk with—but I don't believe you have seen them. One of them is a fantastically thin, long person, apparently ailing; I shouldn't wonder if he was really so. He makes rather a point of it in a mysterious manner. I imagine he must have suffered from tropical fevers, but not so much as he tries to make out. He's what people would call a gentleman. He seemed on the point of volunteering a tale of his adventures—for which I didn't ask him—but remarked that it was a long story; some other time, perhaps.

"I suppose you would like to know who I am?" he asked me.

"I told him I would leave it to him, in a tone which, between gentlemen, could have left no doubt in his mind. He raised himself on his elbow—he was lying down on the camp-bed—and said:

"I am he who is—"

Lena seemed not to be listening; but when Heyst paused, she turned her head quickly to him. He took it for a movement of inquiry, but in this he was wrong. A great vagueness enveloped her impressions, but all her energy was concentrated on the struggle that she wanted to take upon herself, in a great exaltation of love and self-sacrifice, which is woman's sublime faculty; altogether on herself, every bit of it, leaving him nothing, not even the knowledge of what she did, if that were possible. She would fight for his admired, loved, incomprehensible, infinitely precious identity—to save it, to penetrate it, to mingle with it, to make it her own!

Observing her eyes fixed and as if sightless—for the concentration on her purpose took all expression out of them—Heyst imagined it to be the effect of a great mental effort.

"No use asking me what he meant, Lena; I don't know, and I did not ask him. The gentleman, as I have told you before, seems devoted to mystification. I said nothing—"

What Heyst did not know was that he had smiled at Mr. Jones in his usual urbane man-

ner, and that his almost mechanical smile, which had no other definite character but that of urbanity, had both irritated and disconcerted the other man. He had no idea of being almost as enigmatical to Ricardo's governor as to Ricardo himself.

"I said nothing," he went on, "and he laid down his head again on the bundle of rugs he uses for a pillow. He affects a state of great weakness, but I suspect that he's perfectly capable of leaping to his feet if he likes. He laid himself down at last, as I've said, and, seeing that I was by no means anxious for further enlightenment on those lines, he proceeded to give it to me. Having been ejected, he said, from his proper sphere because he had refused to conform to certain usual conventions, he was a rebel now, and was coming and going. As I really did not want to listen to all this nonsense, I told him that I had heard that sort of story about somebody else before. His grin is really ghastly. He confessed that I was very far from the sort of man he expected to meet. Then he said:

"As to me, I am no blacker than the gentleman you are thinking of, and I have neither more nor less determination."

Heyst looked across the table at Lena. Propped on her elbows, and holding her head in both hands, she moved it a little with an air of understanding.

"Nothing could be plainer, eh?" said Heyst grimly. "Unless, indeed, this is his idea of a pleasant joke; for, when he finished speaking, he burst into a long, loud laugh. I didn't join him."

"I wish you had," she breathed out.

"I didn't join him. It did not occur to me. I am not much of a diplomatist. I let him have his laugh out by himself. He was shaking all over, like a merry skeleton, under a blue cotton sheet he was covered with—I believe in order to conceal the revolver that he had in his right hand. I didn't see it, but I have a distinct impression it was there in his fist. As he had not been looking at me for some time, but staring into a certain part of the room, I turned my head and saw a hairy, wild sort of creature which they take about with them, squatting on its heels in the angle of the walls behind me. He wasn't there when I came in. I didn't like the notion of that watchful monster behind my back. If I had been less at their mercy, I should certainly have changed my position. As things are now, to move would have been a mere weakness. So I remained where I was. The gentleman on the bed said he could assure me of one

thing; and that was that his presence here was no more morally reprehensible than mine.

"We pursue the same ends," he said, "only perhaps I pursue them with more openness than you—with more simplicity."

"That's what he said," Heyst went on, after looking at Lena in a sort of inquiring silence. "I asked him if he knew beforehand that I was living here; but he only gave me a ghastly grin. I didn't press him for an answer, Lena. I thought I had better not."

On her smooth forehead a ray of light always seemed to rest. Her loose hair, parted in the middle, covered the hands sustaining her head. She seemed spellbound by the interest of the narrative. Heyst did not pause long. He managed to continue his relation smoothly enough, beginning afresh with a piece of comment.

"He would have lied impudently—and I detest being told a lie. It makes me uncomfortable. It's pretty clear that I am not fitted for the affairs of the wide world. But I did not want him to think that I accepted his presence too meekly; so I said that his comings or goings on the earth were none of my business, of course, except that I had a natural curiosity to know when he would find it convenient to resume them. He asked me to look at the state he was in. Had I been all alone here, as they think I am, I should have laughed at him. But not being alone—I say, Lena, you are sure you haven't shown yourself where you could be seen?"

"Certain," she said promptly.

He looked relieved.

"You understand, Lena, that when I ask you to keep so strictly out of sight, it is because you are not for them to look at—to talk about. My poor Lena! I can't help that feeling. Do you understand it?"

She moved her head slightly in a manner that was neither affirmative nor negative.

"People will have to see me some day," she said.

"I wonder how long it will be possible for you to keep out of sight!" murmured Heyst thoughtfully. He bent over the table. "Let me finish telling you. I asked him pointblank what it was he wanted with me; but he appeared extremely unwilling to come to the point. It was not really so pressing as all that, he said. His secretary, who was really his partner, was not present, having gone down to the wharf to look at their boat. Finally the fellow proposed that he should put off a certain communication he had to make till the day after to-morrow. I agreed; but I

also told him that I was not at all anxious to hear it. I had no conception in what way his affairs could concern me.

"Ah, Mr. Heyst," he said, "you and I have much more in common than you think."

Heyst struck the table with his fist unexpectedly.

"It was a jeer; I am sure it was!"

He seemed ashamed of this outburst, and smiled faintly into the motionless eyes of the girl.

"What could I have done—even if I had had my pockets full of revolvers?"

She made an appreciative sign.

"Killing's a sin, sure enough," she murmured.

"I went away," Heyst continued. "I left him there, lying on his side with his eyes shut. When I got back here, I found you looking ill. What was it, Lena? You did give me a scare! Then I had the interview with Wang while you rested; and afterward I looked in on you. You were sleeping quietly. I sat down here to consider all these things calmly, to try to penetrate their inner meaning and see all their outward bearing. It struck me that these two days that we have before us have the character of a sort of truce. The more I thought of it, the more I felt that this was tacitly understood between Jones and myself. It was to our advantage, if anything can be of advantage to people caught so completely unawares as we are. Wang was gone. He, at any rate, had declared himself and had taken his own line. As I did not know what he might take it into his head to do, I thought I had better warn these people that I was no longer responsible for the Chinaman. I did not want Mr. Wang making some move which would precipitate the action against us. Do you see my point of view?"

She made a sign that she understood; but all her soul was wrapped in her passionate determination, in an exalted belief in herself—in the contemplation of her amazing opportunity to conquer the certitude, the eternity, of that man's love.

"I never saw two men," Heyst was saying, "more affected by a piece of information than Jones and his secretary, who was back in the bungalow by then. They had not heard me come up. I told them I was sorry to intrude.

"Not at all! Not at all!" said Jones.

"The secretary backed away into a corner and watched me like a wary cat. In fact, they both were visibly on their guard.

"I am come," I told them, "to let you know that my servant has deserted—gone off."

"At first they looked at each other as if they had not understood what I was saying; but very soon they seemed quite concerned.

"You mean to say your chink's cleared out?" said Ricardo, coming forward from his corner. "Like this—all at once? What did he do it for?"

"I said that a Chinaman had always a simple and precise reason for what he did, but that to get such a reason out of him was not so easy. All he had told me, I said, was that he 'didn't like.'

"They looked extremely disturbed at this. Didn't like what, they wanted to know?"

"The looks of you and your party," I told Jones.

"Nonsense!" he cried out; and immediately Ricardo, the short man, struck in.

"Told you *that*? What did he take you for, sir—an infant? Or do you take us for kids?—meaning no offense. Come, I bet you will tell us next that you've missed something."

"I didn't mean to tell you anything of the sort," I said, "but as a matter of fact it is so."

"He slapped his thigh.

"Thought so. What do you think of this trick, governor?"

Jones made some sort of sign to him, and then that extraordinary cat-faced associate proposed that he and their servant should come out and help me to catch or kill the chink.

"My object, I said, was not to get assistance. I did not intend to chase the Chinaman. I had come only to warn them that he was armed, and that he really objected to their presence on the island. I wanted them to understand that I was not responsible for anything that might happen.

"Do you mean to tell us," asked Ricardo, "that there is a crazy chink with a six-shooter running about loose on this island, and that you don't care?"

"Strangely enough, they did not seem to believe my story. They were exchanging significant looks all the time. Ricardo stole up close to his principal; they had a confabulation together, and then something happened which I did not expect. It's rather awkward, too.

"Since I would not have their assistance, he said, to get hold of the chink and recover my property, the least they could do was to send me their servant. It was Jones who said that, and Ricardo backed up the idea.

"Yes, yes—let our Pedro cook for all hands in your compound. He isn't so bad as he looks. That's what we will do!"

"He bustled out of the room to the veranda, and let out an air-splitting whistle for their Pedro. Having heard the brute's answering howl, Ricardo ran back into the room.

"Yes, Mr. Heyst. This will do capitally, Mr. Heyst. You just direct him to do whatever you are accustomed to have done for you in the way of attendance. See?"

"Lena, I confess to you that I was taken completely by surprise. I had not expected anything of the sort. I don't know what I expected. I am so anxious about you that I can't keep away from these infernal scoundrels. And only two months ago I would not have cared. I would have defied their scoundrelism as much as I have scorned all the other intrusions of life. But now I have you! You stole into my life, and—"

Heyst drew a deep breath. The girl gave him a quick, wide-eyed glance.

"Ah! That's what you are thinking of—that you have me!"

It was impossible to read the thoughts veiled by her steady gray eyes, to penetrate the meaning of her silences, her words, and even her embraces. He used to come out of her arms with the feeling of a baffled man.

"If I haven't you, if you are not here, then where are you?" cried Heyst. "You understand me very well!"

She shook her head a little. Her red lips, at which he looked now, her lips as fascinating as the voice that came out of them, uttered the words:

"I hear what you say; but what does it mean?"

"It means that I could lie and perhaps cringe for your sake."

"No! No! Don't you ever do that," she said in haste, while her eyes glistened suddenly. "You would hate me for it afterward!"

"Hate you?" repeated Heyst, who had recalled his polite manner. "No! You needn't consider the extremity of the improbable—as yet. But I will confess to you that I—how shall I call it?—that I dissembled. First I dissembled my dismay at the unforeseen result of my idiotic diplomacy. Do you understand, my dear girl?"

It was evident that she did not understand the word. Heyst produced his playful smile, which contrasted oddly with the worried character of his whole expression. His temples seemed to have sunk in, his face looked a little leaner.

"A diplomatic statement, Lena, is a statement of which everything is true but the sentiment which seems to prompt it. I have

never been diplomatic in my relations with mankind—not from regard for its feelings, but from a certain regard for my own. Diplomacy doesn't go well with consistent contempt. I cared little for life and still less for death."

"Don't talk like that!"

"I dissembled my extreme longing to take these wandering scoundrels by their throats," he went on. "I have only two hands—I wish I had a hundred to defend you—and there were three throats. By that time that Pedro was in the room. I had heard him on the veranda. Had he seen me engaged with their two throats, he would have been at mine like a fierce dog or any other savage and faithful brute. I had no difficulty in dissembling my longing for the vulgar, stupid, and hopeless argument of a fight. I remarked that I really did not want a servant. I couldn't think of depriving them of their man's services; but they would not hear me. They had made up their minds.

"We shall send him over at once," Ricardo said, "to start cooking dinner for everybody. I hope you won't mind me coming to eat it with you in your bungalow; and we will send the governor's dinner over to him here."

"I had brought it on myself, and could do nothing but hold my tongue or bring on a quarrel—some manifestation of their dark purpose, which we have no means to resist. Of course, you may remain invisible this evening; but with that atrocious brute prowling all the time at the back of the house, how long can your presence be concealed from these men?"

Heyst's distress could be felt in his silence. The girl's head, sustained by her hands buried in the thick masses of her hair, had a perfect immobility.

"You are certain you have not been seen so far?" he asked suddenly.

The motionless head spoke.

"How can I be certain? You told me you wanted me to keep out of the way. I kept out of the way. I didn't ask your reason. I thought you didn't want people to know that you had a girl like me about you."

"What? Ashamed?" cried Heyst.

"It isn't what's right, perhaps—I mean for you—is it?"

Heyst lifted his hands, reproachfully courteous.

"I look upon it as so very much right that I couldn't bear the idea of any other than sympathetic, respectful eyes resting on you. I disliked and mistrusted these fellows from the first. Didn't you understand?"

"Yes; I did keep out of sight," she said.

A silence fell. At last Heyst stirred slightly.

"All this is of very little importance now," he said with a sigh. "This is a question of something infinitely worse than mere looks and thoughts, however base and contemptible. As I have told you, I simply met Ricardo's suggestions by silence. As I was turning away he said:

"If you happen to have the key of that storeroom of yours on you, Mr. Heyst, you may just as well let me have it; I will give it to our Pedro."

"I had it on me, and I tendered it to him without speaking. The hairy creature was at the door by then, and caught the key, which Ricardo threw to him, better than any trained ape could have done. I came away without another word. All the time I had been thinking anxiously of you, whom I had left asleep, alone here, and apparently ill."

Heyst interrupted himself, with a listening turn of his head. He had heard the faint sound of sticks being snapped in the compound. He rose and crossed the room to look out of the back door.

"And here the creature is," he said, returning to the table. "Here he is, already attending to the fire. Oh, my dear Lena!"

She had followed him with her eyes. She watched him go out on the front veranda cautiously. He stealthily lowered a couple of screens that hung between the columns, and remained outside very still, as if interested by something on the open ground. Meantime she had risen in her turn, to take a peep into the compound.

Heyst, glancing over his shoulder, saw her returning to her seat. He beckoned to her, and she continued to move, crossing the shady room, pure and bright in her white dress, her hair loose, with something of a sleep-walker in her unhurried motion, in her extended hand, in the sightless effect of her gray eyes, luminous in the half light. He had never seen such an expression in her face before. It had dreaminess in it, intense attention, and something like sternness.

Arrested in the doorway by Heyst's extended arm, she seemed to wake up, flushed faintly—and this flush, passing off, seemed to carry away with it the strange transfiguring mood. With a courageous gesture she pushed back the heavy masses of her hair. The light clung to her forehead. Her delicate nostrils quivered. Heyst seized her arm and whispered excitedly:

"Slip out here, quickly! The screens will conceal you. Only you must mind the stair space. They are actually out—I mean the other two. You had better see them before you—"

She made a barely perceptible movement of recoil, checked at once, and stood still. Heyst released her arm.

"Yes, perhaps I had better," she said with unnatural deliberation, and stepped out on the veranda to stand close by his side.

Together, one on each side of the screen, they peeped between the edge of the canvas and the veranda-post entwined with creepers. A great heat ascended from the sun-smitten ground, in an ever-rising wave, as if from some secret store of earth's fiery heart; for the sky was growing cooler already, and the sun had declined sufficiently for the shadows of Mr. Jones and his henchman to be projected toward the bungalow side by side—one infinitely slender, the other short and broad.

The two visitors stood still and gazed. To keep up the fiction of his invalidism, Mr. Jones, the gentleman, leaned on the arm of Ricardo, the secretary, the top of whose hat just came up to his governor's shoulder.

"Do you see them?" Heyst whispered into the girl's ear. "Here they are, the envoys of the outer world. Here they are before you—evil intelligence, instinctive savagery, arm in arm. The brute force is at the back. A trio of fitting envoys, perhaps—but what about the welcome? Suppose I was armed, could I shoot those two down where they stand? Could I?"

Without moving her head, the girl felt for Heyst's hand, pressed it, and thereafter did not let it go. He continued, bitterly playful:

"I don't know. I don't think so. There is a strain in me which lays me under an insensate obligation to avoid even the appearance of murder. I have never pulled a trigger or lifted my hand on a man, even in self-defense."

The suddenly tightened grip of her hand checked him.

"They are making a move," she murmured.

"Can they be thinking of coming here?" Heyst asked anxiously.

"No, they aren't coming this way," she said crisply, and there was another pause. "They are going back to their house," she reported finally.

After watching them a little longer, she let go Heyst's hand and moved away from the screen. He followed her into the room.

"You have seen them now," he began. "Think what it was to me to see them land in the dusk, phantasms from the sea—a spec-

ter, a cat, an ape—apparitions, chimeras! And they persist. That's the worst of it—they persist. They have no right to be, but they are. They ought to have aroused my fury. But I have refined everything away by this time—anger, indignation, scorn itself. Nothing's left but disgust. Since you have told me of that abominable calumny, it has become immense—it extends even to myself." He looked up at her.

"But luckily I have you. Yes, Lena, here we are—we two!"

She put both her hands on his shoulders and looked into his eyes. He returned her penetrating stare. It baffled him. He could not pierce the gray veil of her gaze; but the sadness of her voice thrilled him profoundly.

"You are not reproaching me?" she said.

"Reproach? What a word between us! It could only be myself—but the mention of Wang has given me an idea. I have been, not exactly cringing, not exactly lying, but still dissembling. You have been hiding yourself, to please me, but still you have been hiding. All this is very dignified. Why shouldn't we try begging now? A noble art! Yes, Lena, we will go out together. I couldn't think of leaving you alone, and I must—yes, I must speak to Wang. We will go and seek that man, who knows what he wants and how to secure what he wants. We will go at once!"

"Wait till I put my hair up," she said instantly, and vanished behind the curtain.

When the curtain had fallen behind her, she turned her head back with an expression of infinite and tender concern for him—for him whom she could never hope to understand, and whom she was afraid she could never satisfy; as if her passion were of a hopelessly lower quality, unable to appease some exalted and delicate desire of his superior soul.

In a couple of minutes she reappeared. They left the house by the door of the compound, and passed within three feet of the thunderstruck Pedro, without even looking in his direction. He rose from stooping over a fire of sticks, and, balancing himself clumsily, uncovered his enormous fangs in gaping astonishment. Then suddenly he set off, rolling on his bandy legs, to impart to his masters the astonishing discovery of a woman.

XXXII

As luck would have it, Ricardo was lounging alone on the veranda of the former counting-house. He scented some new development at once, and ran down to meet the trotting, bear-like figure. The deep, growling noises it made,

though they had only a very remote resemblance to the Spanish language, or indeed to any sort of human speech, were from long practise quite intelligible to Mr. Jones's secretary.

Ricardo was rather surprised. He had imagined that the girl would continue to keep out of the fight. That line apparently was given up. He did not mistrust her. How could he? He collected his wits and thought.

This was a change of policy, probably on the part of Heyst. If so, what could it mean? A deep fellow! Unless it was her doing; in which case—h-m—all right! Must be. She would know what she was doing.

Before him Pedro, lifting his feet alternately, swayed to and fro sidewise—his usual attitude of expectation. His little red eyes, lost in the mass of hair, were motionless. Ricardo stared into them with calculated contempt and said in a rough, angry voice:

"Woman! Of course there is. We know that without you!" He gave the tame monster a push. "Git! *Vamose!* Waddle! Get back and cook the dinner! Which way did they go, then?"

Pedro extended a huge, hairy forearm to show the direction, and went off on his bandy legs. Advancing a few steps, Ricardo was just in time to see, above some bushes, two white helmets moving side by side in the clearing. They disappeared.

Now that he had managed to keep Pedro from informing the governor that there was a woman on the island, he could indulge in speculation as to the movements of these people. His attitude toward Mr. Jones had undergone a spiritual change, of which he himself was not yet fully aware.

That morning, before tiffin, after his escape from the Heyst bungalow, completed in such an inspiring way by the recovery of the slipper, he had made his way to their allotted house, reeling as he ran, his head in a whirl. He was wildly excited by visions of inconceivable promise. He waited to compose himself before he dared to meet the governor. On entering the room, he found Mr. Jones sitting on the camp bedstead like a tailor on his board, cross-legged, his long back against the wall.

"I say, sir! You aren't going to tell me you are bored?"

"Bored? No! Where the deuce have you been all this time?"

"Observing—watching—nosing around. What else? I knew you had company. Have you talked freely, sir?"

"Yes, I have," muttered Mr. Jones.

"Not downright plain, sir?"

"No. I wished you had been here. You loaf all the morning, and now you come in out of breath. What is it? What's the matter?"

"I haven't been wasting my time out there," said Ricardo. "Nothing's the matter. I—I—might have hurried a bit." He was, in truth, still panting; only it was not with running, but with the tumult of thoughts and sensations long repressed, which had been set free by the adventure of the morning. He was almost distracted by them now. He forgot himself in the maze of possibilities threatening and inspiring. "And so you had a long talk?" he said, to gain time.

"Confound you! The sun hasn't affected your head, has it? Why are you staring at me like a basilisk?"

"Beg pardon, sir. Wasn't aware I stared," Ricardo apologized good-humoredly. "The sun might well affect a thicker skull than mine. It blazes. Phew! What do you think a fellow is, sir—a salamander?"

"You ought to have been here," observed Mr. Jones.

"Did the beast give any signs of wanting to prance?" asked Ricardo quickly, with absolutely genuine anxiety. "It wouldn't do, sir. You must play him easy for at least a couple of days, sir. I have a plan. I have a notion that I can find out a lot in a couple of days."

"You have? In what way?"

"Why, by watching," Ricardo answered slowly.

Mr. Jones grunted.

"Nothing new, that. Watch, eh? Why not play a little, too?"

"Ha, ha, ha! That's a good one," burst out the secretary, fixing Mr. Jones with mirthless eyes.

The latter dropped the subject indolently.

"Oh, you may be certain of at least two days," he said.

Ricardo recovered himself. His eyes gleamed voluptuously.

"We'll pull this off yet—clean—whole—right through, if you will only trust me, sir."

"I am trusting you right enough," said Mr. Jones. "It's your interest, too."

Ricardo went out of the room. It was impossible for him to keep still. He walked up and down the veranda far into the afternoon, eying the other bungalow at every turn. It gave no sign of being inhabited.

Once or twice he stopped dead short and looked down at his left slipper. Each time he chuckled audibly. His restlessness kept on in-

creasing till at last it frightened him. He caught hold of the balustrade of the veranda and stood still, smiling not to his thoughts but to his feelings, to the strong sense of life within him. He abandoned himself to it carelessly, even recklessly. He cared for no one, friend or enemy.

At that moment Mr. Jones called him by name from within. A shadow fell on the secretary's face.

"Here, sir," he answered; but it was a moment before he could make up his mind to go in.

He found his governor on his feet. Mr. Jones was tired of lying down when there was no necessity for it. His slender form, gliding about the room, came to a standstill.

"I've been thinking, Martin, of something you suggested. At the time it did not strike me as practical; but on reflection it seems to me that to propose a game is as good a way as any to let him understand that the time has come to disgorge. It's less—how should I say?—vulgar. He will know what it means. It's not a bad form to give to the business—which in itself is crude, Martin, crude."

"Want to spare his feelings?" jeered the secretary in such a bitter tone that Mr. Jones was really surprised.

"Why, it was your own notion, confound you!"

"Who says it wasn't?" retorted Ricardo sulkily. "But I am fairly sick of this crawling. No, no! Get the exact bearings of his swag and then a rip up. That's plenty good enough for him!"

His passions being thoroughly aroused, a thirst for blood was allied in him with a thirst for tenderness—yes, tenderness. A sort of anxious, melting sensation pervaded and softened his heart when he thought of that girl—one of his own sort. And at the same time jealousy started gnawing at his breast as the image of Heyst intruded itself on his fierce anticipation of bliss.

"The crudeness of your ferocity is positively gross, Martin," Mr. Jones said disdainfully. "You don't even understand my purpose. I mean to have some sport out of him. Just try to imagine the atmosphere of the game—the fellow handling the cards—the agonizing mockery of it! Oh, I shall appreciate this greatly. Yes, let him lose his money instead of being forced to hand it over. You, of course, would shoot him at once, but I shall enjoy the refinement and the jest of it. He's a man of the best society. I've been hounded out of my sphere by people very much like

that fellow. How enraged and humiliated he will be! I promise myself some exquisite moments while watching his play."

"Aye, and suppose he suddenly starts prancing! He may not appreciate the fun."

"I mean you to be present," Mr. Jones remarked calmly.

"Well, as long as I am free to plug him or rip him up whenever I think the time has come, you are welcome to your bit of sport, sir. I sha'n't spoil it."

XXXIII

It was at this precise moment of their conversation that Heyst had intruded on Mr. Jones and his secretary with his warning about Wang, which he had related to Lena. When he left them, the two looked at each other in wondering silence. Mr. Jones was the first to break it.

"I say, Martin!"

"Yes, sir."

"What does this mean?"

"It's some move. Blame me if I can understand!"

"Too deep for you?" Mr. Jones inquired dryly.

"It's nothing but some of his infernal impudence," growled the secretary. "You don't believe all that about the chink, do you, sir? 'Tain't true."

"It isn't necessary for it to be true to have a meaning for us. It's the why of his coming to tell us this tale that's important."

"Do you think he made it up to frighten us?" asked Ricardo.

Mr. Jones scowled at him thoughtfully.

"The man looked worried," he muttered, as if to himself. "Suppose that Chinaman has really stolen his money! The man looked very worried."

"Nothing but his artfulness, sir," protested Ricardo earnestly, for the idea was too disconcerting to entertain. "Is it likely that he would have trusted a chink with enough knowledge to make it possible?" he argued warmly. "Why, it's the very thing that he would keep close about. There's something else there. Aye, but what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Mr. Jones let out a ghostly, squeaky laugh. "I've never been placed in such a ridiculous position before," he went on, with a sepulchral equanimity of tone. "It's you, Martin, who dragged me into it. However, it's my fault, too. I ought to—but I was really too bored to use my brain, and yours is not to be trusted. You are a hot-head!"

A blasphemous exclamation of grief escaped from Ricardo. Not to be trusted! Hot-head! He was almost tearful.

"Haven't I heard you, sir, saying more than twenty times since we got fired out from Manila that we should want a lot of capital to work the East Coast with? You were always telling me that to prime properly all them officials and Portuguese scalawags we should have to lose heavily at first. Weren't you always worrying about some means of getting hold of a good lot of cash? It wasn't to be got hold of by allowing yourself to become bored in that rotten Dutch town and playing a twopenny game with counfounded beggarly bank clerks and such like. Well, I've brought you here, where there is cash to be got—and a big lot, to a moral," he added through his set teeth.

Silence fell. Each of them was staring into a different corner of the room. Suddenly, with a slight stamp of his foot, Mr. Jones made for the door. Ricardo caught him up outside.

"Put your arm through mine, sir," he begged him gently but firmly. "No use giving the game away. An invalid may well come out for a breath of fresh air after the sun's gone down a bit. That's it, sir. But where do you want to go? Why did you come out, sir?"

Mr. Jones stopped short.

"I hardly know myself," he confessed in a hollow mutter, staring intently at the Number One bungalow. "It's quite irrational," he declared in a still lower tone.

"Better go in, sir," suggested Ricardo. "What's that? Those screens weren't down before. He's spying from behind them now, I bet—the dodging, artful, plotting beast that he is!"

"Why not go over there and see if we can't get to the bottom of this game?" was the unexpected proposal uttered by Mr. Jones. "He will have to talk to us."

Ricardo repressed a start of dismay, but for a moment could not speak. He only pressed the governor's hand to his side instinctively.

"No, sir. What could you say? Do you expect to get to the bottom of his lies? How could you make him talk? It isn't time yet to come to grips with that gent. You don't think I would hang back, do you? His chink, of course, I'll shoot like a dog the moment I catch sight of him; but as to that Mr. Blasted Heyst, the time isn't yet. My head's cooler just now than yours. Let's go in again. Why, we are exposed here. Suppose he took it into

his head to let off a gun on us! He's an unaccountable, 'yporcritical skunk."

Allowing himself to be persuaded, Mr. Jones returned to his seclusion. The secretary, however, remained on the veranda—for the purpose, he said, of seeing whether that chink wasn't sneaking around; in which case he proposed to take a long shot at the galoot and chance the consequences. His real reason was that he wanted to be alone, away from the governor's deep-sunk eyes.

He felt a sentimental desire to indulge his fancies in solitude. A great change had come over Mr. Ricardo since that morning. A whole side of him which from prudence, from necessity, from loyalty, had been kept dormant, was aroused now, coloring his thoughts and disturbing his mental poise by the vision of such staggering consequences as, for instance, the possibility of an active conflict with his governor.

The appearance of the monstrous Pedro with his news drew Ricardo out of a feeling of dreaminess wrapped up in a sense of impending trouble. A woman? Yes, there was one; and it made all the difference.

After driving away Pedro, and watching the white helmets of Heyst and Lena vanish among the bushes, he stood lost in meditation. "Where could they be off to like this?" he mentally asked.

The answer found by his speculative faculties on their utmost stretch was—to meet that chink. For in the desertion of Wang Ricardo did not believe. It was a lying yarn, the organic part of a dangerous plot. Heyst had gone to combine some fresh move. But then Ricardo felt sure that the girl was with him—the girl, full of pluck, full of sense, full of understanding; an ally of his own kind!

He went indoors briskly. Mr. Jones had resumed his cross-legged pose at the head of the bed, with his back against the wall.

"Anything new?"

"No, sir."

Ricardo walked about the room as if he had no care in the world. He hummed snatches of song. Mr. Jones raised his waspish eyebrows at the sound. The secretary got down on his knees before an old leather trunk, and, rummaging in there, brought out a small looking-glass. He fell to examining his physiognomy in it with silent absorption.

"I think I'll shave," he decided, getting up.

He gave a sidelong glance at the governor, and repeated it several times during the operation, which did not take long, and even afterward, when, after putting away the imple-

ments, he resumed his walking, humming more snatches of unknown songs. Mr. Jones preserved a complete immobility, his thin lips compressed, his eyes veiled. His face was like a carving.

"So you would like to try your hand at cards with that skunk, sir?" said Ricardo, stopping suddenly and rubbing his hands.

Mr. Jones gave no sign of having heard anything.

"Well, why not? Why shouldn't he have the experience? You remember in that Mexican town—what's its name?—the robber fellow they caught in the mountains and condemned to be shot? He played cards half the night with the jailer and the sheriff. Well, this fellow is condemned, too. He must give you your game. Hang it all, a gentleman ought to have some little relaxation! And you have been uncommonly patient, sir."

"You are uncommonly volatile all of a sudden," Mr. Jones remarked in a bored voice. "What's come to you?"

The secretary hummed for a while, and then said:

"I'll try to get him over here for you tonight, after dinner. If I ain't here myself, don't you worry, sir. I shall be doing a bit of nosing round—see?"

"I see," sneered Mr. Jones languidly. "But what do *you* expect to see in the dark?"

Ricardo made no answer, and after another turn or two slipped out of the room. He no longer felt comfortable alone with the governor.

XXXIV

MEANTIME Heyst and Lena, walking rather fast, approached Wang's hut. Asking the girl to wait, Heyst ascended the little ladder of bamboos giving access to the door.

It was as he had expected. The smoky interior was empty, except for a big chest of sandalwood too heavy for hurried removal. Its lid was thrown up, but whatever it might have contained was no longer there. All Wang's possessions were gone.

Without tarrying in the hut, Heyst came back to the girl, who asked no questions, with her strange air of knowing nothing or understanding everything.

"Let us push on," he said.

He went ahead, the rustle of her white skirt following him into the shades of the forest, along the path of their usual walk. Twice he looked over his shoulder and smiled at her. Behind the readiness of her answering smile there was a fund of devoted, concentrated pas-

sion, burning with the hope of a more perfect satisfaction.

They passed the spot where it was their practise to turn toward the barren summit of the central hill. Heyst held steadily on his way toward the upper limit of the forest. At the moment when they left its shelter a breeze enveloped them, and a great cloud, racing over the sun, threw a peculiar somber tint over everything.

Lena looked upward quickly, as if surprised. Heyst pointed up a precipitous, rugged path clinging to the side of the hill. It ended in a barricade of felled trees, a primitively conceived obstacle which must have cost much labor to erect at just that spot.

"That," Heyst explained in his urbane tone, "is a barrier against the march of civilization. The poor folk over there did not like it, as it appeared to them in the shape of my company—a great step forward, as some people used to call it with mistaken confidence. The advanced foot has been drawn back, but the barricade remains."

They went on climbing slowly. The cloud had driven over, leaving an added brightness on the face of the world.

"It's a very ridiculous thing," Heyst went on; "but then it is the product of honest fear—fear of the unknown, of the incomprehensible. It's pathetic, too, in a way. And I heartily wish, Lena, that we were on the other side of it."

"Oh, stop, stop!" she cried, seizing his arm.

The face of the barricade they were approaching had been piled up with a lot of fresh-cut branches. The leaves were still green. A gentle breeze, sweeping over the top, stirred them a little; but what had startled the girl was the discovery of three spear-blades protruding from the mass of foliage.

"You had better let me go forward alone, Lena," said Heyst.

She tugged persistently at his arm, but after a time, during which he never ceased to look smilingly into her terrified eyes, he ended by disengaging himself.

"It's a sign rather than a demonstration," he remonstrated persuasively. "Just wait here a moment. I promise not to approach near enough to be stabbed."

As in a nightmare she watched Heyst go up the few yards of the path as if he never meant to stop; and she heard his voice, like voices heard in dreams, shouting unknown words in an unearthly tone.

Heyst was only demanding to see Wang. He was not kept waiting very long. Recover-

ing from the first flurry of her fright, Lena noticed a commotion in the green top-dressing of the barricade. She exhaled a sigh of relief when the spear-blades retreated out of sight, sliding inward—the horrible things!

In a spot facing Heyst a pair of yellow hands parted the leaves, and a face filled the small opening—a face with very noticeable eyes. It was Wang's face, of course, with no suggestion of a body belonging to it, like those cardboard faces at which she remembered gazing as a child in the window of a certain dim shop kept by a mysterious little man in Kingsland Road. But this face, instead of mere holes, had eyes which blinked. She could see the beating of the eyelids.

The hands on each side of the face, keeping the boughs apart, also did not look as if they belonged to any real body. One of them was holding a revolver—a weapon which she recognized merely by intuition, never having seen such an object before.

She leaned her shoulders against the rock of the perpendicular hillside and kept her eyes on Heyst, with comparative composure, since the spears were not menacing him any longer. Beyond the rigid and motionless back he presented to her she saw Wang's unreal, cardboard face moving its thin lips and grimacing artificially. She was too far down the path to hear the dialogue, carried on in an ordinary voice.

She waited patiently for its end. Her shoulders felt the warmth of the rock; now and then a whiff of cooler air seemed to slip down upon her head from above; the ravine at her feet, choked full of vegetation, emitted the faint, drowsy hum of insect life. Everything was very quiet.

She failed to notice the exact moment when Wang's head vanished from the foliage, taking the unreal hands away with it. To her horror, the three spear-blades came gliding slowly out. The very hair on her head stirred; but before she had time to cry out, Heyst, who seemed rooted to the ground, turned round abruptly and began to move toward her. His great mustache did not quite hide an ugly but irresolute smile; and when he had come down near enough to touch her, he burst out into a harsh laugh:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

She looked at him uncomprehending. He cut short his laugh and said curtly:

"We had better go down as we came."

She followed him into the forest. The advance of the afternoon had filled it with gloom. Far away a slant of light between the trees

closed the view. All was dark beyond. Heyst stopped.

"No reason to hurry, Lena," he said in his ordinary, serenely polite tones. "We return unsuccessful. I suppose you know, or at least can guess, what was my object in going up there?"

"No, I can't guess, dear," she said, and smiled, noticing with emotion that his breast was heaving as if he had been out of breath. Nevertheless, he tried to command his speech, pausing only a little between the words.

"No? I went up to find Wang. I went up"—he gasped again here, but this was for the last time—"I made you come with me because I didn't like to leave you unprotected in the proximity of those fellows." Suddenly he snatched his cork helmet off his head and dashed it on the ground. "No!" he cried roughly. "All this is too unreal altogether. It isn't to be borne! I can't protect you! I haven't the power."

He glared at her for a moment, then hastened after his hat, which had bounded away to some distance. He came back looking at her face, which was very white.

"I ought to beg your pardon for these antics," he said, adjusting his hat. "A movement of childish petulance! Indeed, I feel very much like a child in my ignorance, in my powerlessness, in my want of resource, in everything except in the dreadful consciousness of some evil hanging over your head—yours!"

"It's you they are after," she murmured.

"No doubt, but unfortunately—"

"Unfortunately—what?"

"Unfortunately, I have not succeeded with Wang," he said. "I failed to move his Celestial heart—that is, if there is such a thing. He told me with horrible Chinese reasonableness that he could not let us pass the barrier, because we should be pursued. He doesn't like fights. He gave me to understand that he would shoot me with my own revolver without any sort of compunction, rather than risk a rude and distasteful contest with the strange barbarians. He has preached to the villagers. They respect him. He is the most remarkable man they have ever seen, and their kinsman by marriage. We were talking in such Malay as we are both equal to.

"Your fears are foolish," I said.

"Foolish? Of course I am foolish," he replied. "If I were a wise man, I should be a merchant with a big hong in Singapore, instead of being mine-coolie turned house-boy. But if you don't go away in time, I will shoot

you before it grows too dark to take aim. Not till then, Number One, but I will do it then. Now—finish!"

"All right," I said. "Finish as far as I am concerned; but you can have no objections to the Mem Putih coming over to stay with the Orang Kaya's women for a few days. I will make a present in silver for it." Orang Kaya is the head man of the village, Lena," added Heyst.

She looked at him in astonishment.

"You wanted me to go to that village of savages?" she gasped, as if her breath had failed her. "You wanted me to leave you?"

"It would have given me a freer hand."

Heyst stretched out his hands and looked at them for a moment, then let them fall by his sides. Indignation was expressed more in the curve of her lips than in her clear eyes, which never wavered.

"I believe Wang laughed," he went on. "He made a noise like a turkey-cock.

"That would be worse than anything," he said.

"I was taken aback. I pointed out to him that he was talking nonsense. It could not make any difference to his security where you were, because the evil men, as he calls them, did not know of your existence. I did not lie exactly, Lena, though I did stretch the truth till it cracked; but the fellow seems to have an uncanny insight. He shook his head. He assured me they knew all about you. He made a horrible grimace at me."

"It doesn't matter," said the girl. "I didn't want—I would not have gone."

Heyst raised his eyes.

"Wonderful intuition! As I continued to press him, Wang made that very remark about you. When he smiles, his face looks like a conceited death's-head. It was his very last remark—that you wouldn't want to. I went away then."

She leaned back against a tree. Heyst faced her in the same attitude of leisure, as if they had done with time and all the other concerns of the earth. Suddenly, high above their heads, the roof of leaves whispered at them tumultuously and then ceased.

"That was a strange notion of yours, to send me away," she said. "Send me away? What for? Yes, what for?"

"You seem indignant," he remarked listlessly.

"To these savages, too!" she pursued. "And you think I would have gone? You can do what you like with me—but not that, not that!"

Heyst looked into the dim aisles of the forest. Everything was so still now that the very ground on which they stood seemed to exhale silence into the shade.

"Why be indignant?" he said. "It has not happened. I gave up pleading with Wang. Here we are, repulsed! Not only without power to resist the evil, but unable to make terms for ourselves with the worthy envoys, the envoys extraordinary of the world we thought we had done with for years and years. I have neither strength nor persuasion; and the most bitter part of this humiliation is its complete uselessness—which I feel, I feel!"

She had never before seen him give such signs of feeling. Across his ghastly face the long mustache flamed in the shade. He spoke suddenly:

"I wonder if I could find enough courage to creep among them in the night with a knife, and cut their throats one after another, as they slept! I wonder—"

She was frightened by his unwonted appearance more than by the words in his mouth, and said earnestly:

"Don't you try to do such a thing! Don't you think of it!"

"I don't possess anything bigger than a penknife. As to thinking of it, Lena, there's no saying what one may think of. I don't think. Something in me thinks—something foreign to my nature. What is the matter?"

He noticed her suddenly parted lips, and the peculiar stare in her eyes, which had wandered from his face.

"There's somebody after us. I saw something white moving," she cried.

Heyst did not turn his head; he only glanced at her outstretched arm.

"No doubt we are followed; we are watched."

"I don't see anything now," she said.

"And it does not matter," Heyst went on in his ordinary voice. "Here we are in the forest. But can we wander among these big trees indefinitely? Is this a refuge? No! What else is left to us? I did think for a moment of the mine; but even there we could not remain very long. And then that gallery is not safe. The props were too weak to begin with. Ants have been at work there—ants after the men. A death-trap, at best! One can die but once, but there are many manners of death."

The girl glanced about fearfully, in search of the watcher or follower whom she had glimpsed once among the trees; but if he existed he had concealed himself. Nothing met

her eyes but the deepening shadows of the short vistas between the living columns of the still roof of leaves. She looked at the man beside her expectantly, tenderly, with suppressed affright and a sort of awed wonder.

"I have also thought of these people's boat," Heyst went on. "We could get into that, and—only they have taken everything out of her. I have seen her oars and sail in the corner of their room. To get in and shove off in an empty boat would be nothing but a desperate expedient, supposing even that she would drift out a good distance between the islands before the morning. It would only be a complicated manner of committing suicide—to be found dead in a boat, dead from sun and thirst, a sea mystery. I wonder who would find us! Davidson, perhaps; but Davidson went westward ten days ago. I watched him steaming past one early morning, from the jetty."

"You never told me," she said.

"He must have been looking at me through his big binoculars. Perhaps, if I had raised my arm—but what did we want with Davidson then, you and I? He won't be back this way for three weeks or more, Lena. I wish I had raised my arm that morning!"

"What would have been the good of it?" she sighed.

"What good? No good, of course. We had no forebodings. This seemed to be an inexpugnable refuge, where we could live untroubled and learn to know each other."

"It's perhaps in trouble that people get to know each other," she suggested.

"Perhaps," he said indifferently. "At any rate, we would not have gone away from here with him; though I believe he would have come in eagerly enough, and ready for any service he could render. It's that fat man's nature—a delightful fellow!"

He raised his head after a silence.

"How gloomy this forest has grown! Yet surely the sun cannot have set already."

She looked round; and as if her eyes had just been opened, she perceived the shades of the forest surrounding her, not so much with gloom, but with a sullen, dumb, cold, and menacing hostility. Her heart sank in the engulfing stillness; at that moment she felt the nearness of death breathing on her and on the man with her. If there had been a sudden stir of leaves, the crack of a dry branch, the faintest rustle, she would have screamed aloud.

But she shook off the unworthy weakness. Such as she was, a fiddle-scraping girl picked up on the very threshold of infamy, she would

try to rise above herself, triumphant and humble; and then happiness would burst on her like a torrent, flinging at her feet the man whom she loved.

Heyst stirred slightly.

"We had better be getting back, Lena, since we can't stay all night in the woods—or anywhere else, for that matter. We are the slaves of this infernal surprise which had been sprung on us by—shall I say fate?—your fate, or mine."

It was the man who had broken the silence, but it was the woman who led the way. At the very edge of the forest she stopped, concealed by a tree. He joined her cautiously.

"What is it? What do you see, Lena?" he whispered.

She said that it was only a thought that had come into her head. She hesitated for a moment, giving him over her shoulder a shining gleam of her gray eyes. She wanted to know whether this trouble, this danger, this evil, whatever it was, finding them out in their retreat, was not a sort of punishment.

"Punishment?" repeated Heyst. He could not understand what she meant. When she explained, he was still more surprised. "A sort of retribution from an angry Heaven?" he said in wonder. "On us? What for?"

He saw her pale face darken in the dusk. She had blushed. Her whispering flowed very fast. It was the way they lived together—that wasn't right, was it? It was a guilty life. For she had not been forced into it, driven, scared into it. No, no—she had come to him of her own free will, with her whole soul yearning unlawfully.

He was so profoundly touched that he could not speak for a moment. To conceal his trouble, he assumed his best Heystian manner.

"What? Are our visitors, then, messengers of morality, avengers of righteousness, agents of Providence? That's certainly an original view. How flattered they would be if they could hear you!"

"Now you are making fun of me," she said in a subdued voice which broke suddenly.

"Are you conscious of sin?" Heyst asked gravely. She made no answer. "For I am not," he added; "before Heaven, I am not!"

"You! You are different. Woman is the tempter. You took me up from pity. I threw myself at you."

"Oh, you exaggerate, you exaggerate. It was not so bad as that," he said playfully, keeping his voice steady with an effort.

He considered himself a dead man already, yet forced to pretend that he was alive for her

sake, for her defense. He regretted that he had no Heaven to which he could recommend this fair, palpitating handful of ashes and dust—warm, living, sentient, his own—and exposed helplessly to insult, outrage, degradation, and infinite misery of the body.

She had averted her face from him and was still. He suddenly seized her passive hand.

"You will have it so?" he said. "Yes? Well, let us then hope for mercy together."

She shook her head without looking at him, like an abashed child.

Before their eyes the bungalow across the cleared ground stood bathed in a sinister light. An unexpected chill gust of wind made a noise in the tree-tops. She snatched her hand away and stepped out into the open; but before she had advanced more than three yards she stood still and pointed to the west.

"Oh, look there!" she exclaimed.

Beyond the headland of Black Diamond Bay, lying black on a purple sea, great masses of cloud stood piled up above the sunset, bathed in a mist of blood. A crimson crack like an open wound zigzagged between them, with a piece of dark-red sun showing at the bottom. Heyst cast an indifferent glance at the ill-omened chaos of the sky.

"Thunder-storm making up. We shall hear it all night, but it won't visit us, probably. The clouds generally gather round the volcano."

She was not listening to him. Her eyes reflected the somber and violent hues of the sunset.

"That does not look much like a sign of mercy," she said slowly, as if to herself, and hurried on, followed by Heyst. Suddenly she stopped. "I don't care. I would do more yet. And some day you'll forgive me. You'll have to forgive me!"

XXXV

STUMBLING up the steps, as if suddenly exhausted, Lena entered the room and let herself fall on the nearest chair.

Before following her, Heyst took a survey of the surroundings from the veranda. It was a complete solitude. There was nothing in the aspect of this familiar scene to tell him that he and the girl were not as completely alone as they had been in the early days of their common life on this abandoned spot, with only Wang discreetly materializing from time to time and the uncomplaining memory of Morrison to keep them company.

After the cold gust of wind there was an absolute stillness of the air. A sluggish shift-

ing of murky vapors had filled the crimson crack in the body of clouds, and the thunder-charged mass hung unbroken beyond the low, ink-black headland, darkening the twilight. By contrast, the sky at the zenith had a pellucid clearness, the sheen of a delicate glass bubble which the merest movement of air might shatter.

A little to the left, between the black masses of the headland and of the forest, the volcano, a feather of smoke by day and a cigar-glow at night, took its first fiery expanding breath of the evening. Above it a reddish star came out like an expelled spark from the fiery bosom of the earth, enchanted into permanency by the mysterious spell of frozen spaces.

In front of Heyst the forest, already full of the deepest shades, stood like a wall. But he lingered, watching its edge, especially where it ended at the line of bushes, masking the land end of the jetty.

Since the girl had spoken of catching a glimpse of something white among the trees, he believed pretty firmly that they had been followed in their excursion up the mountain by Mr. Jones's secretary. No doubt the fellow had watched them out of the forest, and now, unless he took the trouble to go back some distance and fetch a considerable circuit inland over the clearing, he was bound to walk out into the open space before the bungalows. Heyst did, indeed, imagine at one time some movement between the trees, lost as soon as perceived. He stared patiently, but nothing more happened.

After all, why should he trouble about these people's actions? Why this stupid concern for the preliminaries, since, when the issue was joined, it would find him disarmed and shrinking from the ugliness and degradation of it?

He turned and entered the room. Deep dusk reigned in there already. Lena, near the door, did not move or speak. The sheen of the white table-cloth was very obtrusive. The brute that these two vagabonds had tamed had entered on its service while Heyst and Lena were away. The table was laid.

Heyst walked up and down the room several times. The girl remained without sound or movement on the chair, as if she had been blind, dumb, dead. But when Heyst busied himself in placing the two silver candelabra on the table, and struck a match to light the candles, she got up suddenly and went into the bedroom.

She came out again almost immediately, having taken off her hat. Heyst looked at her over his shoulder.

"What's the good of shirking the evil hour? I've lighted these candles for a sign of our return. After all, we might not have been watched—while returning, I mean. Of course we were seen leaving the house."

The girl sat down again. The great wealth of her hair looked very dark above her colorless face. She raised her eyes without expression, glistening softly in the light with a sort of unreadable appeal, with a strange effect of unseeing innocence.

"Yes," said Heyst across the table, the finger-tips of one hand resting on the immaculate cloth. "A creature with an antediluvian lower jaw, hairy like a mastodon, and formed like a prehistoric ape, has laid this table. Are you awake, Lena? Am I? I would pinch myself, only I know that nothing would do away with this dream. Three covers. You know it is the shorter of the two who's coming—the gentleman who, in the play of his shoulders as he walks, and in his facial structure, recalls a jaguar. Ah, you don't know what a jaguar is? But you have had a good look at these two. It's the short one, you know, who's to be our guest."

She made a sign with her head that she knew. Heyst's insistence brought Ricardo vividly before her mental vision. A sudden languor, like the physical echo of her struggle with the man, paralyzed all her limbs.

Heyst had started to pace the room.

"Our guest! There is a proverb—in Russia, I believe—that when a guest enters the house, God enters the house. The sacred virtue of hospitality! But it leads one into trouble as well as any other."

The girl unexpectedly got up from the chair, swaying her supple figure and stretching her arms above her head. He stopped to look at her curiously, paused, and then went on:

"I venture to think that God has nothing to do with such a hospitality and with such a guest!"

She had jumped to her feet to react against the numbness, to discover whether her body would obey her will. It did. She could stand up, and she could move her arms freely. Though no physiologist, she concluded that all that sudden numbness was in her head, not in her limbs. Her fears assuaged, she thanked God for it mentally, and to Heyst murmured a protest:

"Oh, yes! He's got to do with everything—every little thing. Nothing can happen—"

"Yes," he said hastily; "one of the two sparrows can't be struck to the ground—you are thinking of that." The habitual playful

smile faded on the kindly lips under the martial mustache. "Ah, you remember what you have been told—as a child—on Sundays."

"Yes, I do remember." She sank into the chair again. "It was the only decent bit of time I ever had when I was a kid, with our landlady's two girls, you know."

"I wonder, Lena," Heyst said, with a return of his urbane playfulness, "whether you are just a little child, or whether you represent something as old as the world!"

She surprised Heyst by saying dreamily:

"Well—and what about you?"

"I? I date later—much later. I can't call myself a child, but I am so recent that I may call myself a man of the last hour—or is it the hour before last? I have been out of it so long that I am not certain how far the hands of the clock have moved since—since—"

He glanced at the portrait of his father, exactly above the head of the girl, and, as it were, ignoring her in its painted austerity of feeling. He did not finish the sentence; but he did not remain silent for long.

"Only what must be avoided are fallacious inferences, my dear Lena—especially at this hour."

"Now you are making fun of me again," she said without looking up.

"Am I?" he cried. "Making fun? No, giving warning. Hang it all, whatever truth people told you in the old days, there is also this one—that sparrows do fall to the ground, that they are brought down to the ground. This is no vain assertion, but a fact. That's why"—again his tone changed, while he picked up a table-knife and let it fall disdainfully—"that's why I wish these wretched round knives had some edge on them. Absolute rubbish—neither edge, point, nor substance. I believe one of these forks would make a better weapon at a pinch. But can I go about with a fork in my pocket?" He gnashed his teeth with a rage very real, and yet comic.

"There used to be a carver here, but it was broken and thrown away a long time ago. Nothing much to carve here. It would have made a noble weapon, no doubt; but—"

He stopped. The girl sat very quiet, with downcast eyes. As he kept silent for some time, she looked up and said thoughtfully:

"Yes, a knife—it's a knife that you would want, wouldn't you, in case, in case—"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"There must be a crowbar or two in the sheds; but I have given up all the keys to-

gether. And then, do you see me walking about with a crowbar in my hand? Ha, ha! And besides, that edifying sight alone might start the trouble for all I know. In truth, why has it not started yet?"

"Perhaps they are afraid of you," she whispered, looking down again.

"By Jove, it looks like it," he assented meditatively. "They do seem to hang back for some reason. Is that reason prudence, or downright fear, or perhaps the leisurely method of certitude?"

Out in the black night, not very far from the bungalow, resounded a loud and prolonged whistle. Lena's hands grasped the arms of the chair, but she made no movement. Heyst started, then shrugged his shoulders and turned his face away from the door.

The startling sound had died away.

"Whistles, yells, omens, signals, portents—what do they matter?" he said. "But what about that crowbar? Suppose I had it! Could I stand in ambush at the side of the door—this door—and smash the first protruding head, scatter blood and brains over the floor, over these walls, and then run stealthily to the other door to do the same thing—and repeat the performance for a third time, perhaps? Could I?"

"No, no!" she whispered ardently, as if compelled to speak by his eyes fixed on her face. "No, it's a knife you want to defend yourself with—to defend—there will be time—"

"And who knows if it isn't really my duty?" he began again, as if he had not heard her disjointed words at all. "It may be—my duty to you, to myself. For why should I endure the humiliation of their menaces? Do you know what the world would say?"

He emitted a low laugh, which struck her with terror. She would have got up, but he stooped so low over her that she could not move without first pushing him away.

"It would say, Lena, that I—that Swede—after luring my friend and partner to his death from mere greed of money, have murdered these unoffending shipwrecked strangers from sheer funk. That would be the story whispered—perhaps shouted—certainly spread out, and believed—and *believed*, my dear Lena!"

"Who would believe such awful things?"

"Perhaps you wouldn't—not at first, at any rate; but the power of calumny grows with time. It's insidious and penetrating. It can even destroy one's faith in oneself—dry-rot the soul."

All at once her eyes leaped to the door and remained fixed, stony, a little enlarged. Turning his head, Heyst beheld the figure of Ricardo framed in the doorway.

"For a moment neither of the three moved; then, as if awaking from his astonishment, looking from the newcomer to the girl in the chair, Heyst formulated a sardonic but soft introduction.

"Ah! This is Mr. Ricardo, my dear."

Her head drooped a little. Ricardo's hand went up to his mustache, as if to give it a twirl. His voice seemed to explode in the room:

"At your service, ma'am!"

He stepped in, taking his hat off with a flourish, and dropping it carelessly on a chair near the door.

"At your service," he repeated in quite another tone. "I was made aware there was a lady about by that Pedro of ours; only I didn't know I should have the privilege of seeing you to-night, ma'am."

Lena and Heyst looked at him rather covertly, but he, with a vague gaze avoiding them both, looked at nothing, seeming to pursue some point in space.

"Had a pleasant walk?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes. And you?" returned Heyst, who had managed to catch his glance.

"I? I haven't been a yard away from the governor this afternoon till I started for here." The genuineness of the accent surprised Heyst without convincing him of the truth of the words. "Why do you ask?" pursued Ricardo with every inflection of perfect candor.

"You might have wished to explore the island a little," said Heyst, studying the man, who, to render him justice, did not try to free his captured gaze. "I may remind you that it wouldn't be a perfectly safe proceeding."

Ricardo presented a picture of innocence.

"Oh, yes—meaning that chink that has run away from you. He ain't much!"

"He has a revolver," observed Heyst meaningly.

"Well, and you have a revolver, too," Mr. Ricardo argued unexpectedly. "I don't worry myself about that."

"I? That's different. I am not afraid of you," Heyst made answer after a short pause.

"Of me?"

"Of all of you."

"You have a queer way of putting things," began Ricardo.

At that moment the door on the compound side of the house came open with some noise, and Pedro entered, pressing the edge of a

loaded tray to his breast. His big, hairy head rolled a little, his feet fell in front of each other with a short, hard thump on the floor. The arrival changed the current of Ricardo's thought, perhaps, but certainly of his speech.

"You heard me whistling a little while ago outside? That was to give him a hint, as I came along, that it was time to bring in the dinner; and here he is."

Lena rose and passed to the right of Ricardo, who lowered his glance for a moment. They sat down at the table. The enormous gorilla back of Pedro swayed out through the door.

"Extraordinary strong brute, ma'am," said Ricardo. He had a propensity to talk about "his Pedro," as some men will talk of their dogs. "He ain't pretty, though. No, he ain't pretty. And he has got to be kept under. I am his keeper, as it might be. The governor don't trouble his head much about dee-tails. All that's left to Martin. Martin, that's me, ma'am."

Heyst saw the girl's eyes turn toward Mr. Jones's secretary and rest blankly on his face. Ricardo, however, looked vaguely into space, and, with faint flickers of a smile about his lips, made conversation indefatigably against the silence of his entertainers.

He boasted largely of his long association with Mr. Jones—over four years now, he said. Then, glancing rapidly at Heyst:

"You can see at once he's a gentleman, can't you?"

"You people," Heyst said, his habitual playful intonation tinged with gloom, "are divorced from all reality in my eyes."

Ricardo received this speech as if he had been expecting to hear those very words, or else did not mind at all what Heyst might say. He muttered an absent-minded "Aye, aye," played with a bit of biscuit, sighed, and said, with a peculiar stare which did not seem to carry any distance, but to stop short at a point in the air very near his face:

"Anybody can see at once *you* are one. You and the governor ought to understand each other. He expects to see you to-night. The governor isn't well, and we've got to think of getting away from here."

While saying these words he turned himself full toward Lena, but without any marked expression. Leaning back with folded arms, the girl stared before her as if she had been alone in the room.

"Really? Thinking of going away from here?" Heyst murmured.

"The best of friends must part," Ricardo pronounced slowly. "And, as long as they part friends, there's no harm done. We two are used to being on the move. You, I understand, prefer to stick in one place."

It was obvious that all this was being said merely for the sake of talking, and that Ricardo's mind was concentrated on some purpose unconnected with the words that were coming out of his mouth.

"I should like to know," Heyst asked with incisive politeness, "how you have come to understand this or anything else about me? As far as I can remember, I've made you no confidences."

Ricardo, gazing comfortably into space out of the back of his chair—for some time all three had given up any pretense of eating—answered abstractedly:

"Any fellow might have guessed it." He sat up suddenly, and uncovered all his teeth in a grin of extraordinary ferocity, which was belied by the penitent amiability of his tone. "The governor will be the man to tell you something about that. I wish you would say you would see my governor. He's the one who does all our talking. Let me take you to him this evening. He ain't at all well; and he can't make up his mind to go away without having a talk with you."

Heyst, looking up, met Lena's eyes. Their expression of candor seemed to hide some struggling intention. Her head, he fancied, had made an imperceptible affirmative movement. Why? What reason could she have? Was it the prompting of some obscure instinct? Or was it simply a delusion of his own senses?

"Well, suppose I *do* say so."

Ricardo did not conceal his satisfaction, which for a moment interested Heyst.

"It can't be my life they are after," he said to himself. "What good could it be to them?"

He looked across the table at the girl. What did it matter whether she had nodded or not? As always, when looking into her unconscious eyes, he tasted something like the dregs of tender pity. He had decided to go. Her nod, imaginary or not imaginary, advice or illusion, had tipped the scale.

He reflected that Ricardo's invitation could scarcely be anything in the nature of a trap. It would have been too superfluous. Why carry subtly into a trap some one already bound hand and foot, as it were?

All this time he had been looking fixedly at the girl he called Lena. In the submissive

quietness of her being, which had been her attitude ever since they had begun their life on the island, she remained as secret as ever.

Heyst got up briskly, with a smile of such enigmatic and despairing character that Mr. Secretary Ricardo, whose abstract gaze had an all-round efficiency, made a slight crouching start, as if to dive under the table for his leg-knife—a start that was repressed as soon as begun.

He had expected Heyst to spring on him or draw a revolver, because he created for himself a vision of life in his own image. Instead of doing either of these evident things, Heyst walked across the room, opened the door, and put his head through it to look out into the compound.

As soon as his back was turned, Ricardo's hand sought the girl's arm under the table. He was not looking at her, but she felt the groping, nervous touch of his search, felt suddenly the grip of his fingers above her wrist. He leaned forward a little; still he dared not look at her. His hard stare remained fastened on Heyst's back.

In an extremely low hiss, his fixed idea of argument found expression scathingly:

"See! He's no good. That's not the man for you!"

He glanced at her at last. Her lips moved a little, and he was awed by that movement without a sound. Next instant the hard grasp of his fingers vanished from her arm.

Heyst had shut the door. On his way back to the table, he crossed the path of the girl they had called Alma—she didn't know why—also Magdalen, but whose mind had remained so long in doubt as to the reason of her own existence. She no longer wondered at that bitter riddle, since her heart had found its solution in a blinding, hot glow of passionate purpose.

XXXVI

SHE passed by Heyst as if she had indeed been blinded by some secret, lurid, and consuming glare into which she was about to enter. The heavy curtain of the bedroom door fell behind her into rigid folds. Ricardo's vacant gaze seemed to be watching the dancing flight of a fly in mid air.

"Extra dark outside, ain't it?" he muttered.

"Not so dark but that I could see that man of yours prowling about there," said Heyst in measured tones.

"What—Pedro? He's scarcely a man, you know; or else I wouldn't be so fond of him as I am."

"Very well. Let's call him your worthy associate."

"Aye! Worthy enough for what we want of him. A great standby is Pedro in a scrimmage. A growl and a bite—oh, my! And you don't want him about?"

"I don't."

"You want him out of the way?" insisted Ricardo, with an affectation of incredulity which Heyst accepted calmly, though the air in the room seemed to grow more oppressive with every word spoken.

"That's it. I do want him out of the way." He forced himself to speak equably.

"Lor! That's no great matter. Pedro's not much use here. The business my governor's after can be settled by ten minutes' rational talk with—with another gentleman. Quiet talk!"

He looked up suddenly with hard, phosphorescent eyes. Heyst didn't move a muscle. Ricardo congratulated himself on having left his revolver behind. He was so exasperated that he didn't know what he might have done. He said at last:

"You want poor, harmless Pedro out of the way before you let me take you to see the governor—is that it?"

"Yes, that is it."

"H-m! One can see," Ricardo said with hidden venom, "that you are a gentleman; but all that gentlemanly fancifulness is apt to turn sour on a plain man's stomach. However—you'll have to pardon me."

He put his fingers into his mouth and let out a whistle which seemed to drive a thin, sharp shaft of air solidly against one's nearest ear-drum. Though he greatly enjoyed Heyst's involuntary grimace, he sat perfectly stolid, waiting for the effect of the call.

It brought Pedro in with an extraordinary, uncouth, primeval impetuosity. The door flew open with a clatter, and the wild figure it disclosed seemed anxious to devastate the room in a couple of whirls and bounds; but Ricardo raised his open palm, and the creature came in quietly. His enormous, half-closed paws swung to and fro a little in front of his bowed trunk as he walked. Ricardo looked on truculently.

"Go to the boat—understand? Go now!"

The little red eyes of the tame monster blinked with painful attention in the mass of hair.

"Well? Why don't you get? Forgot human speech, eh? Don't you know any longer what a boat is?"

"Si—boat," the creature stammered out doubtfully.

"Well, go there—the boat at the jetty. March off to it and sit there, lay down there, do anything but go to sleep there—till you hear my call, and then fly here. Them's your orders. March! Get, *vamosé!* No, not that way—out through the front door. And mind you, no sulks!"

Pedro obeyed with uncouth alacrity. When he had gone, the gleam of pitiless savagery went out of Ricardo's yellow eyes, and his physiognomy took on, for the first time that evening, the expression of a domestic cat which is being noticed.

"You can watch him right into the bushes, if you like. Too dark, eh? Why not go with him to the very spot, then?"

Heyst made a gesture of vague protest.

"There's nothing to assure me that he will stay there. I have no doubt of his going; but it's an act without a guarantee."

"There you are!" Ricardo shrugged his shoulders philosophically. "Can't be helped. Short of shooting our Pedro, nobody can make absolutely sure of his staying in the same place longer than he has a mind to; but I tell you, he lives in holy terror of my temper. That's why I put on my sudden-death air when I talk to him. And yet I wouldn't shoot him—not I, unless in such a fit of rage as would make a man shoot his favorite dog. Look here, sir! This deal is on the square. I didn't tip him a wink to do anything else. He won't budge from the jetty. Are you coming along now, sir?"

A short silence ensued. Ricardo's jaws were working ominously under his skin. His eyes glided voluptuously here and there, cruel and dreamy. Heyst checked a sudden movement, reflected for a while, then said:

"You must wait a little."

"Wait a little! Wait a little! What does he think a fellow is—a graven image?" grumbled Ricardo half audibly.

Heyst went into the bedroom, and shut the door after him with a bang. Coming from the light, he could not see a thing in there at first; yet he received the impression of the girl getting up from the floor. On the less opaque darkness of the shutter-hole, her head detached itself suddenly, very faint, a mere hint of a round, dark shape without a face.

"I am going, Lena. I am going to face those scoundrels." He was surprised to feel two arms falling on his shoulders. "I thought that you—" he began.

"Yes, yes!" the girl whispered hastily.

She neither clung to him, nor yet did she try to draw him to her. Her hands grasped

his shoulders, and she seemed to him to be staring into his face in the dark.

And now he could see something of her face, too—an oval without features—and faintly distinguish her person, a something lighter in the blackness, a form without definite lines.

"You have a black dress here, haven't you, Lena?" he asked, speaking rapidly, and so low that she could just hear him.

"Yes—an old thing."

"Very good! Put it on at once."

"But why?"

"Not for mourning!" There was something peremptory in the slightly ironic murmur. "Can you find it and get into it in the dark?"

She could. She would try. He waited, very still. He could imagine her movements over there at the far end of the room; but his eyes, accustomed now to the darkness, had lost her completely. When she spoke, her voice surprised him by its nearness. She had done what he had told her to do, and had approached him, invisible.

"Good! Where's that piece of purple veil I've seen lying about?" he asked.

There was no answer, only a slight rustle.

"Where is it?" he repeated impatiently.

Her unexpected breath was on his cheek.

"In my hands."

"Capital! Listen, Lena. As soon as I leave the bungalow with that horrible scoundrel, you slip out at the back—instantly, lose no time!—and run round into the forest. That will be your time, while we are walking away, and I can be sure he won't give me the slip. Run into the forest behind the fringe of bushes between the big trees. You will know, surely, how to find a place in full view of the front door. I fear for you; but in this black dress, with most of your face muffled up in that dark veil, I defy anybody to find you there before daylight. Wait in the forest till the table is pushed into full view of the doorway, and you see three candles out of four blown out and one relighted—or, should the lights be put out here while you watch them, wait till three candles are lighted and then two put out. At either of these signals run back as hard as you can, for it will mean that I am waiting for you here."

While he was speaking, the girl had sought and seized one of his hands. She did not press it; she held it loosely, as it were, timidly, caressingly. It was no grasp; it was a mere contact, as if only to make sure that he was there, that he was real and no mere darker shadow in the obscurity.

The warmth of her hand gave Heyst a strange, intimate sensation of all her person. He had to fight down a new sort of emotion which almost unmanned him. He went on, whispering sternly:

"But if you see no such signals, don't let anything—fear, curiosity, despair, or hope—entice you back to this house; and with the first sign of the dawn steal away along the edge of the clearing till you strike the path. Wait no longer, because I shall probably be dead."

The murmur of the word "Never!" floated into his ear as if it had formed itself in the air.

"You know the path," he continued. "Make your way to the barricade. Go to Wang—yes, to Wang. Let nothing stop you!" It seemed to him that the girl's hand trembled a little. "The worst he can do to you is to shoot you; but he won't. I really think he won't, if I am not there. Stay with the villagers, with the wild people, and fear nothing. They will be more awed by you than you can be frightened of them. Davidson's bound to turn up before very long. Keep a lookout for a steamer passing. Think of some sort of signal to call him."

She made no answer. The sense of the heavy, brooding silence in the outside world seemed to enter and fill the room—the oppressive infinity of it, without breath, without light. It was as if the heart of hearts had ceased to beat and the end of all things had come.

"Have you understood? You are to run out of the house at once," Heyst whispered urgently.

She swiftly lifted his hand to her lips and let it go. He was startled.

"Lena!" he cried out under his breath.

She was gone from his side. He dared not trust himself—no, not even to the extent of a tender word.

Turning to go out, he heard a thud somewhere in the house. To open the door, he had first to lift the curtain; he did so, with his face over his shoulder. The merest trickle of light, coming through the keyhole and one or two cracks, was enough for his eyes to see her plainly, all black, down on her knees, with her head and arms flung on the foot of the bed—all black in the desolation of a mourning sinner.

What was this? A suspicion that there were everywhere more things than he could understand crossed Heyst's mind. Her arm, detached from the bed, motioned him away. He

obeyed without protest, and went out, full of disquiet.

The curtain behind him had not ceased to tremble when she was up on her feet, close against it, listening for sounds, for words, in a stooping, tragic attitude of stealthy attention, one hand clutching at her breast as if to compress, to make less loud, the beating of her heart.

Heyst had caught Mr. Jones's secretary in the contemplation of his closed writing-desk. Ricardo might have been meditating how to break into it; but when he turned about suddenly, he showed so distorted a face that it made Heyst pause in wonder at the upturned whites of the eyes, which were blinking horribly, as if the man were inwardly convulsed.

"I thought you were never coming," Ricardo mumbled.

"I didn't know you were pressed for time. Even if your going away depends on this conversation, as you say, I doubt if you are the men to put to sea on such a night as this," said Heyst, motioning Ricardo to precede him out of the house.

With feline undulations of hip and shoulder, the secretary left the room at once. There was something cruel in the absolute dumbness of the night. The great cloud covering half the sky seemed to hang right against one, like an enormous curtain hiding menacing preparations of violence. As the feet of the two men touched the ground, a distant rumble came from behind the cloud, preceded by a swift, mysterious gleam of light on the waters of the bay.

"Ha!" said Ricardo. "It begins."

"It may be nothing in the end," observed Heyst, stepping along steadily.

"No! Let it come!" Ricardo said to himself viciously. "I am in the humor for it!"

By the time the two men had reached the other bungalow, the far-off, modulated rumble was growling almost incessantly, while pale lightning in waves of cold fire flooded and ran off the island time after time in rapid succession. Ricardo, unexpectedly, dashed ahead up the steps and put his head through the door.

"Here he is, governor! Keep him with you as long as you can—till you hear me whistle. I am on the track."

He flung these words into the room with inconceivable speed, and stood aside to let the visitor pass through the doorway; but he had to wait an appreciable moment, because the other man, seeing his purpose, had scornfully slowed his pace.

When Heyst entered the room it was with a smile, the Heyst smile, lurking under his martial mustache.

XXXVII

Two candles were burning on the stand-up desk. Mr. Jones, tightly infolded in an old but gorgeous silk dressing-gown, kept his elbows close against his sides and his hands deeply plunged into the extraordinarily deep pockets of the garment. The costume accentuated his emaciation. He greatly resembled a painted pole leaning against the edge of the desk, with a dried head of dubious distinction stuck on the top of it.

Ricardo lounged in the doorway. Indifferent, in appearance, to what was going on, he was biding his time. At a given moment, between two flickers of lightning, he melted out of his frame into the outer air.

His disappearance was observed on the instant by Mr. Jones, who abandoned his nonchalant immobility against the desk, and made a few steps calculated to put himself between Heyst and the doorway.

"It's awfully close," he remarked.

Heyst, in the middle of the room, had made up his mind to speak plainly.

"We haven't met to talk about the weather. You favored me earlier in the day with a rather cryptic phrase about yourself. 'I am he that is,' you said. What does that mean?"

Mr. Jones, without looking at Heyst, continued his absent-minded movements till, attaining the desired position, he brought his shoulders with a thump against the wall near the door, and raised his head. In the emotion of the decisive moment his haggard face glistened with perspiration. Drops ran down his hollow cheeks and almost blinded the spectral eyes in their bony caverns.

"It means that I am a person to be reckoned with. No—stop! Don't put your hand in your pocket—don't!"

His voice had a wild, unexpected shrillness. Heyst started, and there ensued a moment of suspended animation, during which the thunder's deep bass muttered distantly and the doorway to the right of Mr. Jones flickered with bluish light.

At last Heyst shrugged his shoulders; he even looked at his hand. He didn't put it in his pocket, however. Mr. Jones, glued against the wall, watched him raise both his hands to the ends of his mustache, and answered the note of interrogation in his steady eyes.

"A matter of prudence," said Mr. Jones in his naturally hollow tones, and with a face of

deathlike composure. "A man of your free life has surely perceived that. Though, as far as I understand—you are a much-talked-about man, Mr. Heyst—as far as I understand, you are accustomed to employ the subtler weapons of intelligence, still I can't afford to take any risk of the—er—grosser methods. I am not unscrupulous enough to be a match for you in the use of intelligence; but I assure you, Mr. Heyst, that in the other way you are no match for me. I have you covered at this very moment. You have been covered ever since you entered this room. Yes—from my pocket."

During this harangue Heyst looked deliberately over his shoulder, stepped back a pace, and sat down on the end of the camp bedstead. Leaning his elbow on one knee, he laid his cheek in the palm of his hand and seemed to meditate on what he should say next.

Mr. Jones, planted against the wall, was obviously waiting for some sort of overture. As nothing came, he resolved to speak himself; but he hesitated. For, though he considered that the most difficult step had been taken, he said to himself that every stage of progress required great caution, lest the man, in Ricardo's phraseology, should "start to prance"—which would be most inconvenient. He fell back on a previous statement:

"And I am a person to be reckoned with."

The other man went on looking at the floor, as if he were alone in the room. There was a pause.

"You have heard of me, then?" Heyst said at length, looking up.

"I should think so! We have been staying at Schomberg's hotel."

"Schom—" Heyst choked on the word.

"What's the matter, Mr. Heyst?"

"Nothing. Nausea," Heyst said resignedly. He resumed his former attitude of meditative indifference. "What is this reckoning you are talking about?" he asked after a time, in the quietest possible tone. "I don't know you."

"It's obvious that we belong to the same—social sphere," began Mr. Jones with languid irony. Inwardly he was as watchful as he could be. "Something has driven you out—the originality of your ideas, perhaps. It was the case with me; and I wasn't going to go to prison for it and weep publicly over my sins."

Mr. Jones indulged in one of his ghastly smiles. In repose his features had a curious character of evil, exhausted austerity; but when he smiled, the whole mask took on an unpleasantly infantile expression. A recrudescence

of the rolling thunder invaded the room loudly, and passed into silence.

"You are not taking this very well," observed Mr. Jones. This was what he said, but as a matter of fact he thought that the business was shaping quite satisfactorily. The man, he said to himself, had no stomach for a fight. Aloud he continued: "Come! You can't expect to have it always your own way. You are a man of the world."

"And you?" Heyst interrupted him unexpectedly. "How do you define yourself?"

"I, my dear sir? In one way I am—yes, I am the world itself, come to pay you a visit. In another sense I am an outcast—almost an outlaw. If you prefer a less materialistic view, I am a sort of fate—the retribution that waits its time."

"I wish to goodness you were the commonest sort of ruffian!" said Heyst, raising his equable gaze to Mr. Jones. "One would be able to talk to you straight, then, and hope for some humanity. As it is—"

"I dislike violence and ferocity of every sort as much as you do," Mr. Jones declared, looking very languid as he leaned against the wall, but speaking fairly loud. "You can ask my Martin if it is not so. This, Mr. Heyst, is a soft age. It is also an age without prejudices. I've heard that you are free from them yourself. You mustn't be shocked if I tell you plainly that we are after your money—or I am, if you prefer to make me alone responsible. Pedro, of course, knows no more of it than any other animal would. Ricardo is of the faithful retainer class—absolutely identified with all my ideas, wishes, and even whims."

Mr. Jones pulled his left hand out of his pocket, got a handkerchief out of another, and began to wipe the perspiration from his forehead, neck, and chin. The excitement from which he suffered made his breathing visible. In his long dressing-gown he had the air of a convalescent invalid who had imprudently overtaxed his strength. Heyst, broad-shouldered, robust, watched the operation from the end of the camp bedstead, very calm, his hands on his knees.

"And by the bye," he asked, "where is he now, that henchman of yours? Breaking into my desk?"

"That would be crude. Still, crudeness is one of life's conditions." There was the slightest flavor of banter in the tone of Ricardo's governor. "Conceivable, but unlikely. Martin is a little crude; but you are not, Mr. Heyst. To tell you the truth, I don't know

precisely where he is. He has been a little mysterious of late; but he has my confidence. No, don't get up, Mr. Heyst!"

The viciousness of his spectral face was indescribable. Heyst, who had moved a little, was surprised by the phenomenon.

"It was not my intention," he said.

"Pray remain seated," Mr. Jones insisted in a languid voice, but with a very determined glitter in his black eye-caverns.

"If you were more observant," said Heyst with dispassionate contempt, "you would have known before I had been five minutes in the room that I had no weapon of any sort on me."

"Possibly; but pray keep your hands still. They are very well where they are. This is too big an affair for me to take any risks."

"Big? Too big?" Heyst repeated with genuine surprise. "Good Heavens! Whatever you are looking for, there's very little of it here—very little of anything."

"You would naturally say so, but that's not what we have heard," retorted Mr. Jones quickly, with a grin so ghastly that it was impossible to think it voluntary.

Heyst's face had grown very gloomy. He knitted his brows.

"What have you heard?" he asked.

"A lot, Mr. Heyst—a lot," affirmed Mr. Jones. He was trying to recover his manner of languid superiority. "We have heard, for instance, of a certain Morrison, once your partner."

Heyst could not repress a slight movement.

"Aha!" said Mr. Jones, with a sort of ghostly glee on his face.

The muffled thunder resembled the echo of a distant cannonade below the horizon, and the two men seemed to be listening to it in sullen silence.

"This diabolical calumny will end in actually and literally taking my life from me," thought Heyst.

Then, suddenly, he laughed. Portentously spectral, Mr. Jones listened to the sound.

"That's as you please," he said. "I, who have been hounded out from society by a lot of highly moral souls, can't see anything funny in that story. But here we are, and you will now have to pay for your fun, Mr. Heyst."

"You have heard a lot of ugly lies," observed Heyst. "Take my word for it."

"You would say so, of course—very natural. As a matter of fact, I haven't heard very much. Strictly speaking, it was Martin. He collects information, and so on. You don't

suppose I would talk to that Schomberg animal more than I could help? It was Martin whom he took into his confidence."

"The stupidity of that creature is so great that it becomes formidable," Heyst said, as if speaking to himself.

Involuntarily his mind turned to the girl, wandering in the forest, alone and terrified. Would he ever see her again? At that thought he nearly lost his self-possession. He looked speculatively at Mr. Jones, who, of course, had never for a moment taken his eyes from his intended victim. And the conviction came to Heyst that this outlaw from the higher spheres was an absolutely hard and pitiless scoundrel.

Mr. Jones's voice made him start.

"It would be useless, for instance, to tell me that your Chinaman has run off with your money. A man living alone with a Chinaman on an island takes care to conceal property of that kind so well that the devil himself—"

"Certainly," Heyst muttered.

Again, with his left hand, Mr. Jones mopped his frontal bone, his stalklike neck, his razor jaws, his fleshless chin. Again his voice faltered and his aspect became still more gruesomely malevolent, as of a wicked and pitiless corpse.

"I see what you mean," he cried, "but you mustn't put too much trust in your ingenuity. You don't strike me as a very ingenious person, Mr. Heyst. Neither am I. My talents lie another way. But Martin—"

"Who is now engaged in rifling my desk," interjected Heyst.

"I don't think so. What I was going to say is that Martin is much cleverer than a Chinaman. Do you believe in racial superiority, Mr. Heyst? I do, firmly. Martin is great at ferreting out such secrets as yours, for instance."

"Secrets like mine!" repeated Heyst bitterly. "Well, I wish him joy of all he can ferret out!"

"That's very kind of you," remarked Mr. Jones. He was beginning to be anxious for Martin's return. Of iron nerve at the gaming-table, fearless in a sudden affray, he found that this rather special kind of work was telling on his nerves. "Keep still as you are!" he cried sharply.

"I've told you I am not armed," said Heyst, folding his arms on his breast.

"I am really inclined to believe that you are not," admitted Mr. Jones seriously. "Strange!" he mused aloud, the caverns of his eyes turned upon Heyst. Then briskly:

"But my object is to keep you in this room. Don't provoke me, by some unguarded movement, to smash your knee or do something definite of that sort." He passed his tongue over his lips, which were dry and black, while his forehead glistened with moisture. "I don't know if it wouldn't be better to do it at once!"

"He who deliberates is lost," said Heyst with grave mockery.

Mr. Jones disregarded the remark. He had the air of communing with himself.

"Physically I am no match for you," he said slowly, his black gaze fixed upon the man sitting on the end of the bed. "You could spring—"

"Are you trying to frighten yourself?" asked Heyst abruptly. "You don't seem to have quite enough pluck for your business. Why don't you do it, for once?"

Mr. Jones, taking violent offense, snorted like a savage skeleton.

"Strange as it may seem to you, it is because of my origin, my breeding, my traditions, my early associations, and such like trifles. Not everybody can divest himself of the prejudices of a gentleman as easily as you have done, Mr. Heyst. But don't worry about my pluck. If you were to make a clean spring at me, you would receive in mid air, so to speak, something that would make you perfectly harmless by the time you landed. No, don't misapprehend us, Mr. Heyst. We are—er—adequate bandits; and we are after the fruit of your labors as a—er—successful swindler. It's the way of the world—gorge and disgorge!"

He wearily inclined his head on his left shoulder. His vitality seemed exhausted. Even his sunken eyelids dropped a little within the bony sockets. Only his thin, waspish, beautifully penciled eyebrows, drawn together a little, suggested the will and the power to sting—something vicious, unconquerable, and deadly.

"Fruits! Swindler!" repeated Heyst, without heat, almost without contempt. "You are giving yourself no end of trouble, you and your faithful henchman, to crack an empty nut. There are no fruits here, as you imagine. There are a few sovereigns, which you may have, if you like; and since you have called yourself a bandit—"

"Yaas!" drawled Mr. Jones. "That, rather than a swindler. Open warfare, at least!"

"Very good! Only let me tell you that there were never in the world two more deluded bandits—never!"

Heyst uttered these words with such energy that Mr. Jones, stiffening up, seemed to become thinner and taller as he leaned in his metallic-blue dressing-gown against the white-washed wall.

"Fooled by a silly, rascally innkeeper!" Heyst went on. "Talked over like a pair of children with a promise of sweets!"

"I didn't talk with that disgusting animal," muttered Mr. Jones sullenly; "but he convinced Martin, who is no fool."

"I should think he wanted very much to be convinced," said Heyst, with the courteous intonation so well known in the islands. "I don't want to disturb your touching trust in your—your follower, but he must be the most credulous brigand in existence. What do you imagine? If the story of my riches were ever so true, do you think Schomberg would have imparted it to you from sheer altruism? Is that the way of the world, Mr. Jones?"

For a moment the lower jaw of Ricardo's gentleman dropped; but it came up with a snap of scorn, and he said with spectral intensity:

"The beast is cowardly! He was frightened, and wanted to get rid of us, if you want to know, Mr. Heyst. I don't know that the material inducement was so very great, but I was bored, and we decided to accept the bribe. I don't regret it. All my life I have been seeking new impressions, and you have turned out to be something quite out of the common. Martin, of course, looks to the material results. He's simple—and faithful—and wonderfully acute."

"Ah, yes! He's on the track"—and now Heyst's speech had the character of politely grim raillery—"but not sufficiently on the track, as yet, to make it quite convenient to shoot me without more ado. Didn't Schomberg tell you precisely where I conceal the fruit of my rapines? Pah! Don't you know he would have told you anything, true or false, from a very clear motive? Revenge! Mad hate—the unclean idiot!"

Mr. Jones did not seem very much moved. On his right hand the doorway incessantly flickered with distant lightning, and the continuous rumble of thunder went on irritatingly, like the growl of an inarticulate giant muttering menaces.

Heyst overcame his immense repugnance to allude to her whose image, cowering in the forest, was constantly before his eyes, with all the pathos and force of its appeal, august, pitiful, and almost holy to him. It was in a hurried, embarrassed manner that he went on:

"If it had not been for that girl whom he persecuted with his insane and odious passion, and who threw herself on my protection, he would never have—but you know well enough!"

"I don't know!" burst out Mr. Jones with amazing heat. "That hotel-keeper tried to talk to me once of some girl he had lost, but I told him I didn't want to hear any of his beastly women stories. It had something to do with you, had it?"

Heyst looked on serenely at this outburst, then lost his patience a little.

"What sort of comedy is this? You don't mean to say that you didn't know that I had—that the girl was here?"

One could see that the eyes of Mr. Jones had become fixed in the depths of their black holes by the gleam of white becoming steady there. The whole man seemed frozen still.

"Here? Here?" he foamed out twice. There was no mistaking his astonishment, his shocked incredulity—something like frightened disgust.

Heyst was disgusted also, but in another way. He, too, was incredulous. He regretted having mentioned the girl; but the thing was done, his repugnance had been overcome in the heat of his argument against the absurd bandit.

"Is it possible that you didn't know of that significant fact?" he inquired. "Or the only effective truth in the welter of silly lies that deceived you so easily?"

"No, I didn't!" Mr. Jones shouted. "But Martin did!" he added in a faint whisper, which Heyst's ears just caught and no more.

"I kept her out of sight as long as I could," said Heyst. "Perhaps, with your bringing up, traditions, and so on, you will understand my reason for it."

"He knew. He knew before!" Mr. Jones went on in a hollow voice. "He knew of her from the first!"

Backed hard against the wall, he no longer watched Heyst. He had the air of a man who had seen an abyss yawning under his feet.

"If I want to try and kill him, this is my time," thought Heyst; but he did not move.

Next moment Mr. Jones jerked his head up, glaring with sardonic fury.

"I have a good mind to shoot you, you woman-ridden hermit, you man in the moon, that can't exist without—no, it won't be you that I'll shoot. It's the other woman-lover—the prevaricating, sly, low-class, amorous cuss! And he shaved—shaved under my very nose. I'll shoot him!"

"He's gone mad," thought Heyst, startled by the specter's sudden fury.

He felt himself more in danger, nearer death, than ever since he had entered that room. An insane bandit is a deadly combination. He did not, could not know that Mr. Jones was quick-minded enough to see already the end of his reign over his excellent secretary's thoughts and feelings; the coming failure of Ricardo's fidelity.

A woman had intervened! A woman, a girl, who apparently possessed the power to awaken men's disgusting folly. Her power had been proved in two instances already—the beastly innkeeper, and that man with the mustache, upon whom Mr. Jones, his deadly right hand twitching in his pocket, glared more in revulsion than in anger.

The very object of the expedition was lost from view in his sudden and overwhelming sense of utter insecurity. And that made Mr. Jones feel very savage; but not against the man with the mustache. He was nothing!

Thus, while Heyst was really feeling that his life was not worth two minutes' purchase, he heard himself addressed with no affectation of languid impertinence, but with a burst of feverish determination:

"Here! Let's call a truce!" said Mr. Jones.

Heyst's heart was too sick to allow him to smile.

"Have I been making war on you?" he asked wearily. "How do you expect me to attach any meaning to your words?" he went on. "You seem to be a morbid, woman-hating sort of bandit. We don't speak the same language. If I were to tell you why I am here, talking to you, you wouldn't believe me, because you would not understand me. It certainly isn't the love of life, from which I have divorced myself long ago—not sufficiently, perhaps; but if you are thinking of yours, then I repeat to you that it has never been in danger from me. I am unarmed."

Mr. Jones was biting his lower lip in a deep meditation. It was only toward the last that he looked at Heyst.

"Unarmed, eh?" Then he burst out violently: "I tell you, a gentleman is no match for the common people. And yet one must make use of them. Unarmed, eh? And I suppose that creature is of the commonest sort. You could hardly have got her out of a drawing-room. Though they're all alike, for that matter. Unarmed! It's a pity. I am in much greater danger than you are, or were—or I am much mistaken. But I am not—I know my man!"

He lost his air of mental vacancy and broke into shrill exclamations. To Heyst they seemed madder than anything that had gone before.

"On the track! On the scent!" he cried, forgetting himself to the point of executing a dance of rage in the middle of the floor.

Heyst looked on, mute, fascinated by this skeleton in a gay dressing-gown, agitated like a grotesque toy on the end of an invisible string. It became quiet suddenly.

"I might have smelled a rat! I always knew that would be the danger." He changed suddenly to a confidential tone, fixing his sepulchral stare on Heyst. "And yet here I am, taken in by the fellow, like the veriest fool. I've been always on the watch for some such beastly influence, but here I am, fairly caught. He shaved himself right in front of me—and I never guessed!"

The shrill laugh, following on the low tone of secrecy, sounded so convincingly insane that Heyst got up as if moved by a spring. Mr. Jones stepped back two paces, but displayed no uneasiness.

"It's as clear as daylight," he said mournfully, and fell silent.

Behind him the doorway flickered lividly, and the sound as of a naval action somewhere away on the horizon filled the breathless pause. Mr. Jones inclined his head languidly over his shoulder. His mood had completely changed.

"What do you say, unarmed man? Shall we go and see what is detaining my trusted Martin so long? He asked me to keep you engaged in friendly conversation till he made a further examination of that track. Ha, ha, ha!"

"He is no doubt ransacking my house," said Heyst.

He was bewildered. It seemed to him that all this was an incomprehensible dream, or perhaps an elaborate other-world joke, contrived by the specter in a gorgeous dressing-gown.

Mr. Jones looked at him with a horrible, cadaverous smile of inscrutable mockery and pointed to the door. Heyst passed through it first. His feelings had become so blunted that he did not care how soon he was shot in the back.

"How oppressive the air is!" the voice of Mr. Jones said at his elbow. "This stupid storm gets on my nerves. I would welcome some rain, though it would be unpleasant to get wet. On the other hand, this exasperating thunder has the advantage of covering the sound of our approach. The lightning's not

so convenient. Ah, your house fully illuminated! My clever Martin is punishing your stock of candles. He belongs to the unceremonious classes, which are also unlovely, untrustworthy, and so on."

"I left the candles burning," said Heyst, "to save him trouble."

"You really believed he would go to your house?" asked Mr. Jones with genuine interest.

"I had that notion, strongly. I do believe he is there now."

"And you don't mind?"

"No."

"You don't?" Mr. Jones stopped to wonder. "You are an extraordinary man," he said suspiciously, and moved on, touching elbows with Heyst.

In the latter's breast dwelt a deep silence, the complete silence of unused faculties. At this moment, by simply shouldering Mr. Jones, he could have thrown him down and put himself, by a couple of leaps, beyond the certain aim of the revolver; but he did not even think of that. His very will seemed dead of weariness. He moved automatically, his head hanging low, like a prisoner captured by the evil power of a masquerading skeleton released from the grave.

Mr. Jones took charge of the direction. They fetched a wide sweep. The echoes of distant thunder seemed to dog their footsteps.

"By the bye," said Mr. Jones, as if unable to restrain his curiosity, "aren't you anxious about that—ouch!—that fascinating creature to whom you owe whatever pleasure you can find in our visit?"

"I have placed her in safety," said Heyst. "I—I took good care of that."

He did not raise his head when Mr. Jones laid a hand on his arm.

"You have? Look! Is that what you mean?"

Heyst raised his head. In the flicker of lightning the desolation of the cleared ground on his left leaped out and sank into the night, together with the elusive forms of things distant, pale, unearthly. But in the brilliant square of the door he saw the girl—the woman he had longed to see once more—as if enthroned, with her hands on the arms of the chair. She was in black; her face was white, her head dreamily inclined on her breast.

He saw her only as low as her knees. He saw her—there, in the room, alive with a somber reality. It was no mocking vision. She was not in the forest—but there! She sat there in the chair, seemingly without

strength, yet without fear, and tenderly inclined.

"Can you understand their power?" whispered the hot breath of Mr. Jones into his ear. "Can there be a more disgusting spectacle? It's enough to make the earth detestable. She seems to have found her affinity. Move on closer. If I have to shoot you in the end, then perhaps you will die cured."

Heyst obeyed the pushing pressure of a revolver barrel between his shoulders. He felt it distinctly, but he did not feel the ground under his feet.

They found the steps, without his being aware that he was ascending them—slowly, one by one. Doubt entered into him—a doubt of a new kind, formless, hideous. It seemed to spread itself all over him, enter his limbs, and lodge in his entrails. He stopped suddenly, with a thought that he who experienced such a feeling had no business to live—or perhaps was no longer living.

Everything—the bungalow, the forest, the open ground—trembled incessantly; the earth, the sky itself, shivered all the time, and the only thing immovable in the shuddering universe was the interior of the lighted room and the woman in black sitting in the light of the four candle-flames. They flung around her an intolerable brilliance which hurt his eyes, seemed to sear his very brain with the radiation of infernal heat.

It was some time before he made out Ricardo seated on the floor at a little distance, his back to the doorway, but only partly so; one side of his upturned face showing the absorbed, forgetful rapture of his contemplation.

The grip of Mr. Jones's hard claw drew Heyst back a little. In the roll of thunder, swelling and subsiding, he whispered in his ear a sarcastic: "Of course!"

A great shame descended upon Heyst—the shame of guilt, absurd and maddening. Mr. Jones drew him still further back into the darkness of the veranda.

"This is serious," he went on, distilling his ghostly venom into Heyst's very ear. "I had to shut my eyes many times to his little flings; but this is serious. He has found his soul-mate. Mud souls, obscene and cunning! Mud bodies, too—the mud of the gutter! I tell you, we are no match for the vile herd. I, even I, have nearly been caught. He asked me to detain you till he gave me the signal. It won't be you that I'll have to shoot, but him. I wouldn't trust him near me for five minutes after this!"

He shook Heyst's arm a little.

"If you had not happened to mention the creature, we should both have been dead before morning. He would have stabbed you as you came down the steps after leaving me, and then he would have walked up to me and planted the same knife between my ribs. He has no prejudices. The vile origin, the greater the freedom of these simple souls!"

He stretched his neck to peer into the room from the side. Heyst, too, made a step forward, under the slight impulse of that slender hand clasping his arm with a thin, bony grasp.

"Behold!" the skeleton of the crazy bandit jabbered thinly into his ear in spectral fellowship. "Behold the simple Acis kissing the sandals of the nymph, on the way to her lips, all forgetful, while the menacing wife of Polyphemus already resounds close by—if he could only hear it! Stoop a little."

XXXVIII

ON returning to the Heyst bungalow, rapid, as if on wings, Ricardo saw the girl waiting for him. She was dressed in black; and at once his uplifting exultation was replaced by an awed and quivering patience before her white face, before the immobility of her reposeful pose, the more amazing to him who had encountered the strength of her limbs and the indomitable spirit in her body.

She had come out at once after Heyst's departure, and had sat down under the portrait to wait for the return of the man of violence and death. While lifting the curtain, she felt the anguish of her disobedience to her lover, which was soothed by a feeling she had known before—a gentle flood of penetrating sweetness.

She was not automatically obeying a momentary suggestion; she was under influences more deliberate, more vague, and of greater potency. She had been prompted, not by her will, but by a force that was outside of her and more worthy. She reckoned upon nothing definite; she had calculated nothing. She saw only her purpose of capturing death—savage, sudden, irresponsible death, prowling round the man who possessed her; death embodied in the knife ready to strike into his heart.

All she thought of—the essence of her tremors, her flushes of heat, and her shudders of cold—was the question how to get hold of that knife, the mark and sign of stalking death. A tremor of impatience to clutch the frightful thing, glimpsed once and unforgettable, agitated her hands.

And yet it was the instinctive flinging forward of these very hands that stopped Ricar-

do dead short between the door and her chair, with the ready obedience of a conquered man who can bide his time.

Her success disconcerted her. She listened to the man's impassioned transports of terrible eulogy and even more terrible declarations of love. She was even able to meet his eyes, oblique, apt to glide away, but now throwing feral gleams of desire.

"No!" he was saying, after an impassioned outpouring of words in which the most ferocious phrases of his love were mingled with wooing accents of entreaty. "I will have no more of it! Don't you mistrust me. I am sober in my talk. Feel how quietly my heart beats. Ten times to-day when you, you, you swam in my eye, I thought it would burst one of my ribs or leap out of my throat. It has knocked itself dead tired waiting for this evening, for this very minute. And now it can do no more. Feel how quiet it is!"

He made a step forward, but she raised her clear voice commandingly:

"No nearer!"

He stopped with a smile of imbecile worship on his lips, and with the delighted obedience of a man who could at any moment seize her in his hands and dash her to the ground.

"Ah! If I had taken you by the throat that morning, and had had my way with you, I should never have known what you are! You are a wonder! And so am I, in my way. I have nerve, and I have brains, too. We should have been lost many times but for me. I plan—I plot for my gentleman. Gentleman—pah! I am sick of him. And you are sick of yours, eh? You, you!"

He shook all over; he cooed at her a string of endearing names, obscene and tender, and then asked abruptly:

"Why don't you speak to me?"

"It's my part to listen," she said, giving him an inscrutable smile, with a flush on her cheek and her lips cold as ice.

"But you will answer me?"

"Yes," she said, her eyes dilated as if with sudden interest.

"Where's that plunder? Do you know?"

"No! Not yet."

"But there is plunder stowed somewhere that's worth having?"

"Yes, I think so. But who knows?" she added after a pause.

"And who cares?" he retorted recklessly. "I've had enough of this crawling on my belly. It's you who are my treasure. It's I who found you out where a gentleman had buried you to rot for his accursed pleasure!"

He looked behind him and all around for a seat, then turned to her his troubled eyes and dim smile.

"I am dog-tired," he said, and sat down on the floor. "I went tired since this morning, since I came in here and started talking to you—as tired as if I had been pouring my life-blood here on these planks for you to dabble your white feet in."

Unmoved, she nodded at him thoughtfully. Womanlike, all her faculties remained concentrated on her heart's desire—on the knife—while the man went on babbling insanely at her feet, ingratiating and savage, almost crazy with elation. But he, too, was holding on to his purpose.

"For you! For you I will throw away money, lives—all the lives but mine! What you want is a man, a master that will let you put the heel of your shoe on his neck; not that skulker, who will get tired of you in a year—and you of him. And then what? You are not one to sit still; neither am I. I live for myself, and you shall live for yourself, too—not for a Swedish baron. They make a convenience of people like you and me. A gentleman is better than an employer, but an equal partnership against all the hypocrites is the thing for you and me. We'll go on wandering the world over, you and I, both free and both true. You are no cage bird to be shut up in a prison like this. We'll rove together, for we are of them that have no homes. We are born rovers!"

She listened to him with the utmost attention, as if any unexpected word might give her some sort of opening to get that dagger, that awful knife—to disarm murder itself, pleading for her love at her feet. Again she nodded at him thoughtfully, rousing a gleam in his yellow eyes, yearning devotedly upon her face.

When he hitched himself a little closer her soul had no movement of recoil. This had to be. Anything had to be which would bring the knife within her reach.

He talked more confidentially now.

"We have met, and their time has come," he began, looking up into her eyes. "The partnership between me and my gentleman has to be ripped up. There's no room for him where we are. Why, he would shoot me like a dog! Don't you worry. This will settle it not later than to-night!"

He tapped his folded leg below the knee, and was surprised, flattered, by the lighting up of her face, which stooped toward him eagerly and remained expectant, the lips girlishly part-

ed, red in the pale face, and quivering in the quickened drawing of her breath.

"You marvel, you miracle, you man's luck and joy—one in a million! No, the only one! You have found your man in me," he whispered tremulously. "To serve—to rule. Listen! They are having their last walk together; for I'll do for your gentleman, too, by midnight!"

Without the slightest tremor she murmured, as soon as the tightening of her breast had eased off and the words would come:

"I wouldn't be in too much of a hurry—with him."

The pause, the tone, had all the value of meditated advice.

"Good, thrifty girl!" He laughed low, with a strange feline gaiety, expressed by the undulating movement of his shoulder and the sparkling snap of his oblique eyes. "You are still thinking about the chance of that swag. You'll make a good partner, that you will! And, I say, what a decoy you will make! Jee-miny!"

He was carried away for a moment, but his face darkened swiftly.

"No! No reprieve. What do you think a fellow is—a scarecrow? All hat and clothes and no feeling, no inside, no brain to make fancies for himself? No!" he went on violently. "Never in his life will he go again into that room—never any more!"

A silence fell. He was gloomy with the torment of his jealousy, and did not even look at her. She sat up and slowly, gradually, bent lower and lower over him, as if ready to fall into his arms. He looked up at last, and checked this droop unwittingly.

"Say! You, who are up to fighting a man with your bare hands, could you—eh?—could you manage to stick one with a thing like mine?"

She opened her eyes very wide and gave him a wild smile.

"How can I tell?" she whispered enchantingly. "Will you let me have a look at it?"

Without taking his eyes from her face, he got the knife out of its sheath—a short, broad, cruel, double-edged blade with a bone handle—and only then looked down at it.

"A good friend!" he said simply. "Take it in your hand and feel the balance," he suggested.

At the moment when she bent forward to receive it from him, there was a flash of fire in her mysterious eyes—a red gleam in the white mist which wrapped the promptings and longings of her soul. She had done it! The

very sting of death was in her hands; the venom of the viper in her paradise, extracted, safe in her possession—and its head all but lying under her heel.

Ricardo, stretched on the mats of the floor, crept closer and closer to the chair.

All her thoughts were busy, now, in planning how to keep possession of that weapon which had seemed to have drawn into itself every danger and menace on the death-ridden earth. She said with a low laugh, the exultation in which he failed to recognize:

"I didn't think that you would ever trust me with that thing!"

"Why not?"

"For fear I should suddenly strike you with it."

"What for? For that morning's work? Oh, no! There's no spite in you for that. You forgave me. You saved me. You got the better of me, too. And anyhow, what good would it be?"

"No, no good," she admitted.

In her heart she felt that she would not know how to do it; that if it came to a struggle she would have to drop the dagger and fight with her hands.

"Listen. When we are going about the world together, you shall always call me your husband. Do you hear?"

"Yes," she said, bracing herself for the contest, in whatever shape it was coming.

The knife was lying in her lap. She let it slip into the fold of her dress, and laid her forearms with clasped fingers over her knees, which she pressed desperately together. The dreaded thing was out of sight at last! She felt a dampness in her limbs.

"I am not going to hide you like that good-for-nothing, finicky, sneery gentleman. You shall be my pride and my chum. Isn't that better than rotting on an island for the pleasure of a gentleman, till he gives you a chuck?"

"I'll be anything you like," she said.

In his intoxication he crept closer with every word she uttered, with every movement she made.

"Give me your foot," he begged in a timid murmur, with the full consciousness of his power.

Anything! Anything to keep murder quiet and disarmed till strength had returned to her limbs and she could make up her mind what to do. Her fortitude had been shaken by the very facility of success that had come to her. She advanced her foot forward a little from under the hem of her skirt; and he threw himself on it greedily.

She was not even aware of him. She had thought of the forest, to which she had been told to run. Yes, the forest—that was the place for her to carry off the terrible spoil, the sting of vanquished death.

Ricardo, clasping her ankle, pressed his lips time after time to the instep, muttering gasping words that were like sobs, making little noises that resembled the sounds of grief and distress. Unheard by them both, the thunder growled distantly with angry modulations of its tremendous voice, while the world outside shuddered incessantly around the dead stillness of the room where the framed profile of Heyst's father looked severely into space.

Suddenly Ricardo felt himself spurned by the foot he had been cherishing—spurned with a push of such violence into the very hollow of his throat that it swung him back instantly into an upright position on his knees. He read his danger in the stony eyes of the girl; and in the very act of leaping to his feet he heard sharply, detached on the comminatory voice of the storm, the brief report of a shot which half stunned him in the manner of a blow.

He turned his burning head, and saw Heyst towering in the doorway. The thought that the beggar had started to prance darted through his head. For a fraction of a second his distracted eyes sought for his weapon all over the floor. He couldn't see it.

"Stick him, you!" he called hoarsely to the girl, and dashed headlong for the door of the compound.

While he thus obeyed the instinct of self-preservation, his reason was telling him that he could not possibly reach it alive. It flew open, however, with a crash, before his launched weight, and instantly he swung it to behind him. There, his shoulder leaning against it, his hands clinging to the handle, dazed and alone in the night full of shudders and muttered menaces, he tried to pull himself together.

He asked himself if he had been shot at more than once. His shoulder was wet with the blood trickling from his head. Feeling above his ear, he ascertained that it was only a graze; but the shock of the surprise had unmanned him for the moment.

What the deuce was the governor about, to let the beggar break loose like this? Or—was the governor dead, perhaps?

The silence within the room awed him. Of going back there could be no question.

"But she knows how to take care of herself," he muttered.

She had his knife. It was she now who was

deadly, while he was disarmed, no good for the moment.

He stole away from the door, staggering, the warm trickle running down his neck, to find out what had become of the governor and to provide himself with a firearm from the armory in the trunks.

XXXIX

MR. JONES, after firing his shot over Heyst's shoulder, had thought it proper to dodge away. Like the specter he was, he had noiselessly vanished from the veranda.

Heyst stumbled into the room and looked around. All the objects in there—the books, the gleam of old silver familiar to him from boyhood, the very portrait on the wall—seemed shadowy, unsubstantial, the dumb accomplices of an amazing dream-plot ending in an illusory effect of awakening and the impossibility of ever closing his eyes again.

With dread he forced himself to look at the girl. Still in the chair, she was leaning forward far over her knees, and had hidden her face in her hands.

She sat up a little, then leaned back, and, taking her hands from her face, pressed both of them to her breast, as if moved to the heart by seeing him there looking at her with a black, horror-struck curiosity.

He would have pitied her, if the triumphant expression of her face had not given him a shock which destroyed the balance of his feelings. She spoke with an accent of wild joy:

"I knew you would come back in time! You are safe now. I have done it! I would never, never have let him—"

Her voice died out, while her eyes shone at him as when the sun breaks through a mist. "Never. Oh, my Axel!"

He bowed his head gravely, and said in his polite, Heystian tone:

"No doubt you acted from instinct. Women have been provided with their own weapon. I was a disarmed man. I have been a disarmed man all my life, as I see it now. You may glory in your resourcefulness and your knowledge of yourself; but I must say that the other attitude, suggestive of shame, had its charm. For you are full of charm!"

The exultation vanished from her face.

"You mustn't make fun of me now. What shame? I was thanking God with all my sinful heart for having been able to do it—for giving you to me in that way—oh, my beloved—all my own at last!"

He stared as if mad. Timidly she tried to excuse herself for disobeying his directions for

her safety. Every modulation of her enchanting voice cut deep into his very breast, so that he could hardly understand the words for the sheer pain of it.

He turned his back on her; but a sudden drop, an extraordinary weakness which came upon her tone, made him spin round. On her white neck her pale head drooped as in a cruel draft a withered flower droops on its stalk.

He caught his breath, looked at her closely, and seemed to read some awful intelligence in her eyes. At the moment when her eyelids fell as if smitten from above by an invisible power, he snatched her up bodily out of the chair, and, disregarding an unexpected metallic clatter on the floor, carried her off into the other room.

The limpness of her body frightened him. Laying her down on the bed, he ran out again, seized a four-branched candlestick on the table, and ran back, tearing down with a furious jerk the curtain that swung stupidly in his way; but after putting the candlestick on the table by the bed he remained absolutely idle. There did not seem anything more for him to do.

Holding his chin in his hand, he looked down intently at her still face.

"Has she been stabbed with this thing?" asked Davidson, whom he suddenly saw standing by his side and holding up Ricardo's dagger to his sight.

Heyst uttered no word of recognition or surprise. He gave Davidson only a dumb look of unutterable awe; then, as if possessed with a sudden fury, he started tearing open the front of the girl's dress.

She remained insensible under his hands, and Heyst let out a groan which made Davidson shudder inwardly—the heavy plaint of a man who falls clubbed in the dark.

They stood side by side, looking mournfully at the little black hole made by Mr. Jones's bullet under the swelling breast, of a dazzling and, as it were, a sacred whiteness. It rose and fell slightly—so slightly that only the eyes of the lover could detect that faint stir of life.

Heyst, calm and utterly unlike himself in the face, moving about noiselessly, prepared a wet cloth, and laid it on the insignificant wound, round which there was hardly a trace of blood to mar the charm, the fascination, of that mortal flesh.

Her eyelids fluttered. She looked drowsily about, serene, as if fatigued only by the exertions of her tremendous victory, capturing the very sting of death in the service of life. But

her eyes became very wide awake when they caught sight of Ricardo's dagger, the spoil of vanquished death, which Davidson was still holding unconsciously.

"Give it to me!" she said. "It's mine."

Davidson put the symbol of her victory into the feeble hands extended to him with the innocent gesture of a child reaching for a toy.

"For you," she gasped, turning her eyes to Heyst. "Kill nobody."

"No," said Heyst, taking the dagger and laying it on her breast, while her hands fell powerless by her sides.

The faint smile on her deep-cut lips waned, and for a moment the girl's head sank deep into the pillow, taking on the majestic pallor and immobility of marble. But over the muscles, which seemed set in their transfigured beauty forever, passed a slight and awful tremor. With an amazing strength she asked loudly:

"What's the matter with me?"

"You have been shot, dear Lena," Heyst said in a steady voice, while Davidson, at the question, turned away and leaned his head against the post at the foot of the bed.

"Shot? I thought something struck me."

Over Samburan the thunder had ceased to growl at last, and the world of material forms shuddered no more under the emerging stars. The spirit of the girl which was passing away from under them clung to her triumph, convinced of the reality of her victory over death.

"No more," she muttered. "There will be no more! Oh, my beloved," she cried weakly, "I've saved you! Why don't you take me into your arms and carry me out of this lonely place?"

Heyst bent low over her, cursing his fastidious soul, which even at that moment kept the true cry of love from his lips in its infernal mistrust of itself. He dared not touch this faint flicker of life, and she had no longer the strength to throw her arms about his neck.

"Who else could have done this for you?" she whispered gloriously.

"No one in the world," he answered her in a murmur of unconcealed despair.

She tried to raise herself, but all she could do was to lift her head a little from the pillow. With a terrified and gentle movement, Heyst hastened to slip his arm under her neck. She felt relieved of an intolerable weight, and was content to surrender to him the infinite weariness of her tremendous achievement.

Exulting, she saw herself extended on the bed, in a black dress, and profoundly at peace;

while, stooping over her with a kindly, playful smile, he was about to lift her up in his firm, untrembling arms and take her into the sanctuary of his innermost heart—at last! The flush of rapture flooding her whole being broke out in a smile of innocent, girlish happiness; and with that divine radiance on her lips she breathed her last, triumphant, seeking for his glance in the shades of death.

XL

"YES, excellency," said Davidson in his placid voice; "there are more dead in this affair—more white people, I mean—than have been killed in most of the battles of the last Achin war."

Davidson was talking with an excellency, because what was alluded to in conversation as "the mystery of Samburan" had caused such a sensation in the archipelago that even those in the highest spheres were anxious to hear something at first hand. Davidson had been summoned to an audience. It was a lieutenant-governor, or some such personage, on his tour.

"You knew the late Baron Heyst well?"

"The truth is that nobody out here can boast of having known him well," said Davidson. "He was a queer chap. I doubt if he himself knew how queer he was. But everybody was aware that I was keeping my eye on him in a friendly way. And that's how I got the warning which made me turn round in my tracks in the middle of my trip and steam back to Samburan, where, I am grieved to say, I arrived too late."

Without enlarging very much, Davidson explained to the attentive excellency how a woman, the wife of a certain hotel-keeper named Schomberg, had overheard two card-sharpping rascals making inquiries from her husband as to the exact position of the island. She caught only a few words referring to the neighboring volcano, but these were enough to arouse her suspicions—"which," went on Davidson, "she imparted to me, your excellency. They were only too well founded!"

"That was very clever of her," remarked the great man.

"She's much cleverer than people have any conception of," said Davidson.

But he refrained from disclosing to the excellency the real cause which had sharpened Mrs. Schomberg's wits. The poor woman was in mortal terror of the girl being brought back within reach of her infatuated Wilhelm. Davidson only said that her agitation had impressed him; but he confessed that while go-

ing back, he began to have his doubts as to there being anything in it.

"I got into one of those silly thunderstorms that hang about the volcano, and had some trouble in making the island," narrated Davidson. "I had to grope my way dead slow into Black Diamond Bay. I don't suppose that anybody, even if looking out for me, could have heard me let go the anchor."

He admitted that he ought to have gone ashore at once; but everything was perfectly dark and absolutely quiet. He felt ashamed of his impulsiveness. What a fool he would have looked, waking up a man in the middle of the night just to ask him if he was all right! And then, the girl being there, he was afraid that Heyst would look upon his visit as an unwarrantable intrusion.

The first intimation he had of there being something wrong was a big white boat, adrift, with the body of a very hairy man inside, bumping against the bows of his steamer. Then he lost no time in going ashore—alone, of course, from motives of delicacy.

"I was there in time to see that poor girl die, as I have told your excellency," pursued Davidson. "I won't tell you what a time I had with him afterward. He talked to me. It did him good. His father seems to have been a crank, and to have upset his head when he was young. He was a queer chap. Practically the last words he said to me, as we came out on the veranda, were:

"Ah! Davidson, wo to the man whose heart has not learned while young to hope, to love—and to put its trust in life!"

"As we stood there, just before I left him, for he said he wanted to be alone with his dead for a time, we heard a snarly sort of voice near the bushes by the shore calling out:

"Is that you, governor?"

"Yes, it's me."

"Jeeminy! I thought the beggar had done for you. He has started prancing and nearly had me. I bolted out and have been dodging, looking for you ever since."

"Well, here I am," suddenly screamed the other voice, and then a shot rang out.

"This time he has not missed him," Heyst said to me bitterly, and went back into the house.

"I went on board as he had insisted I should do. I didn't want to intrude on his grief. Later, about five in the morning, some of my calashes came running to me, yelling that there was a fire ashore. I landed at once, of course. The principal bungalow was blazing. The heat drove us back. The other two houses caught

one after another like kindling-wood. There was no going beyond the shore end of the jetty till two hours afterward."

Davidson sighed placidly.

"I suppose you are certain that Baron Heyst is dead?"

"He is—ashes, your excellency," said Davidson, wheezing a little; "he and the girl together. I suppose he couldn't stand his thoughts before her dead body—and fire purifies everything. That Chinaman, of whom I told your excellency, helped me to investigate next day, when the embers got cool enough. We found enough to be sure. He's not a bad Chinaman. He told me that he followed Heyst and the girl through the forest from pity, and partly out of curiosity. He watched the house till he saw Heyst go out, after dinner, and Ricardo come back alone. While he was dodging there, it occurred to him that he had better cast the boat adrift, for fear those scoundrels should come round by water and bombard the village from the sea. He judged that they were devils enough for anything. So he walked down the wharf quietly; and as he got into the boat, to cast her off, that hairy man who, it seems, was dozing in her, jumped up growling, and Wang shot him dead. Then he shoved the boat off as hard as he could and went away."

There was a pause. Presently Davidson went on in his tranquil manner:

"Let Heaven look after what has been purified. The wind and rain will take care of the ashes. The carcass of that follower, secretary, or whatever the unclean scoundrel called himself, I left where it lay, to swell and rot in the sun. His principal had shot him neatly through the heart. It was a toss-up which of them would do for the other. Then, apparently, Jones went down the wharf to look for the boat and for the hairy man. I suppose he tumbled into the water by accident—or perhaps not by accident. The boat and the man were gone, and the scoundrel saw himself all alone, his game clearly up, and fairly trapped. Who knows? The water's very clear there, and I could see him lying on the bottom between the piles, like a heap of bones in a blue silk bag, with only the head and the feet sticking out. Wang was very pleased when we discovered him. That made everything safe, he said, and he went at once over the hill to fetch his Alfuro woman back to the hut."

Davidson took his handkerchief to wipe the perspiration off his forehead.

"And then, your excellency, I went away. There was nothing to be done there."

"Clearly," assented the excellency.

Davidson, thoughtful, seemed to weigh the matter in his mind, and then murmured with placid sadness:

"Nothing!"

THE END

NEXT MONTH'S NOVEL—The March MUNSEY will carry for its full book-length complete novel a fascinating story of love and youth by a writer who won his spurs in the pages of this magazine. The title of the new novel is

"THE GRIP ETERNAL"

BY HAMILTON GIBBS

Author of "The Hour of Conflict"

There is nothing of the hackneyed in this romance of the vicar's son, who is seized by the eternal passion which defies all analysis. In it the reader will see the budding of love, will follow the star of romance along a particularly thorny path, and will not be dismissed, as is so often the case, when the wedding-bells begin to peal, but will be taken still further into the author's confidence. The lovers meet in a conventional way, but their acquaintance is pursued in most unconventional fashion. When the great revelation comes, nothing else matters to Richard except this transcendent love of his, yet manliness, honor, and a dogged determination not to be beaten compel him to shut the door of happiness in his own face.

When Mr. Gibbs wrote this story last winter, he had no idea that by the time it saw print he would be a soldier in a great war. As soon as hostilities were declared last summer he reported for service in the British army, and was ordered to the front with the Twenty-First Lancers. He will probably be in the fighting line as these pages are read.

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means shortened life for the candle.

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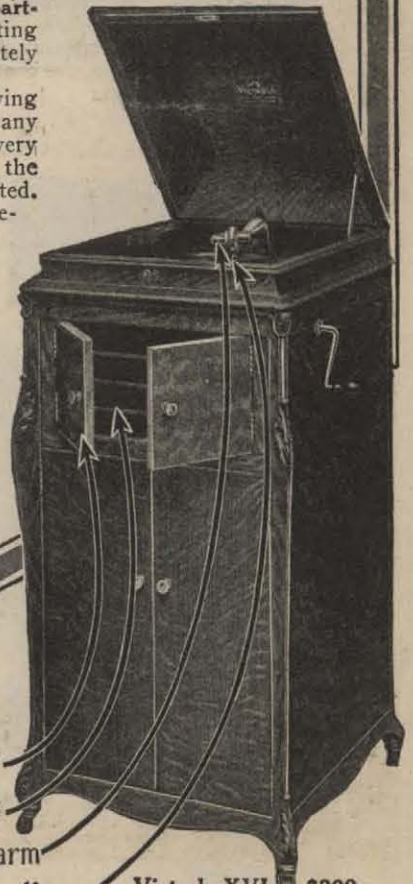
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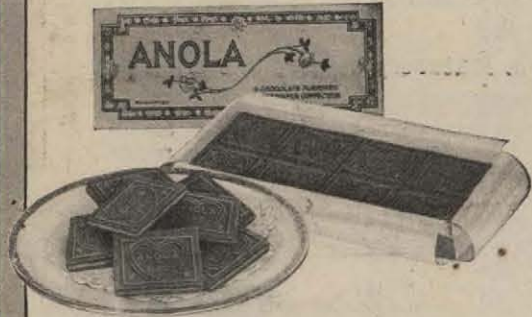
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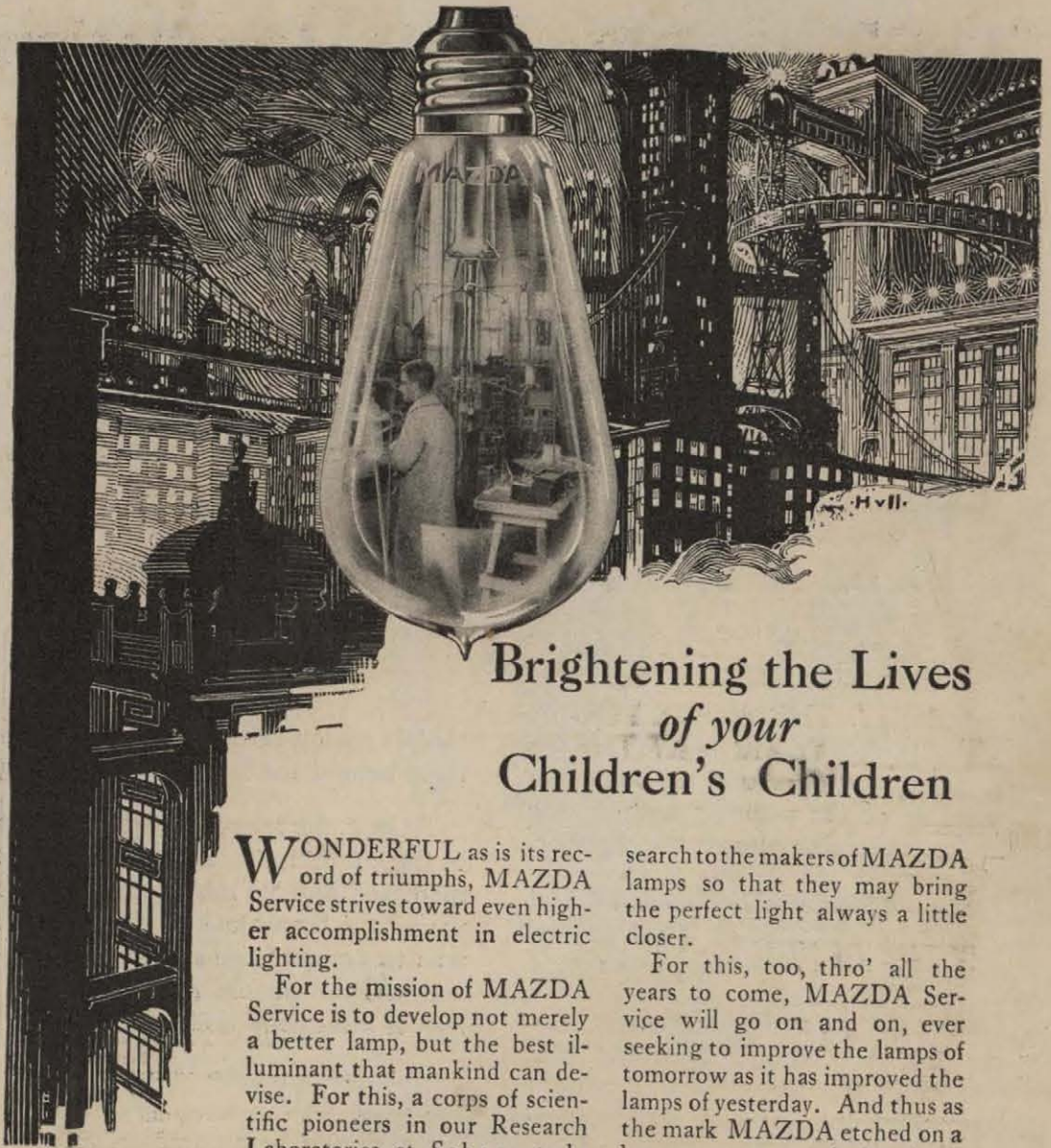
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At first, the telephone was the voice of the community. As the population increased and its interests grew more varied, the larger task of the telephone was to connect the communities and keep all the people in touch, regardless of local conditions or distance.

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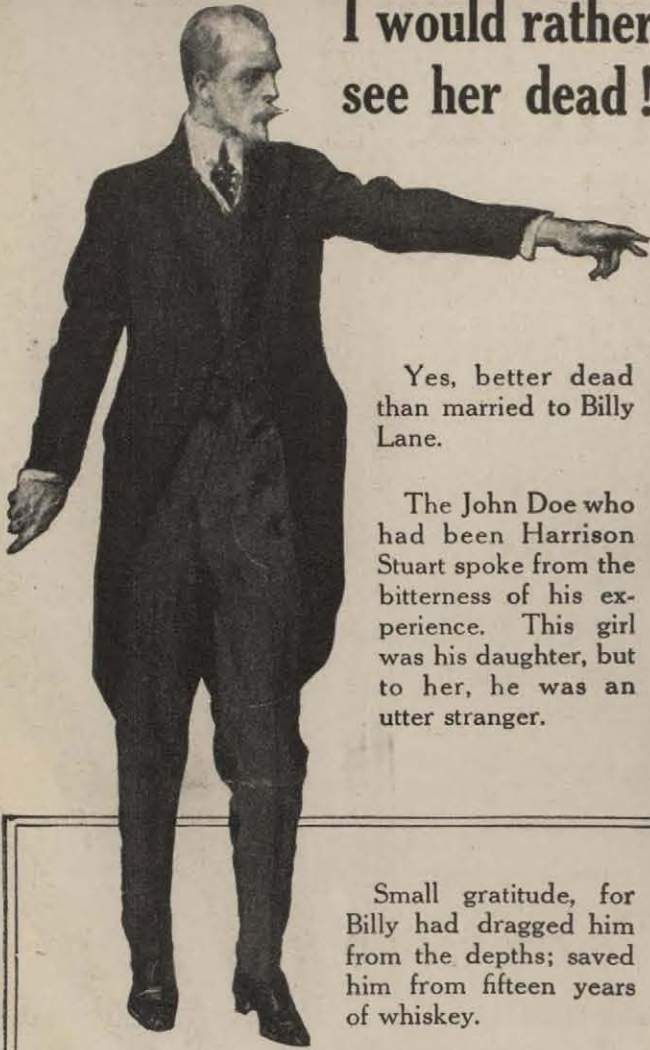
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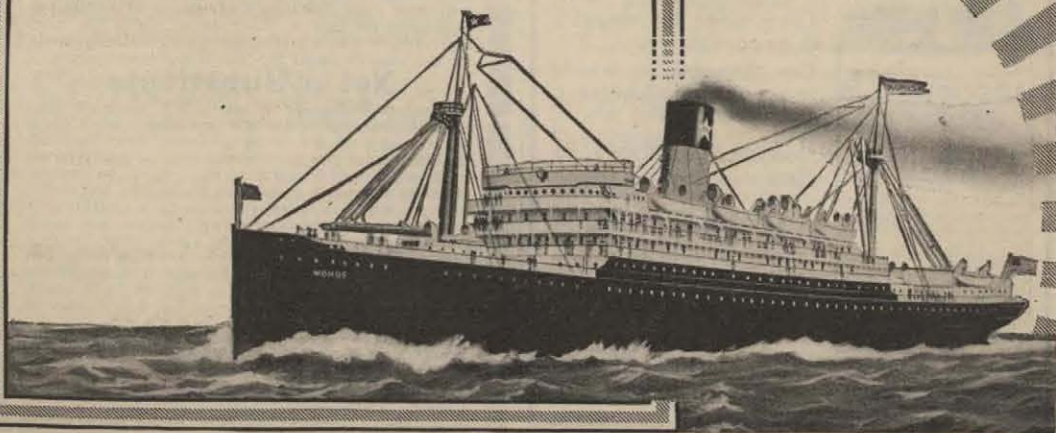
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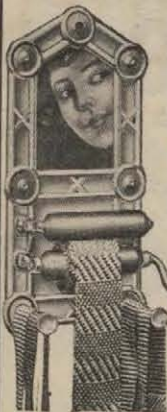
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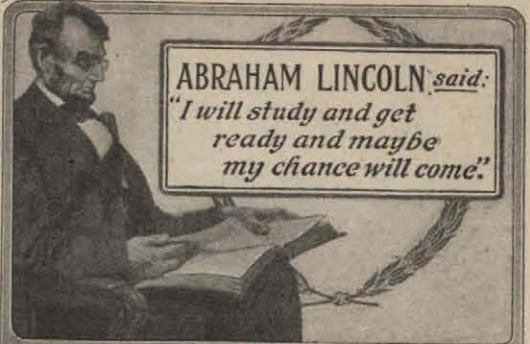
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my chance will come."

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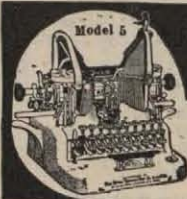


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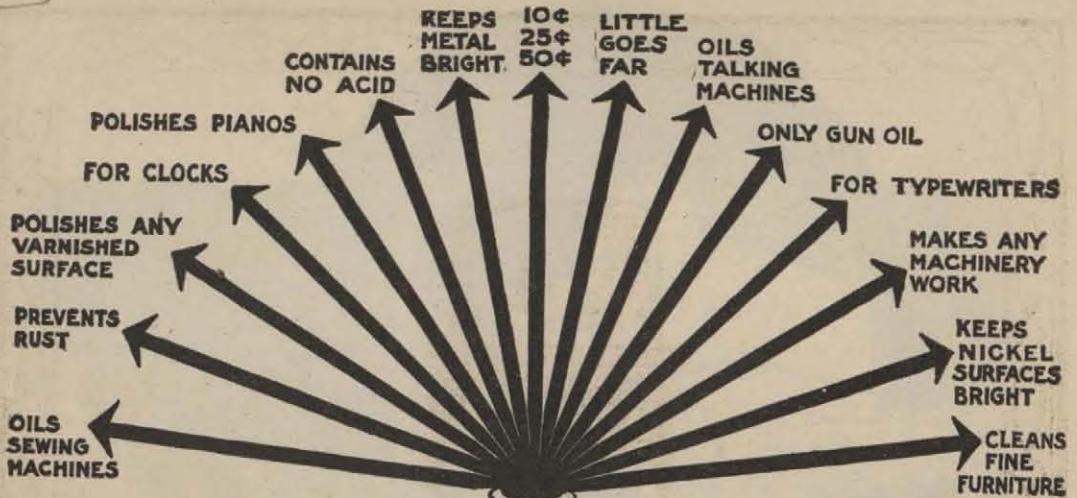
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