

No.3,Vol.38

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PUBLISHED
OCT. 20,
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"Fraser's Folly"

A Complete Novel by
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VOLUME XXXVIII

NUMBER 3



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ALL IN THE NOVEMBER 7th ISSUE OF THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXXVIII.

OCTOBER 20, 1915.

No. 3.

Fur Pirates

By A. M. Chisholm

Author of "Precious Water," "The Peacemaker," Etc.

This novel is not for the man who lives softly. It is full of peril, adventure, hardship. The setting is the same that Chisholm has made us familiar with in many stories—the fur country, the Land of Romance to the man who tells the tale. It's about a group of thieves who stole \$100,000 worth of furs from the posts and cached them. Where they were cached became a lost secret till a skeleton pointed the way. This is just a hint at the series of eventful things that fill these pages. Chisholm has never written a story that has surpassed this. Reading it, you will be reminded of another great romance, widely different as to setting but with something of the same *motif*, told by a master of English whose books have outlived their author.

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CHAPTER I.

THE LAND OF ROMANCE.

IF it were not for Peggy I should not write this story at all. Peggy is my niece, and I am very fond of her and she knows it. So when she got the idea in her glossy young head we both knew very well what would happen, although I objected that there was no woman in the story except that other Peggy who, being my sister, did not count, and the klootchman Lucille, who was most certainly not a heroine. But Peggy overrode me grandly by saying she was tired of wilderness heroines who crop up where no white man would think of taking a woman. There was something in that.

But I protested further that though I had told the yarn often enough it was quite a different matter to write it.

"Bosh!" said Peggy. "Write it just the way you tell it."

So I was up against the iron there, too. I do not know just how to make a proper literary start; but, as with most other work, perhaps the main thing is to get started somehow.

My name is Robert Cory. I do not remember my mother. My father, who taught history in a college which is not necessary to name, died when I was a little shaver, and when his friends came to dig into his affairs they found that he had very little money and no insurance and only one relative on earth so far as they could ascertain, a brother

who lived in the wilderness that fringed the Carcajou. And so my sister Peggy and I, two forlorn little waifs, were packed off to him, and no doubt everybody was glad to be rid of us.

Now our Uncle Fred, though college bred like my father, had been a rolling stone. But finally he had taken up land on the Carcajou, in the belief that it would some day be valuable, and, of course, as everybody knows now, he was right. But at that time he was land poor. He had several thousand acres of farm and timber lands on which he was hard pressed to make even the small payments required by the government, but often he had not enough money to buy flour.

He worked a scant thirty acres with the help of one man, a slow-moving, lanky, one-eyed Scandinavian named Gus Swanson. This gave him subsistence. And for more he waited till the march of settlement west and north should strike him; and the slow years never shook his faith, which has since been amply justified.

Peggy was his favorite, and from the first she could twist him around her finger, just as the other Peggy now twists me, and to me he was more like an elder brother than an uncle.

And so, you see, as a boy my life was bounded by the Carcajou. I had only faint recollections of anything different. Its waters and bordering forests made up my world, with which I was very well content. In summer, when old enough, I helped in the garden and fields, and fished and gathered wild berries in season for Peggy to do down against the winter. And in winter I fished through the ice, and set my small line of snares and traps for rabbit and muskrat and mink and fox; and even for the great, silver-gray, soft-footed, tuft-eared lynx.

And yet it must not be supposed that Peggy and I grew up like young savages. We had our schoolbooks and

our regular hours for study, and our uncle taught us, having been no doubt at much pains to brush up his rudiments.

Close neighbors, in those early days, were few. Here and there a hopeful pioneer had settled and built himself a habitation, but in the main the land lay as in the beginning. We had our supplies from Neepaw, a struggling border outpost three days up the Carcajou by canoe, and twice that by a bad pack trail. And a hundred miles to the north was Carcajou House, a post of the fur company, to me in the Land of Romance.

Of Indians we saw plenty, Crees and Ojibways and Chippewyans mostly, who used the river by canoe in summer and by dog and snowshoe in winter. They were dirty, but friendly, and most of them were honest; at any rate, they never stole from us.

After a while, as settlement spread upward from the south, there were more people passing on the river. Winter and summer they drifted up and down—hard, gaunt men for the most part, with seldom a woman or child—prospectors, trappers, lumberjacks, surveyors—the light foam of humanity that ever tips and heralds the advancing wave of settlement in the new lands.

Many of them, seeing a house and clearing where nothing but brush and beaver meadow should have been—and hearing the brave challenge of a rooster and the busy cackle of hens—halted and broke their journey upon us. Always they were ravenous for eggs, which Peggy sold at wonderful prices. In the main they were quiet and civil, and in the presence of Peggy, when she was almost a woman, abashed and tongue-tied, a thing which is so of most men whose companionship is principally masculine. To that rule, however, one day there was a notable exception.

On this day my uncle and Gus were absent. About noon two men landed

from a canoe and came up to the house, and though they were hard-looking customers, I asked them to eat with us, following my uncle's custom. One of them, the younger of the two, was a big, black-haired fellow, not bad looking in a rakish sort of way, and as Peggy passed close beside him setting the table he threw his arm around her, drew her to him, and kissed her.

She struck him in the face, and as I jumped for my rifle, which stood in the corner, the other man caught me by the collar. I do not know what would have happened, except that if I had got my gun I would certainly have shot the fellow who had kissed Peg. But at the moment when I was kicking my man's shins, and, I am afraid, calling him names which I had no business to know, and while Peg was thrusting the other fellow back and striking at him with all her strength, there came an unexpected interruption.

"What's up here?" said a voice from the door.

At that Peg's assailant let her go very suddenly, and I twisted loose from the grip that held me. Two strangers stood in the doorway. One was a short, small, oldish man with a short, gray beard and very blue, childlike eyes. The other was a man of about thirty, I should think, with a lean, hard face and red hair. His eyes, too, were blue, but there was nothing childlike in their expression. They put me in mind of fresh-cut ice, and his red brows were drawn down over them and his chin thrust out.

"He kissed Peg!" I cried.

"So that's it," said the red-haired man. "Nootka Charlie and Siwash George! Squaw men! Pah!" He made a face of disgust. "That stuff may go with the klootchmen, Nootka, but not with white girls—not while I'm around. Don't make no move for a gun now. What'll we do with 'm, Ike?"

"Well," said he of the childlike eyes,

"you know I've allus said it'd come to a show-down one of these days."

"Let her come, then," said the black-haired man. "I dunno what you're talkin' about. Me and George never lifted that winter cache of yours, if that's what's stickin' in your crop."

"Never mind about the cache, Nootka," the red-haired man returned. "We can settle that—and some other things—later. But just now I'm goin' to give you a father of a lickin'—or you'll give me one. Come outside!"

They fought down by the landing, and in the end Nootka Charlie took a bad trimming. His partner helped him into their canoe, and paddled off, while the red-haired man grinned after them from the bank. He himself was badly battered, but very cheerful. He washed himself in the river, and afterward came up to the house and eat the meal Peggy had prepared. His name, he told us, was Dinny Pack, and his partner's was Ike Toft. Peg made a fuss over his bruises, and I think that stampeded him, for as soon as the meal was over he said they must be going, and hurried away from her thanks.

Shortly after this episode, which I lived over and over, having conceived a vast admiration for red-haired Dinny Pack, we had two new neighbors who built a cabin on the river some four miles away. These were partners, named Tom Ballou and Louis Beef. Of course the latter's name was really "Lebœuf," but nobody called him that. He was a tremendously thickset man, but not fat. His chest arched out like the belly of a wind-hardened sail, and it was covered with a veritable undergrowth of black hair, plainly visible, for he wore his shirt open save in the coldest weather. He had a big head covered with curling black hair like the front of a bull, and big, fierce, terrifying, black eyes. He must have been nearly fifty years old, but in spite of that and his fierce eyes he was as playful and

mischievous as a bear cub. Also he was very strong and active.

Tom Ballou was some years older than Louis Beef—a tall man with a great, hooky nose and a gray beard which reached nearly to his waist. He reminded me of the pictures of the old prophets in our big Bible; only he chewed tobacco, which rather spoiled the likeness.

The land they took up was very good, but they made scarcely any attempt to cultivate it, and were often absent for months at a time, prospecting or trapping, or guiding some outfit. We got to be very good friends. Sometimes I stayed at their shack overnight, listening to Louis Beef spin yarns in his queer patois—tales of the great wastes of the Arctic Sea, of the barrens where the musk ox ranged, of mountain ranges and unknown streams where the gold lay thick in the sands, and of the hard men who invaded these fastnesses.

One fall there came to Ballou and Louis an Eastern sportsman named Fothergill, who brought with him a vast outfit of weapons and complicated and burdensome camping devices. He was a tall, stout, red-faced man with prominent blue eyes and a loud voice. Of all things he desired to be considered—as he considered himself—a great hunter and an expert woodsman, and Tom and Louis indulged him in this belief.

"But dat Foddergeel," said Louis to me, "he's more troube in de woods dan leetle baby. For why? For because baby can't walk, an' so you jus' pack heem on your back an' you know where he be. But dat Foddergeel, he's turn round once an' he's lost!"

But Mr. Fothergill came for two seasons, and enjoyed himself hugely, never suspecting that he was considered a joke. He had plenty of money, and paid them liberally. And I thought him very generous, for, having a rifle of the same caliber as mine, he gave me his

entire stock of ammunition for it, a most precious gift to a boy accustomed to pay for his cartridges with skins of small value.

Such, then, were our early friends and surroundings, which you may perhaps think very commonplace and circumscribed; and you may think I have dwelt upon them unduly. But if I have done so, it is because if I am to tell this story at all clearly I must throw off the burden of the intervening years and see men and things as I saw them then; so that, perhaps, I may make others see them clearly, too.

CHAPTER II.

BALLOU'S TILLIKUM.

On a certain spring morning, when I was rising eighteen years of age and grown into a strong, dour, silent lad given to solitary rambles and daydreams which I kept entirely to myself, I rose before the light and went out to get a deer. For at that time we observed no close season, killing as we needed meat; but we killed only bucks at that season, and of them no more than sufficed.

I slid, silent-footed, through the dawn fogs which rolled along the river bottoms, and the night dews on the brush soaked me to the hide. That I did not mind at all, being used to it; but the sun rose and gathered up the mists, and I saw no deer. Indeed, it was past noon when I killed a small buck. And when I came to look around, I found myself about seven miles from home and but a couple from Ballou's. Therefore I decided that instead of packing part of the meat home I would take the whole carcass to Ballou's, and get him or Louis to paddle me back, in return for which I would, of course, give them a hind quarter if they could use it.

But when I arrived at their cabin, very hot from the weight of the buck and the roughness of the going, and being pestered by flies as well, brought

by the scent of the blood, to my disgust I found no one at home.

I dumped my load on the bank beside their landing and lay down and drank from the river, and then I peeled off and dived in. Afterward I sat on the bank, kicking my heels, uncertain whether to wait or to quarter up the buck and pack what I could overland. Finally I got out my knife, and, as I did so, a canoe came down the river, but its occupant was neither Louis nor Tom.

I did not know him. He was an old man, lean and sinewy, bald save for a fringe of hair back of his ears, with a weather-beaten face, a long neck wrinkled like a turkey's, and small gray eyes very cold and steady. His canoe held a scanty outfit, but I saw a gold pan, and judged him a prospector. He drew in to the landing and caught a stake of it, while he glanced from me to the buck.

"How's chances to git some meat?" he asked, in a high, nasal voice. "Give ye a dollar for a ham."

"All right," I said. "I'll skin it out for you."

He put his weather-beaten craft ashore and rose stiffly, a hand on the small of his back, and he swore as if it gave him pain. I observed that he wore a gun belt, and the butt of a heavy revolver stuck out from a worn holster, and this rather surprised me, for with us belt guns were not common, though, of course, most men traveled with rifles as a means of getting meat. He stretched himself on the grass and filled an ancient, charred pipe.

"I'd give a whole lot if I was as soople in the back as you be, young feller," he said, as he watched me.

"What's the matter with your back?" I asked.

"Pretty close to seventy years," he answered, with a wry grin. "Them, mostly, and a few kidneys and rheumatiz and things. Sho! What's the

use of tellin' a kid like you? Your folks live here?"

"No; you passed my uncle's place about five miles back."

"Pretty gal there?"

"My sister."

"Well, she's good people," he declared. "Staked me to a mess of early greens and some spuds. Wouldn't take nothin' for it. Don't run in the family, though."

"I'd have given you a chunk of meat," I retorted, "but you asked for a ham. A ham's worth a dollar. If you think it isn't, you don't need to take it."

He chuckled. "If it wasn't I wouldn't give it. Who lives here, anyway?"

I told him, and he straightened up with a smothered oath as his stiff back caught him.

"Tom Ballou!" he cried, staring. "Is he a big, skookum, brown-haired cuss with a hooked nose and a square chin?"

I told him that Ballou's hair was gray, and I didn't know what his chin looked like because he wore a beard. But he had a big nose and a trick of narrowing his eyes when he was in earnest about anything.

"It's him," he exclaimed, "sure as a gun sight! Course he'd be gray—I'd forgot that. And this here Louis Beef—is he gray, too?"

"Not a bit. His hair is black and curly."

"Head like a bull and chest like a bar'l?"

"That's Louis," I agreed.

"Them Frenchmen don't git gray 'count of so much grease in their wool," he said. "Nor bald. I never see a bald peajammer yet. Gosh! And to think of runnin' up on Tom and French Louis here! Where be they?"

But I could not tell him that.

"I'll wait," he announced, "if it takes a week." And he threw his outfit ashore, drew up his canoe, and turned it over. "Now," he said, "we'll go up to the shack and cook us some meat.

Tom an' Louis here! Well, blight me standing! Who'd have thought it?"

"You know them?" I said.

"Well, *some!* We're old tillikums. Why, we was spreadin' our blankets together before you was born." And when we went to the cabin, he looked around. "Nice shack they got. Nice and comfortable. Not so durn much, maybe, but more'n most of us old-timers can show. Most of us ain't got nothin'. What we got we blowed. How's Tom fixed for money? Pretty strong?"

I didn't know anything about that, and said so. And then he asked me how long they had been living there and where they came from before that, and my own name.

"My name's Hayes," he informed me—"Jack Hayes. S'posin' you rustle some kindlin's, Bob. You're several years younger'n I be."

When I came in with the kindlings, he was nosing about in Ballou's belongings. I suppose my face expressed surprise and disapproval. But Hayes explained that he was looking for a needle to take a sliver from under his nail. I found one for him, and he went to the door for better light and picked the sliver out while I was busy with the stove. While I cooked and while we ate he asked continual questions about Tom and Louis. And afterward he filled his pipe again and lay on the bunk while I washed up, which I did with great care, putting each thing back where I had found it, as was the custom.

Meanwhile, a stiff wind had sprung up, and the sky had clouded heavily. Looking out, I saw Ballou and Louis fighting their way up to the landing against wind and current. Evidently it was hard work, for both bent to it with snapping, driving strokes; but nevertheless the canoe would not keep way, checking the moment the paddles left the water. I called Hayes, and he peered out at the rhythmically swaying figures.

"Sure, that's them," he said. "I wonder if they'll know me. They ain't seen me for years. I won't tell 'em who I am for a while."

Ballou and Louis made the landing, took a look at Hayes' canoe, and came up to the house.

"Hello, Bob!" said Ballou, and nodded to Hayes.

"I've been sorter makin' myself to home," said the latter. "Been usin' your layout to cook me some muckamuck."

"Sure, that's right," said Ballou heartily, and yet with a puzzled note in his voice. He eyed Hayes for a moment, and the perplexity crept into his face. "Old-timer," he said, "do I know you?"

"Well, now you mention it, your face seems sort of familiar to me," Hayes returned. "We might have met some place." He chuckled to himself. "Now whereabouts do you s'pose it might be?"

Ballou's eyes narrowed as he studied the other intently, but he shook his head. Hayes picked up his hat and put it on.

"Does that help any?" he said.

"Jackstraws!" cried Ballou.

"Well, by gar!" exclaimed Louis Beef.

"Surest thing you know, boys!" chuckled old Hayes. "Jackstraws! Lordy, I ain't heard that name for so long I'd almost forgot it. Well, ain't you hyas yutl tumtum to see me again?"

If they were glad of heart they did not say so.

"Mo' gee!" cried Louis, "I'll t'ink for sure you'll be dead. How you'll stand off le diable so long, hey?"

Hayes grinned. "I'm a hard old bird, Louis."

Louis cooked more venison, and he and Tom ate, keeping up a running fire of conversation with Hayes, chiefly concerning men and happenings quite strange to me.

Meanwhile the wind had increased to a gale, and waves crisped the river.

It began to rain, in driven sheets which beat and slatted on the widow. To get home by canoe was out of the question, and to go by the bush was decidedly unpleasant.

"You'd better stay the night," said Ballou. "Your folks will know where you are."

And so I remained. Darkness came, and we gathered around the stove, for the night was raw and chill. The men's talk continued, winnowing the years since they had met.

"Got any whisky?" Hayes asked presently.

To my surprise—for I had never seen him drink—Ballou, after a moment's hesitation, produced a demijohn from a cupboard. Hayes sniffed the neck with approval.

"Rum!" he decided. "Good hooch. It lays over rye an' Scotch an' such soft stuff. 'S a ho, Tom! The old boys and the old days!"

They had a drink, and another. The smoke of their pipes filled the room. I grew sleepy and nodded by the fire.

"Better turn in," said Ballou. "Needn't wait for us. Take the new bunk in there."

He nodded toward the other room of the cabin, and, very glad to accept his suggestion, I kicked off my moccasins, rolled up in a blanket, and was asleep as quickly as a tired puppy. How long I slept I do not know, but when I woke, some time in the night, they were still talking, and their voices were loud. There was no door between us, and I could hear plainly.

I suppose the liquor Hayes had drunk made him quarrelsome. At any rate, at some remark of Louis', he seemed to lose his temper. And he cursed the Frenchman bitterly in a voice which heightened and shook in a sudden gust of rage. Out of the sudden silence that followed came Louis' voice, quite stripped of its jeering tone:

"Go easy, Jackstraws! I don't let no

man call me dose t'ing! You say some-ting more, now, an' for sure I wring your ol' neck!"

"I guess not," Hayes returned grimly. "You won't wring nobody's neck, you ——" And he added a phrase quite unprintable.

Came a bellow from Louis, the crash of an overturned chair, and the report of a pistol shot, shattering in that confined little space. I leaped from my bunk to the doorway.

Louis had Hayes by the throat with his right hand, while with his left he held Hayes' right, which held a smoking six-shooter, toward the roof. For a moment they seemed to stand motionless, statuesque, in the white drift of the powder smoke which eddied in the lamplight, for this was in the days before smokeless powder had much favor. I knew that Louis, with his tremendous strength, could break Hayes in pieces. But, as I looked, Ballou sprang in, twisted away the gun, and cursed them both for a couple of old fools. He saw me standing in the door, and scowled blackly, but only for a moment.

"Woke you up, did they, Bob? Well, there'll be no more of it. We're all going to bed."

His eyes challenged contradiction. To my surprise, the two combatants made no objection. They grinned sardonically at each other.

"Well, I guess I was too fast with my tongue and too slow with my gun," said Hayes. "In the old days you wouldn't have got your hands on me."

"Mebbe I'm leetle faster myself when I'm yo'nger," Louis returned. "I guess we have 'noder leetle drink, an' hit dose blanket."

Ballou followed me to my bunk, and, sitting down, began to unlace his moccasins.

"I'm sorry this happened when you were here, Bob," said he. "They got a jolt or so too much. However, they're

good friends now. Still I wouldn't want any one else to know about it."

"I won't say anything," I promised. "I don't talk much."

"I know you don't. That's one thing I like about you. You've got better judgment than a lot of men. I s'pose it was the shot woke you up?"

"Yes, I guess so," I answered, which was not quite true, but eminently discreet; and, anyway, I had no idea what they had been talking about. He nodded.

"Well, don't say nothing about it. If it got around, your uncle might not like your comin' here, and I wouldn't blame him, though nothin' like this is goin' to happen again. And then I was thinkin' that this fall you might come along with us on a hunt, and if he knew of this racket he might put his foot down on that."

Which made my silence absolutely sure, for a hunting trip in the hills had been my dream for years, and I would not imperil its realization. And as for telling Peggy, though she was as a rule my confidante, naturally there must be many things in a man's life of which he does not speak to his womenkind.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT THE RIVER BROUGHT.

That spring I was very busy. For, as it happened, Uncle Fred had sprained his ankle, and Gus Swanson's rheumatism laid him up for a week at a stretch, and so the bulk of the work fell on me.

There was the garden to be planted and the grain to be sown and a patch of winter clearing to be broken and fenced, and a score of odd jobs done. And so I was hard at it from dawn to dusk; and, though I was strong beyond my years, I would nod over my supper and fall into a dead sleep immediately afterward.

Though I worked cheerfully enough,

in my heart I loathed the labor. And while I worked my thoughts were not of the tasks in hand, but of the fall and camp fires in the hills and mysterious, lonely waterways and still, dark-fringed lakes where moose and caribou and deer drank in the dawn fogs and the cold dusks.

At last there came a time when the new fence stood, and the raw soil of the fresh clearing lay uppermost, and the wheat and oats sprouted green in the drills; and in our garden the peas shot out delicate tendrils, and the potatoes pushed upward sturdy stalks of dark green, and all flourished.

Then I had breathing space to employ as I saw fit, and my inclinations led me to the water front, where I drove fresh stakes and made a new log landing and painted our two canoes, and sometimes sat for half an hour idle, my eyes on the ospreys wheeling against the blue and the vivid, darting, chattering kingfishers, or watching the slow, brown current slip by.

Here Peggy joined me one quiet afternoon, and we sat talking of the future and wondering what it might hold for us.

Suddenly Peggy exclaimed:

"Look, Bob, there's a canoe!"

I looked up. A canoe had rounded the bend and was coming toward us. It held two men. The one in the stern was an Indian, a particularly worthless Cree whom we knew as Joe Fishbelly. The other man was white, and a stranger. He was not paddling, though a paddle rested athwart the canoe in front of him. He lay with his back against a roll of dunnage, and seemed satisfied to let the Indian do the work, which was, of course, quite proper, for no doubt he was paying for it, but looked lazy. As he saw us, he turned and spoke to the Cree, who swung the nose of the canoe in on our landing.

When they were close, I could see that the white man was young, and,

though big of frame, very pale and thin, which was the more noticeable because he was naturally of a dark complexion. His head was bare, and his black hair clipped close to the scalp. His cheek bones seemed ready to start through the skin, and his cheeks were flat against his teeth, without any kindly padding. The angles of his jaw stood out prominently. Indeed his face, owing to his exceeding leanness, seemed all knobs and angles, and there were sad-colored hollows beneath his eyes. The eyes themselves put me in mind of some one's whom I knew, being full of a strange, whimsical, quizzical, quenchless deviltry, and yet steady and cool. And suddenly it came to me that in expression they were like Dinny Pack's, though his were blue and these were almost black.

The canoe slid alongside the landing, and its passenger straightened up from his recumbent position and bowed to Peggy.

"Good afternoon!" he said, smiling at us. The words were common enough, and yet there was something in his voice and manner which made us aware that he was not a man of the woods and rivers. "Can you tell me," he asked, "how far it is to Tom Ballou's? Man afraid of a paddle back there"—and he nodded back over his shoulder at Fish-belly—"says it's about twenty miles, as nearly as I can understand him, and that we can't make it to-day."

"He's a liar," I said, for I held Fish-belly in contempt, and did not care whether I hurt his feelings or not. "It's not more than five."

"I suspected something like that," said he. "Thank you. You hear that, my oxidized friend! I believe in my soul Ananias was a Cree!"

"They're not all like him. But there's nobody at Ballou's. They're away somewhere—gone prospecting, I think—and they won't be back for two or three weeks, and perhaps longer."

"The deuce they are!" he ejaculated ruefully, and rubbed his clipped scalp in comical perplexity. "I beg your pardon. But that puts me in a nice fix. Here, I'll come ashore for a minute, if you don't mind." He did so rather slowly, as though his legs were weak beneath him, and bowed once more to Peggy. "Before I tell you my troubles," said he, "permit me to introduce myself. My name is Dunleath, first name James, usually shortened down to a nonapostolic 'Jim.' I am a friend of Mr. Wallace Dent Fothergill, whom I think you know. I presume I am addressing Miss Cory and her brother, am I not?"

"Yes, sir," I said. "I'm Bob Cory, and this is my sister Peggy."

He bowed again, smiling, and Peggy smiled and I laughed without knowing why; but just, I suppose, because of the big, radiant friendliness of his smile and his eyes.

"So now I'll unload my troubles," he went on. "I was going to spend a month or so with Ballou, just loafing and camping anywhere. The medical sharps thought that would set me up again. Of course you can see that I'm slightly pulled down. In fact I'm far from being a strong dog yet. Nothing infectious, I assure you. I'm no lunger—merely a pneumonia-typhoid convalescent. Fothergill told me about this country, and it looked good to me. But with Ballou away things are complicated. Is there any one else I can get? Man afraid of his paddle is barred for obvious reasons. I want a white man for guide, philosopher, and friend."

"I'm afraid there isn't any one," I replied.

"Tough luck!" he said gloomily. "I guess I'll have to go back. I wouldn't spend a month with this Indian on a bet." Suddenly he brightened. "I wonder now! Couldn't you arrange to come with me yourself? I'd make it worth your while, and I think we'd get along together all right."

"Oh, but Bob couldn't go!" Peggy exclaimed, putting in her oar unasked, as girls will.

"Why not?" I demanded. "The crop is all in. I'll ask uncle about it."

"Good—with due apologies to you, Miss Peggy," said Dunleath. "It's a case with me. If I can steal your brother I'll do it."

"Well, he's really worth stealing," she laughed. "But he's my chum, and I don't want to lose him. Here is uncle now. You'd better ask him."

Uncle Fred came limping down the trail, and I think he liked Mr. Dunleath as we did. However, he would give him no answer as to me, but invited him to stay with us for a few days; an invitation which Mr. Dunleath accepted frankly, but with the proviso that he should live in his own tent so as not to incommode us. And so I helped him pitch his tent, and he got rid of Fishbelly, though the rascal overcharged him. And while he was settling himself in his new quarters, Peggy and I went back to our house together.

CHAPTER IV.

DEAD MEN'S BONES.

From the first there was no doubt that I should be allowed to go with Mr. Dunleath. But he was not strong, and Uncle Fred thought he should wait for a week at least. In that time I worked hard, so that I might go with a clear conscience. And meanwhile Uncle Fred and Peggy saw far more of our guest than I did. Indeed he and Peggy became great friends, and spent hours together reading and talking by the river, though for my part I could not see what he found to talk about to a girl so often and so long, and I told Peggy so.

"It's funny, isn't it?" she admitted humbly, but with a mischievous twinkle in her eye. "But then he isn't well,

Bob, and you must make allowance for that."

"I s'pose that's it," I conceded, and I wondered what she found to laugh at.

Mr. Dunleath's convalescence was most confoundedly slow, I thought. I imagine Peggy had as much to do with retarding it as anything or anybody. For the first time I was forced to the realization that an otherwise sane man may prefer mooning about with a girl to the attractions of the woods and the river. At any rate, a fortnight elapsed before we made our start.

But one morning I routed him out of his blankets in the gray dawn, had his bed rolled and roped while he dressed, and loaded the canoe so that she trimmed to my liking; that is, well down in the stern and up in the bow, which is best under most circumstances. And I remember still the importance I felt when I picked up the steering paddle and shoved off, waving it jauntily at Peggy and Uncle Fred on the bank; and yet with a certain preoccupied dignity, for was I not now a man and a guide?

I have no intention of describing the next three weeks in detail because they contain little of interest. We went down the Carcajou by easy stages and into the Little Windy, with its chain of lakes—where I managed to lose myself completely for several days, though my companion did not know it—and from there into the Antler. Of course much of this was strange country to me, but on the whole I got along very well by aid of a good memory and a sharp eye, for at different times I had had very accurate descriptions of it.

At first our stages were short, for my companion tired easily and was in no hurry. But after the first week his strength came back very fast—not having Peggy to warn him against the perils of overexertion, I suppose—and he delighted to test it. He was ignorant of many things which I supposed every-

body knew, but he was quick to observe, and asked questions continually. Being a boy, I am afraid I was not above showing off a little. But if I could teach him things about a canoe and animals and fish and birds, and show him a lot of camping wrinkles, there were other things which he could teach me.

I had always considered myself a good swimmer until I saw him in the water, and then I knew myself for a mere flapper, and immediately set about acquiring the strokes he employed so smoothly. Then, too, I discovered that he was "scioned," as we called it, meaning that he could box and wrestle. I was eager to be taught, and I think he enjoyed teaching me; but of course, as we had no gloves, we were a little handicapped in the boxing lessons, though we made rough pillows out of a flour sack and moss. But when it came to wrestling, though I was a strong, active youngster, he handled me as if I had been a baby, and I knew that when he had his full strength he would be a formidable opponent for any man, even my old hero, Dinny Pack. And, thinking of that one day, I told him of how Dinny had trimmed Nootka Charlie to a peak down by our landing.

"Good for Dinny!" he approved. "I'd like to shake hands with him."

"I wonder if you could lick him?" I speculated.

"Do you?" he said, with a grin. "Well, my son, you'll never know because you couldn't hire me to try."

We portaged over from the Antler into the Cuisse Lakes, and one day on the Upper Cuisse we landed to boil the tea pail and eat a lunch of cold venison and bannock. As we rested afterward my eye caught the glint of some white objects on the sand dunes a hundred yards or so away, and I walked over to examine them. They were bones, sticking out of the sand, but they were not scattered; they were in regular order,

as if the animal to which they belonged lay below with its bony framework entire.

"What do you suppose it was?" I asked Jim Dunleath.

"By George," he said, "those are human ribs! It's a skeleton."

"Let's dig him up!" I suggested.

"I see plainly," he said, with a grin, "that you are destined for the medical profession. You have all the earmarks of a freshman med. All right, my resurrectionist friend, go to it."

And so I fetched a broken shovel that we carried to shift coals on the bake kettle, and dug away. In a few minutes I had the gruesome thing bare. It had disarticulated long ago, and fell to pieces when the supporting sands were removed. The skull was whole, and the teeth still in their sockets. Evidently it was the skeleton of a big, able-bodied man. For some moments we stood in silence, looking down on all that was left of one who had dropped out from the long trail to tread a longer one.

"Alas! Poor Yorick! I knew him well," said Jim Dunleath.

"You did?" I cried in astonishment. "How can you tell just from the bones? Yorick? Was he a Swede?"

"A Dane, I think. No, this isn't Yorick. I was just repeating a line from a play."

Which was just like Jim Dunleath. Most men would have told me it was one of the best-known quotations, and made me feel ashamed of my ignorance, for at that time I had read no Shakespeare; but not Dunleath.

"Oh, a play," I said. "Well, I wonder who this fellow was."

"Some Indian, I suppose," he returned. "Poor devil! No way of—Hello! What's this?"

He stooped and picked from the bottom of the excavation a small metal box, blackened and discolored. In shape it looked like a little curling stone,

and it was about four inches across and perhaps two inches deep.

"Why," I said, "that's an old tobacco box. The old-timers used 'em. Most of 'em were silver, and they were just about water-tight. You don't see so many of 'em now."

"You talk like an old-timer yourself." He scratched the box with his knife point. The scratch was bright. "This is silver," he decided, "otherwise it would have rusted to nothing, I should think. Must have lain there a long time."

He tried to open it, but the lid, which fitted very closely, refused to move. After repeated trials he discovered that instead of lifting it swung.

"I wonder what brand he smoked?" he said as it came back.

But there was no tobacco. The interior was filled with a paper, folded so that it fitted neatly. This he pried out carefully. Beneath it was an odd-looking scrap of dried, parchmentlike skin, about the size of a silver dollar, to which wisps of straight, black hair still clung.

"What in thunder is this?" he exclaimed.

"Perhaps the paper will tell," I suggested.

"Right, my son. I see I was mistaken. You will some day be a great detective." He unfolded the paper carefully. "Writing, sure enough!" he exclaimed. "Must have been a white man. Pencil writing, and pretty bad. Let's see if we can read it!"

He smoothed it out flat on the sand, and we lay down on our stomachs to decipher it. The paper had apparently been old and crumpled before being written on. In addition, the writing was clumsy, faint, and shaky. In parts it was quite illegible, but this is what we finally made out:

DEAR BROTHER: I am writing this on the divide north of Shagenaw, because I

am too sick to travel any more, and I guess this is my finish, for the pain in my side and bowels hits me worse every time. . . .

Here several lines were quite undecipherable, and throughout there were parts which were entirely illegible.

. . . to stand us off, and six men were killed. . . . Black Donald myself, not knowing who he was, and lucky for him, for if I had got him alive he would have died slow . . . went back on the bargain and wanted equal shares all round, and I had to pretend to agree, because they were too many to stand off alone. But it turned out . . . away fast enough, and we found there was a big bunch after us, and headed us into . . . traveling faster than we could the way we . . . cache everything, and scatter, and meet again when it was safe; and they agreed, because it was that, or get caught.

I took Joe Barbe with me, and left the rest, and we doubled back and watched the bunch go by. And then we raised the cache and made a new one. That is what I want to tell you about, because you know old Joe isn't all there at times since that time on the Slave, and, in case he forgets, here is how you will find it:

The cache is on the Burntwood Lakes, on the one the Indians call Ahtikamag, on a creek on the west side of it, near the upper end. It is in a rock cave. We blocked up the mouth with rocks, and loosened down a little slide to make a good job, and there was a bigger slide than we thought, so it is blocked good and plenty. You will have to dig your way in, and be careful not to shake down more. The cave is dry and cold, so everything will be O. K.

I was afraid to blaze a tree, or set up anything, because they will comb the country fine; but for landmarks there is a big hawk's nest right opposite the cache, on the far side of the creek, and downhill from the tree is a red rock with a flat top; and on that I marked a line. Lay your rifle along the line, and she will sight for the mouth of the cache.

Now, these dogs went back on their bargain, and I have fooled them plenty. Don't tell them you know, or give them a share. Let them hunt for the cache till they give up. Then get about four big canoes, and men you can trust, and go after it yourself. . . . saw better nor anything like them in my life, and no one else. You would hardly believe . . . worth a hun . . .

to see you again, but I guess I am out of luck. So good-by. Your loving brother,

ANGUS McNAB.

P. S.—I am putting in a lock of Black Donald's hair, because you hated him about like I did. I told him I would get him before I died, and I am glad I did. Use this box, and think of me once in a while. Use old Joe right, because he stayed with me.

When we had finished reading this remarkable message from the past—and it was not at all easy to read—Jim Dunleath looked at me with lifted brows.

"Well, my son," said he, "what have we struck? Who on earth is—or was—Angus McNab?"

"I never heard of him."

"He must have been a mighty hard-bitten sport," he said, and lifted the scrap of skin and black hair gingerly. "By thunder! Bob, this belonged to some gentleman called 'Black Donald,' and Angus McNab scalped him!"

I nodded, my eyes bulging at the grisly memento of bygone feud and hate.

"But what is the letter about, anyway?" he went on. "It's disjointed—written by a sick man—and he rambles. Now let's see: McNab and some tough bunch of which he seems to have been the leader fought for something valuable and won out. They quarreled over the spoils. About then they had to make a get-away from some party that outnumbered them. So they cached whatever it was, and McNab lifted it and cached it again. It was bulky, or heavy, because they couldn't travel with it, and, anyway, that part about the canoes settles it. Then, having fooled his companions, McNab took sick. As he describes it, I'll bet it was appendicitis—and he wrote this note to his brother and gave it to Joe Barbe. If Barbe is this skeleton—or the skeleton Barbe—his brother never saw it. And that is likely from the way we found the letter in the box. So the chances are that whatever they cached is there still."

"But what was it?" I asked. "Gold?"

"Not likely. He tells his brother to bring about four canoes. He couldn't have four canoe loads of gold. He says it is worth 'a hun——' That must mean a hundred. A hundred what?"

"A hundred dollars!" I suggested foolishly.

"Pshaw! Nobody would bother caching a hundred dollars. A hundred wouldn't weigh anything. He must mean a hundred thousand at the least."

"Gosh!" I breathed. "That's a whole bunch of money."

"Think so, Bob?" he said dryly. "Well, it is—when you haven't got it. Not so much when you have. I know a fellow who got rid of that much in a couple of years."

"He must have been a darn fool," I said candidly.

"So he was. And, as the Wise Man of the East remarked: 'A fool and his father's money are soon parted.' Well, where are these Burntwood Lakes the letter speaks of?"

"It's up North. Up the Brulé River, I think. I don't know just where. I guess Tom Ballou would know."

"Well," he said, "when we get back we'll ask him about it. And now let's cover up the bones of old Joe Barbe, and put up a cairn or a cross or something just as a mark of respect from humans to an ex-human. And then let's get out of here. I don't think I want to camp on this lake to-night."

CHAPTER V.

NITCHE M'NAB.

When, a week after, we sighted Ballou's cabin there was smoke coming from the chimney. It was noon, and we were bucking a stiff head wind as well as current, and I for one was both tired and hungry.

"Let's stop and eat with them," I suggested.

"Good enough," Dunleath agreed.

"I've got Fothergill's letter in my war bags somewhere. And we can ask Ballou about this McNab. But I won't tell him we've found anything. We're after information, not out to give it."

"Sure," I said. "I won't say a word."

As it turned out old Hayes was at the cabin, too, and as much at home as any of them. But he and Louis did not seem on very good terms. I suppose because they had seen too much of each other. Tom Ballou read Mr. Fothergill's letter of introduction and looked Jim Dunleath up and down.

"Sorry we was away," he said. "But you look as if Bob had treated you all right."

"He certainly did. I don't look like a sick man now, do I?"

"No more'n I do."

"Well," Dunleath laughed, eying the lean old frontiersman, "if I look as healthy as you do I guess I'm over the hump. The cold fact is that for the last week I've had all I could do to keep from eating Bob alive. I have an appetite like a wolf."

"We'll fix that. Louis is rustling grub right now."

"Did you have any luck?" I asked.

"Same old thing—colors and float. One bar might pay a Chinaman to work."

"I told you we took the wrong fork o' that crick," Hayes put in. "I told you when we was——"

"Ah, shut up your face on dat!"

Louis interrupted in a swift flare of exasperation, as if the other had been harping too long on one string. "I ain't been hear not'ing but about dat since t'ree week! If you know so moch why don't you pass yourself on dat odder fork when we come to her? For why don't you go prospec' by your lonely, hey?"

"I sure will next time," drawled old Hayes. "When I'm by my lone I can keep clean. But campin' with a Frenchman——"

"Ol'-timer," said Louis, "you want to go slow, or some day for sure I twis' your ol' neck so you spit on your heel!"

"Quit that and sweeten up your stomachs with some sody," Ballou put in.

"Pshaw! I was only foolin' with him," said old Hayes. "Louis can take a joke, can't you, Louis?"

"I tak' a joke the way you mak' her," Louis replied enigmatically, and began to prepare dinner, while Ballou and Dunleath talked.

"Did you ever hear of a man named McNab?" the latter asked a few minutes later.

Louis was frying pork, which was sputtering great blisters of fat, and as Dunleath spoke he jumped as if he had been stung, and swore and wrung his hand.

"Mo' gee!" he ejaculated. "Dat pork gr-ris she's burn comme le diable!"

Old Hayes was lighting his pipe, and he held the burning match several inches from the bowl, while from force of habit he sucked vigorously at the cold tobacco, his lean old cheeks working like a bellows. Then the flame nipped his fingers, and he, too, swore. But Ballou asked:

"McNab? There's lots of McNabs. What one do you mean?"

"This one would be an old-timer. I think his first name was Angus."

"How did you hear of him yourself?"

"I think somebody mentioned the name when I was coming in. Or else I saw it somewhere. Somehow I got the idea that he was a rather hard citizen."

"Lots of old-timers were hard citizens."

"And that's no lie," Hayes put in. "Did you ever hear of this Angus McNab, Tom?"

Ballou reflected, with narrowed eyes.

"No, I don't think so. I knew an Archie McNab in Cariboo, and there

was a Duncan McNab down in the Bitter Root once. That's all I remember. They wouldn't be the ones. I never heard of Angus McNab, did you, Louis?"

"Nevaire!" Louis replied emphatically above his pork.

Old Hayes, it appeared, did not know him either. It was a disappointment. I had made sure that one of them would have heard of McNab if he had been at all celebrated. We had dinner and went down to the canoe.

"You headin' for the outside now?" Ballou asked.

"Not immediately. I'm here for my health, and I may stay a month. If Bob's folks get tired of me I may ask you to let me camp around here somewhere."

"No chance of our getting tired," I said.

"If they do," said Ballou, "you know where to come. Come anyhow. We ain't got much, but you're welcome."

A couple of hours afterward we reached home, and Peggy hugged me as if I had been away a year. We set up Dunleath's tent again on the old spot, and I resumed my daily tasks, which after my taste of freedom were more distasteful than ever. And Peggy and Dunleath resumed their long talks and walks. Even I could see that they did not want company, and so I let them severely alone.

Uncle Fred could tell us nothing about Angus McNab, though the name seemed vaguely familiar, and I had given up hope of learning more when one night old McClintock, the factor at Carcajou House, traveling back from Neepaw by canoe, stopped with us overnight, as was his custom, for he and my uncle were great friends.

"Angus McNab!" he exclaimed when he heard the name. "Did ever I hear of him? Aye, that I did. Ye'll be meanin' 'Nitche' McNab, Mr. Dunleath."

"I don't know," said Jim Dunleath. "Who was Nitche McNab?"

"He was a deevil," McClintock replied. "A dour, thievin', bluidy-minded deevil!"

"A half-breed?"

"Weel, I'll na go that far. Maybe an' eighth. Ye'll understan' that man—and mair especially a Scotchman—wasna made to live alone, and in the early days white weemin were scarce. But on the male side he was Hielan' blood, and he was born in the Selkirk settlements of white parents. 'Nitche' was just a nickname, because he had Indian habits—bad ones at that. Also he was dark of skin—a swart deevil. But his brother was red as a fox."

"He had a brother, had he?"

"A younger brother, Alec, little better than himsel', but with less brain. Bluidy murderers, the pair o' them. Eirst an' last they cost the company a fortune."

"But what did they do?"

"Suffeicient!" McClintock replied grimly, lighting the clay pipe that was his inseparable companion. "Ye'll be wantin' the yarn? Weel, it was this way: In the beginning Nitche was in the service of the company, and he rose to a small post on the Churchill. There he robbed the company with both hands, trading on his own account and stealing the best skins, and his brother helped him at it. Ye'll understan' that in those days—that'll be upward of twenty years ago—the company made its own laws and enforced them. When Nitche's thievin's were discovered he tried to get away. Inside fifty miles he was caught and brought back to be tried. He was flogged before all the Indians and the men of the post, and turned loose to leave the country—if he could."

"Well, couldn't he?"

"The company," McClintock replied, "wasna stakin' him to gun, canoe, or food."

"Great Scott!" Dunleath exclaimed as

the full meaning of this dawned on him.

"It wasna intended as a humane measure, but as an example," said McClintock grimly. "In dealin' with Indians, ye'll understan', humanity is a mistake. The company was forced to punish its own men caught in wrong-doin' in the same way. But Nitche McNab was long-headed as weel as bluidy-minded. Against preceesely sic an eventuality he had cached a gun and food. A week afterward the man who laid the lash on him was found stabbed to death in his blankets. And two days after that Donald Murdoch, that had ordered the floggin', was shot from the dark as he sat in his chair."

"Donald Murdoch?"

"Aye, Black Donald Murdoch. A hard man. He was just wounded, and got over it. But na doubt Nitche thought he had killed him, for he seemed to vanish from the country. No one heard of him for a year or two. Then it was discovered that he was tradin' with the Indians across the divide on the Athabasca. Six men were sent to take him and his brother, and but one came back. The Indians say the brothers killed them, one at a time, from ambush. Then they disappeared, as they had before."

McClintock paused, refilled his clay, and relighted it deliberately.

"The rest," he continued, "is but little known, and at the time the company had its own reasons for silence. But at this date I'm violatin' no confidence when I tell ye. Nitche McNab, ye'll understand, knew the country an' the posts an' the customs of the company. And so he got together a small band of desperate characters like himself—maybe a dozen or more in all—to raid certain of the company's posts when the winter's catch of furs was in and before the brigades came to take them out."

"By George!" Jim Dunleath ex-

claimed, and suddenly a great light broke on me. Furs! That was what it was. That was what the cache of Nitche McNab held.

"Ye may weel say that," McClintock nodded. "Siccan an enterprise was never undertaken before or since, to my knowledge. There are reasons why I shouldna tell ye the names of the posts. But they came in at the heel of the winter, overland, and held up one post after another, looted them of their best furs, and went on to the next. As luck would have it that winter's catch of fur was far above the ordinar' in quantity and quality. It was a good year—the best I remember. They took a fortune in skins from those posts, as prices went then. At present-day values the total would be something ye'd scarce credit."

"Now, at the last post they raided was that same factor, Black Donald Murdoch, that Nitche had shot on the Churchill. Nitche may have known that or he may not. They took the post, but they had to fight hard. In the fighting men were killed on either side, and among them was Murdoch. Nitche McNab scalped him."

"He must have been a good hater," Dunleath commented.

"Aye, I grant him that—an' it's na so bad a point," McClintock admitted grudgingly. "Weel, then, having taken this last post, they tried to get away with their plunder. But the men of the looted posts had combined and were after them. And that year, because of an early spring, the brigades came in earlier than usual. So that though the robbers had smashed all the canoes they could find except what they took for themselves, they found a force on their trail which was too large for them to fight. They were headed, and had to turn north, up the Reindeer and the Brulé, and heavily loaded with plunder as they were, they could not travel fast enough to escape."

"Do you mean they were captured?" Dunleath asked anxiously.

"I didna say that, young man. What I have told ye so far is fact. The rest is supposition and rumor. It is said that Nitche and his men quarreled. When they found themselves hard pressed, Nitche was for makin' one cache of the plunder, and the others wished to divide it, break up the party, and each take his chance. In the end Nitche had his way. They cached the furs, and broke up, some overland and some by canoe, so that it was like lookin' for needles in a haystack. Of the lot only two men were caught, and the tale of these is what I have told you."

"But did they tell where the cache was?"

"Oh, aye, they told where it *was*. I'll no' say they volunteered the information, but they yielded to persuasion. But the cache had been lifted. There was not much as a rat skin left. And from that day to this the company has never seen or heard of its stolen furs."

"What is the theory?" Dunleath asked.

"Naturally that some of the thieves doubled back and lifted it. Still, the company could never find that these skins had been offered for sale. Very strange that. But the result is the same so far as the company is concerned."

"And what became of Nitche McNab?"

"Nobody knows. Pairsonally I have little doubt that it was Nitche lifted the cache. He was like a fox for cunning, and he would know that if any of his men were captured the secret would not be safe. And, as I say, they had quarreled. He would not trust them. Takin' one thing with another, it seems likely that having lifted the cache he perished by some mischance, and the secret of the furs with him."

"So that the furs are still where he cached them?"

"Aye, pro-bably."

"Would they be worth anything now?"

"That'll depen'. Furs will keep indefinitely if dry and free from insects. It's like he would cache them well."

"And you say they were very valuable?"

"Accordin' to the men who bought them and the company's books. It was a rare year. The pack was like that of a hundred years gone, when the country was new. There were many black fox, and marten big and black as tomcats, and even sea otter traded in somehow from the far-coast Indians. Oh, aye, it was a verra serious loss to the company." And old McClintock shook his head sadly.

That night I dreamed of furs. In the morning, when McClintock had gone, sitting in state in his big canoe, with its six paddles, and the smoke from his clay pipe floating out astern like a steamer's, Jim Dunleath turned to Uncle Fred.

"I'm going after those furs," he said, "and I want Bob. Half of what we find belongs to him, of course. Can you spare him for the rest of the summer?"

"I guess so," my uncle replied. "But it's a long way to those lakes, and he can't guide you. You'd never get there yourselves. And if you did, and found the furs, you couldn't bring out more than a fraction of them."

"I know that," Dunleath replied. "I'm going to get a proper outfit of men and canoes. The deuce of it is"—he hesitated for a moment—"well, the cold fact is, I haven't got the money."

"Neither have I," said my uncle bluntly, "if that is what you mean."

"No, I didn't mean that. I can get the money, but it will take a little time. I'll have to go to Neepaw and wire, and I want to start to-morrow."

"Well," said my uncle, with a twinkle in his eye, "if you can coax Bob away from his work on the ranch he may go with you."

CHAPTER VI.

PREPARATIONS.

Neepaw is now a busy, thriving town, almost a city, with waterworks, electric lights, banks, a theater, and all the rest of it. But at that time it was merely a trading point, an outpost of civilization whence a single sagging wire trailed away southward, a tenuous filament, often broken, connecting it with the outer world of men and events.

"You see, Bob," Dunleath explained, "I'll have to get money from Fothergill for this trip. If I could see him there would be no trouble. As it is I'll have to put it up to him that it's a gamble. But that ought to appeal to him. It always did."

"Is he a gambler?" I asked in surprise.

"No, he's in the wholesale dry-goods business—nominally. That is, his father made the business and about half a million, and left both to Fothergill. Fothergill lets other people run it, and has a good time. Not that he isn't a good business man. He is. But what I meant was that he's game to take a long chance. And this is a mighty long one."

"But I thought," I said hesitatingly, "that you had plenty of money. I guess you paid me too much. I wish you'd take some of it back."

He laughed gently, and shook his head. "Not a nickel, old boy, though it's good of you. Just between ourselves I had some money once and I lost it. The next lot I get I'm going to hang on to. I have some stocks, but they are down to rock bottom now, and if I let go I'd lose. So I'll get it from Fothergill."

But for two days he got no reply

to his telegram, and we waited impatiently. When at last the answer came he puckered his mouth and whistled.

"Can't you get it?" I asked anxiously.

"That part is all right. Fothergill wants to come with us, though of course I didn't tell him what we were going for. He knows there's something up, and he wants to be in the fun. Well, as he's putting up the money, he's entitled to a run for it. I always understood that he had a good deal of experience in roughing it."

Remembering what Louis Beef had said as to Mr. Fothergill's ability to lose himself, I repeated his words. Dunleath laughed.

"As a matter of fact, I always suspected that he wasn't the original Leatherstocking. But he's a good fellow, Bob, one of the best in the world, and it's white of him to help us out. We'll have to wait for him."

So we waited, and I found the time pass very slowly. At last he arrived, not on the stage, but in a wagon which he had hired; and it was piled with a quantity of rolls and bundles of dunnage which quite appalled me.

Wallace Dent Fothergill was a big man, beefy, red-faced, with a loud voice and a bluff, offhand manner. He was wearing a four-punch hat, a fringed buckskin shirt and moccasins, and he had a belt full of cartridges around his extensive middle. I suppose he thought these things made him look like an old-timer; whereas they merely advertised him as a pilgrim. And the driver grinned at us as his passenger climbed down.

"Klahowya, Jim!" he shouted to Dunleath. But he pronounced it 'klahow-ya,' which is quite wrong, for the Chinook greeting is accented sharply on the second syllable, which is "ho." "Klahowya, Jim! Hope you're feeling hiyu skookum again. And Bob Cory, too. Lord, Bob, you've grown! I didn't kumtux you at first. And how

is the uncle and the pretty sister and everybody at your illahee?"

He had a fashion of interlarding his conversation with Chinook words which he did not always use correctly apart from the pronunciation, though in this case he was all right. Just in fun I asked him in Chinook what made him so large around the waist. He didn't understand a word of it. But all the same he made a bluff in English, thanking me for inquiring. And the driver snickered again, and Jim Dunleath gave me a reproving glance, though of course he did not understand what I had said, either.

"And now, Jim," said Mr. Fothergill after dinner, when he had lit a huge cigar, "I'm ready to hear all about it."

So Dunleath showed him the old letter of Nitche McNab, and told him what we had heard from McClintock.

"And that," he concluded, "is what we have to go on. Not being blessed with the ready cash to finance an expedition to look for this old cache I wired you. Now you know as much about it as I do. If you don't feel like staying with the game, say so. I admit it's a long shot."

"Well, I'm lucky with these long ones," said Mr. Fothergill. "Of course I'll stay with it. About twenty years ago this was. That ought to pretty nearly extinguish any title the company had to the furs. Anyway, if we find 'em we can make practically our own salvage terms."

"So I think. Bob and I have equal shares in this. Now you come in, and we'll split the profits—if there are any—three ways. Will that be satisfactory to you?"

"Say," said Mr. Fothergill, "do you think my name is Shylock? I've got all the money I want. This is fun for me. If we get the furs you can repay what I spend—and that's all."

But Jim Dunleath would not have

it that way, telling him rather stiffly that we were neither of us objects of charity. Mr. Fothergill called him a crank. They got quite hot about it. But finally Mr. Fothergill agreed to take a quarter interest.

"Meet me now," he said. "Don't be so blame proud."

And so we all shook hands on it, and, seeing how really generous and good-hearted he was, I resolved not to make fun of him any more, no matter what he did or said.

"Ballou will guide us, of course," he announced, "and Louis will cook. I'm surprised that you haven't engaged them already. However, you just leave it to Tom and me. We'll pick out good men. We'll need eight or ten. The expense is a detail. We'll do this thing right. Tom will know where to get good men. When I've told him where we're going and what we're after——"

"Hold on, Wally!" said Dunleath. "That's just what you must not do."

"Why not?" Mr. Fothergill demanded.

"Because, Wally, though competition may be the life of trade, it's poor from the standpoint of monopolists. We are monopolists—so far as information of this cache is concerned. I don't want anybody told where we are going, or why."

"But old Tom is as honest as the sun and as close as a clam."

"That's the way he struck me. But all the same I want this kept among us three until we get on the ground."

"But, hang it!" Mr. Fothergill exclaimed impatiently. "We've got to give some reason for going into that country with such an outfit. Why not be frank with Ballou? It's far the best policy."

"Now, look here," said Dunleath emphatically, "I'm not going to take a single chance on this, Wally, and that goes. I want to have those furs in

possession before the company gets wind of them. Then we can make our own terms. If somebody leaked we might have a rival outfit on the ground, and there might be all kinds of trouble."

"Something in that, perhaps," Mr. Fothergill admitted. "All right. I'll think up some plausible yarn. And we'll put ourselves in Tom's hands as to men. You can bet that any man he recommends will be good. And, without egotism, I think I know these backwoodsmen pretty well. Any man that gets past Tom and me will be all right. Don't you worry. I'll look after our organization myself."

That, as I learned later, was a characteristic of Mr. Fothergill. He was prone, unasked, to take things into his own hands, and I think it was knowledge of this trait which had made Dunleath doubtful when he had received the telegram.

It was evident that we should never get Mr. Fothergill and his dunnage into a small canoe. And then he bought a quantity of supplies and tools. I solved the problem by getting a big canoe and two Indians to paddle it. They were Ojibways, named Billy Finger and Jake Horsefly, both good men. And so Mr. Fothergill rode in comfort and was able to shift about and stretch his limbs; and when I saw how he did it I was very glad he was not in the little canoe with me. He hitched and lurched in a way that would have upset a sixteen-foot canoe a dozen times in a mile, and I could imagine the trouble he had been to Ballou and Louis.

Dunleath and I stopped at the ranch when we reached it, while Fothergill and the Indians went through to Ballou's.

I had bought a few simple presents for Peggy and Uncle Fred, but Jim Dunleath had things for them which quite put mine in the shade—books and music and almost a half bushel of candy for Peg; and for my uncle a case of

pipes and half a dozen boxes of cigars. And for me, quite without my knowledge, he had a long forty-one-caliber single-action six-shooter, blued, plain, and businesslike, a weapon which I had often longed for.

Most of these things were not to be had in Neepaw, and he must have telegraphed for them. Altogether they must have cost him a pretty penny, and I don't think my uncle quite approved.

"I don't want to look a gift horse in the mouth," he said, "but for a young man that's broke you are going pretty strong."

"I'm not broke," Jim Dunleath laughed. "I have a fortune in furs."

"And a castle in Spain," said my uncle dryly.

"Yes—more than one," he replied, laughing, and as he said it his eyes sought Peggy's, and I thought she blushed a little, though I could not see what his Spanish property had to do with her. You see, I had never heard the phrase before, and took it literally, though I soon found out it was a mere figure of speech.

In the morning, Mr. Fothergill came up the river with the Indians, and he was jubilant.

"I've made all arrangements," he said. "I knew we could depend on old Tom. He will go, and Louis, and his old tillikum, Hayes. A fine old fellow, Hayes; a genuine frontiersman, one of a vanishing type."

"Personally," said Dunleath, "I don't care how soon his type vanishes. He seems to me to be a pretty hard old bird."

"Of course he's hard. A rough diamond, like all those fellows. They had to be hard to survive. It ill becomes us, who ride in comfort on the trails they blazed, to sneer at them."

"Well," said Dunleath, "I don't know what trails Hayes has blazed, but I'll bet a fair proportion of them lead

to saloons. However, that's so of too many of us. Hayes goes. How about other men?"

"Tom's off to Scott's Portage to get them. He thinks he can find three or four there."

"What's the matter with these Indians? They are good men."

"I mentioned that to Tom, but he pointed out that it would be better to have all white men. He isn't prejudiced against Indians himself, but some are—Hayes for one. Others might be."

"Any one who can stand Hayes ought to be able to stand an Indian," said Dunleath. "Is Hayes running this show, or are we?"

"You've taken an unreasonable dislike to that old pioneer," said Mr. Fothergill. "Why, you've only seen him once or twice. He may have his peculiarities, but he's a friend of Tom's, and that's good enough for me. You'll like him when you know him better."

"Maybe. But I hate to discard two perfectly good Indians on his say-so. Well, all right, if you want it that way. Did Ballou ask any questions?"

"Naturally he wanted to know why we required such a big outfit. He thought the three of them and the three of us would be plenty for anything."

"Well?"

"Well, I just told him to get four more men, and that we would take four big canoes and one small one; and when he asked what we were going to do with the big canoes I said we expected to bring them back loaded with the natural products of the country."

Jim Dunleath laughed. "Was he satisfied with that?"

"Not altogether. He asked a few questions. I had to say something, so I told him we had information of some valuable deposits. No harm in that, was there?"

"No, I guess not. Only my limited experience has been that a good,

straightforward lie is the most honest form of evasion."

"Well, hang it, I wouldn't tell old Tom a flat-footed lie that I'd have to acknowledge later. It would be tantamount to a suspicion of his honesty. I tell you, these old-timers are as frank and simple and straightforward as the sun. I know them, and you don't."

Mr. Fothergill was plainly put out, and Dunleath let the matter drop. There was nothing to do but wait for Ballou's return. Fothergill took up his quarters with Louis and Hayes. I worked hard about the ranch. And Peggy and Jim Dunleath spent more and more time together.

Ballou was away a week. He returned with three big canoes, which, with the one we had brought from Neepaw, made up our complement, and four recruits, strangers to me. All were young men, and though they were evidently strong and experienced canoe-men I didn't care much for their looks.

Hector McGregor seemed to be the leader. He stood six feet in his moccasins, and he was beautifully built. He was red of hair, high of cheek bone as an Indian, with a straight, wide mouth and a pair of insolent blue eyes. His tongue carried the Highland bur of his ancestors, and it was easy to see that he had a hair-trigger temper. Jordan and Conover were of a more ordinary type, such as may be seen by the score anywhere in the North among the lumberjacks and rivermen. The fourth man was a breed, Peter Opegagun, and his appearance was decidedly against him. He was well built enough, but his mouth bent down at the corners like the curve of a hawk's bill; his nose had been broken and sat sidewise in his wide, flat face; his upper lip was thinly thatched with coarse hair; his ears projected outward, and his head narrowed in above them, and he had the smallest, lowest forehead I have ever seen in a man. Nevertheless, he

seemed to be on good terms with the others.

The evening before our departure was close and muggy. I was busy overhauling my outfit, and when I was through I went outside to look for Peg. But she was not around anywhere, and neither was Jim Dunleath. By that time I knew better than to go looking for them, for I had done that once or twice before, and when I had found them it was clear that I was about as popular as a crow with two kingbirds. And so I sat down on the grass in the shadow of a bushy, soft maple, where I presently fell asleep. I came out of my slumber with the sound of voices near by, and there were the two of them close to me in the starlight. But they were so much occupied with each other that they did not see me at all.

"I'll bid your uncle good-by in the morning," Jim Dunleath was saying, "but I'd rather say good-by to you now—alone."

"Good-by," said Peggy softly, "and good luck! I shall think of you—and Bob—very often."

"Thank goodness it's only for a few weeks. Do you know that I shall find that time very long?"

"Really?" said Peggy in a very small voice.

"Really and truly. Each night, at dusk, I shall wish that I were here with you, beside this old, brown river. I believe I shall pretend that I am."

"It would be fun, wouldn't it? Mental telepathy. Is that it?"

"Well, I hope it works. If we find those furs——" He broke off.

"You were going to say——" Peggy reminded him after a pause.

"I was going to say something which I had better keep till then," he replied. And so he said good night and good-by, standing very close to her, looking down into her face and holding her hands, and went away. And she watched him vanish in the gloom, her slight figure

drooping a little as a flower that craves the rain.

"Peg!" I said.

She started with a little cry.

"Bob! Is that you? What are you doing there?"

"Nothing. I was asleep. You woke me up." I shivered a little, for the night chill had crept up from the river.

"You had no business to be asleep there. You frightened me."

"I didn't mean to. What do you suppose he was going to say?"

"You were listening!" she cried.

"I wasn't!" I denied indignantly. "I just couldn't help hearing."

"Yes, you could! You could have spoken. It was sneaky of you!"

"Aw, go on!" I retorted. "If you and Jim Dunleath want to spoon without being heard why don't you go somewhere else?"

"We don't!" she exclaimed angrily. "You—you're mean, Bob. You lie there like a—a snake and frighten me and listen to what's none of your business and ask impertinent questions. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"Rats!" I told her, with brotherly frankness. "You make me tired. I don't care a darn what you were talking about. Mush! That's what it was. Going to pretend you are together by the river every night. Kid's tricks! You're the one that ought to be ashamed. I'll tell him so, too."

"If you do," she flamed, "I'll never speak to you again—never! Remember, Bob!"

"Oh, well, I won't then," I promised. "No need to get hot about it. Why didn't he propose to you, Peg? Any one can see you're stuck on him."

And the next instant my ear rang to the impact of her clenched fist against it, and I staggered, for she was strong for a girl and I was taken utterly by surprise. I caught her wrists, and she wrenched against my grip.

Even in the starlight I could see that her eyes were blazing with anger, and her face white.

"You brute! You big boy brute!" she panted. "Let me go! Oh, how dare you? How could you?" And suddenly she stopped struggling and began to cry softly. Whereat, panic-stricken, I put my arm around her and walked her out of earshot of the house.

"There now, old girl, don't be a darn fool," I said in what I considered a highly comforting manner. "What's the row? What did you punch me for? I didn't mean anything."

"Oh, Bob!" she sobbed. "It was brutal of you. And yet it must be my own fault. Oh, do you suppose I have let him see—and, of course, you don't know how a thing like that cuts a girl, when he—I mean she—oh, I can't talk about it even to you!"

Which was all Greek to me. But finally she stopped crying and dried her eyes, and gave me a hug and a swift kiss, and the trouble was all over like a spring shower, and we were good friends again. And I was glad of that because I was going away and I was really very fond of Peggy, though, like most women, she was unreasonable at times and I seemed to have bunted into one of them. For I declare I could not think, for the life of me, what I had said to make such a fuss about.

CHAPTER VII.

VOYAGEURS.

If I described our journey in detail you would find it wearisome. So far as events went, each day was much like another. There was rain and shine, wind and calm, rapids and portages, and steady, monotonous work. Each day began by the wink of Louis' cooking fire, and the smell of wood smoke in the dawn, followed by his whoop for breakfast. Next the quick rolling of

blankets and stowing of dunnage, water on the fire, and the dip and swish of paddles. A brief halt at noon to eat and relax cramped limbs and muscles. Dip and swish and tunk of paddle again. And once more the landing, the quick "lick-lock" of axes, the fire in the growing dusk, the hour around it while the men smoked and talked; and last the welcome blankets and the bright stars of the northern night above the sleeping camp.

At last we turned up the Brulé, where the old raiders, finding their way blocked by the company's men, had broken away northward. And what a beautiful thing is a boy's imagination! I could see them in fancy, those men of twenty years before, their canoes deep with plunder, paddles driving steadily in an endeavor to shake off the pursuit which had fastened on them. No doubt every boy is a bandit at heart. At any rate, my sympathies were with Nitche McNab and his men. And as I swung my paddle hour after hour I pretended that I was Nitche himself. But of course I kept that to myself, for I would have been very much ashamed to have been even suspected of such childishness.

It has always interested me to observe how strangers thrown together immediately sort themselves into groups. This process went on among us. Old Hayes consorted principally with the younger men. He was continually yarning to them of rich strikes, of will-o'-the-wispy rumors of gold, of fabled creeks, and lodes in which he himself believed devoutly and of which, therefore, he told impressively. Gold seeking, according to him, was the only work fit for young men of spirit. And his words fired their imaginations.

"What do you know about this here trip, anyway, old-timer?" I heard Conover ask him once. "Is it gold the Ogemows are after?"

"Why don't you ask 'em?" Hayes returned.

"I asked Tom," Conover returned, "but I don't get no satisfaction from him."

"Tom's wise," said Hayes.

"Then it is gold," Conover concluded.

"I didn't say so," Hayes returned, but his tone was an admission.

"No, you didn't. But, I can tell you, if it's gold I'm goin' to stake me a claim almighty close to discovery."

"You're workin' for wages," Hayes pointed out, and Conover swore.

"I can fix that any time I see pay dirt," he said, and I heard no more.

But this conversation amused me, for it seemed to show that Hayes had been quite misled by Fothergill's diplomatic words to Ballou. After hearing it I took a gold pan and washed sand and gravel near our camps, and in a day or two all the men but Ballou were at it themselves, which I considered a huge joke.

It was old Hayes who endeavored to pump me. He came up behind me one evening when I was fishing.

"Ain't seen you panning any dirt for a couple of days," he said casually.

"I didn't find anything," I replied. And I added mischievously: "I guess there isn't anything right around here."

He digested that.

"Can't tell about gold. Half the rich strikes was made by accident. I'll bet I've walked over millions in my time, not knowin' it was there."

"Did you ever find any?"

"Sure. I was never first on one of the big creeks, but I've made stakes now and again."

"What did you do with them?" I asked curiously.

He grinned wickedly.

"Ask me somethin' easy, Bob. I blowed 'em. When I had the dust I surely played 'em high and hard." He spoke with a certain pride. "Us old-timers is built that way. I'm about due

for another stake now. I feel it in my bones. Shouldn't wonder if there was good stuff somewhere up in this country."

His eyes searched my face; but I went on with my fishing.

"Now here!" he said. "I'm an old-timer, and no man can give me any pointers on placer workin'. You're a kid, but I've took a fancy to you. If I find anything I'm a-goin' to let you in on it as my partner. You won't be the first young feller that's got rich workin' with the old man. Same way, if you strike anything you'll let me know. You're about as apt to as me, because that's the way it goes. We'll stake as partners and work together."

"All right," I replied, "if we find gold."

I suppose he thought he had laid a foundation, for he asked me a number of leading questions, but got nothing out of me. And presently he left me.

Ordinarily, Jim Dunleath and I had the small canoe together, but one day he went with Fothergill, and Ballou came in with me. Quite casually he proceeded to question me about my three weeks' trip with Dunleath. Where had we been exactly? What had we seen? Had we met any people? And so on.

I answered his questions, but of course said nothing of finding the bones of Joe Barbe. And he switched to our visit to Neepaw, asking if I had had a good time there. I told him no, that I was anxious to get away.

"To start on this here trip, you mean?"

"Yes," I admitted.

"Yes, of course you would be. What kept you there so long?"

"We were waiting for Mr. Fothergill."

"He wasn't on time?"

"Oh, I guess he came as fast as he could," I admitted incautiously.

"When Dunleath sent him word to come, I s'pose?"

"Yes," I replied, not knowing what else to say.

"He dropped all holts and come right along," he deduced. "Well, I s'pose he thought it was worth while?"

But I did not respond to that lead, and he asked me no more questions. Afterward I repeated the conversation to Dunleath.

"He's a long-headed old fox," he said, "and I don't blame him for being curious. I would be myself if I were in his place. He would know that I sent for Fothergill. And I rather think he suspects that our little camping trip has something to do with this one. If there wasn't the possibility of meeting some of the company's men they might all be told, for all I'd care. But with that possibility we'd better keep quiet. Naturally they'd know that the company would be interested in any fur cache, even though they've never heard of Nitche McNab. You know, that seems odd to me. I should think old-timers like them would have heard of him."

"Oh, I don't know. They weren't in this part of the country at the time, and McClintock said the company kept the whole thing quiet."

"That's so, of course. Well, anyway, don't let them pump you. We'll tell them when we get to those lakes, and not before."

Now up to that time we had all gotten along harmoniously, but that very night I ran foul of McGregor's hasty temper—or perhaps he ran foul of mine—and Dunleath became involved in it. I was carrying a pail of water for Louis, and with it in my hand I tried to step across McGregor's legs as he lay between me and the cooking fire. Somehow I stumbled and upset half the contents of the bucket on him. He was up in a minute, and cuffed me, open-handed, on the ear. Instantly my own

temper, never very well controlled, flared up. I caught up a knot of pitch-wood and threw it. It struck him fair on the mouth, splitting his lip, and the next moment he had me by the throat, shook me till my brain rattled, and then struck me deliberately in the face. I struck back, but I had about as much chance as a rat in a terrier's jaws.

"Hey, stop dat, McGregor!" cried Louis Beef. "For why you try for bus' up leetle kid, hey?"

"Mind your own business, you!" snarled McGregor, and drew back his hand again.

But it never struck me, for Jim Dunleath, clearing the intervening space in two great bounds, caught McGregor's wrist, and, as the latter half turned, lifted a terrific right-hand punch at his jaw. It came straight up from the heel, with a stiffening leg and a lifting shoulder, and it cracked home like the blow of a mallet. I felt a beautiful, vicarious satisfaction in it. McGregor simply dropped in his tracks, greatly, I think, to the surprise of every one except Dunleath, and a good deal to the disappointment of the men.

But McGregor, though momentarily knocked out, was up again in a few seconds.

"You hit me when I wasn't looking," he told Dunleath.

"You ought to have been looking," Dunleath replied, "seeing that you were punching a kid. However, if you want it that way I can hit you when you are looking."

"That will suit me," said McGregor. "Are you ready now?"

"Any time," Jim Dunleath replied. "Only, I warn you, McGregor, that if you want to follow this up you're in for a lively time."

The men had dropped whatever they were doing. Louis stood, with a spoon in his hand, his mouth half open, and a look of childish delight upon his features. Ballou's face was expression-

less. Old Hayes was leaning forward hungrily, his lips twitching like the nose of an old hound which strikes a familiar scent. But they were cheated of their amusement, for Mr. Fothergill came hurrying up and shoved in between them. Of course he had no authority over Dunleath, but as it was McGregor who was looking for more trouble he succeeded in stopping the impending fight. Later I overheard a conversation between him and Jim Dunleath.

"But I couldn't let him beat up the kid," the latter was saying.

"Well, you could have stopped that without a rough-house. You're too fond of scrapping, Jim. Bob had no business to throw that knot at him."

"If he hadn't thrown it he wouldn't have been worth scrapping for. We were kids ourselves once. Young wild cat! He'd have used a gun on McGregor if I hadn't butted in."

Mr. Fothergill grunted. "Here," said he, "everything was going harmoniously, and you must punch one of our best men."

"Well, he can't quit," Dunleath pointed out, "unless he wants to take a long walk."

"That's not it. You act on impulse, and you destroy the spirit of good feeling and comradeship that should exist all around."

"Which was so strongly in evidence when McGregor was punching the kid," Dunleath retorted. "And now, Wally, if you have any more calling down to do try it on somebody else—McGregor, for instance. I've had all I want of it."

"Oh, all right," said Mr. Fothergill rather stiffly. "You needn't go up in the air about it. I'm merely trying to tell you that McGregor will carry a grudge, if I know anything about him."

"If you hadn't horned in," said Dunleath, "he'd have worked out his grudge by this time. If he had licked me he would have been satisfied, and if I had

trimmed him he'd have known that it was no lucky punch that put him down."

"It wouldn't have done—wouldn't have done at all," said Mr. Fothergill. "I know you can scrap, but I'll bet McGregor can, too. If he had licked you he'd never have let it go at that, and neither would the other young fellows. You'd have seen it in their eyes and heard it in their voices every day of your life. Then you'd have tried him or one of them again. That's human nature—yours, anyway. It was far better not to fight at all."

But one result was to start a controversy as to the respective prowess of Dunleath and McGregor, in which the latter had the most supporters, Louis being almost alone in picking the former.

"Aw, what's the use of talkin'?" said old Hayes. "Mac can whip this here Dunleath in a rough-an'-tumble any day."

"You t'ink dat, hey?" said Louis. "Well, now I'll tol' you somet'ing: De rougher dey tumble de more dat Dunleat' mak' heem look lak suckaire!"

I told Jim Dunleath, who merely laughed and said he hoped that Louis was a good judge. And I think Hayes told McGregor.

CHAPTER VIII.

AHTIKAMAG.

"We'd better take Ballou into our confidence now," said Mr. Fothergill, when we were as nearly as we could tell within a couple of days' journey of the Burntwood Lakes. "We'll have to do it, anyway, to find this Ahtikamag Lake, and we may as well do it now."

"Yes, I suppose so," Dunleath admitted. "Ask him to come down here for a minute, Bob."

So I went and got Ballou from an early camp we had made, and brought him to them where they sat on the river bank. Mr. Fothergill explained

at length what we were after, and Ballou listened in silence, smoking thoughtfully.

"Well," he said, when Mr. Fothergill had finished, "I may as well tell you straight I'd have liked it better if you had told me this at the start."

"That's what I told you, Jim," said Fothergill.

"So you did," Dunleath admitted. "It wasn't that I didn't trust you, Ballou, but I simply wasn't going to take any chances. I'd do the same thing again, and I'm not going to apologize for it. The fewer men who know a secret the safer it is."

"Yes, that's so," said Ballou. "That's right enough. Of course, if the company got to know of these furs, they'd be right after 'em. I s'pose you're going to keep 'em?"

"We're going to get them first," Dunleath replied. "If the company wants them it can pay a good fat salvage."

"The company," said Ballou, "never paid for anything it could take. I'd like to see that letter you are going on."

Dunleath handed it to him, and he read slowly, his lips moving soundlessly with the words.

"No use talking," he said, with a sort of admiration, "Nitche was cunnin' as an old dog fox. There wasn't another man in the outfit with the brains to do what he done. It took some nerve, too. He fooled 'em all. But he died like a sick wolf. Well, serve him right. He tried to double cross his own tillikums."

"He thought they tried to double cross him."

"Well, it don't matter much now. He's dead, and likely most of them are, too." He shook his head thoughtfully. "So it was Nitche you meant when you asked me if I knew any McNabs?"

"Yes, it's strange you never heard of him."

"Oh, I'd heard of him all right, but it never struck me at the time. It's

years since I'd heard of him, and then I never knew him to be called anything but 'Nitche.' When you said his name was Angus I guess that put me off. Same way with the others, I guess."

"Then what McClintock says is apt to be correct, I suppose?"

"More'n apt to be. He'd know. Did he say who was with Nitche on this raid—give the names of any of his gang?"

"No. He said there were a dozen or more. I guess they were a hard lot."

"A man needed to be hard to travel with Nitche. McClintock didn't tell you who the two men was that was caught, nor what happened to 'em?"

"No. I understood that they were forced to tell what they knew. McClintock mentioned no names, and I don't think I asked for them."

"A fire and a hot iron," said Ballou, "will make most men talk."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Mr. Fothergill. "There wouldn't be anything like that, Tom."

"You can bet," said Ballou, "that when they started in to make them boys confidential they weren't too polite about it."

"Well," said Mr. Fothergill, "I suppose there won't be any trouble in finding this cache, Tom. The directions seem explicit enough."

"A lot of things can happen in twenty years," Ballou replied, shaking his head. "Trees blow down and others grow up. Twenty years will green a burned country till you won't know it. And a fire will fix a timber country till you won't know *that*. Rocks move with slides. You can't tell."

"But you can find this Lake Ahtikamag, can't you?"

Ballou reflected for a moment. "Yes," he replied, "I know that when I come to it."

"Then that's the main thing," said Mr. Fothergill optimistically. "We'll

find this cache without any trouble. We'll go home loaded with furs."

"Natural products of the country," Ballou commented dryly, by which it was evident that Mr. Fothergill's descriptive phrase had stuck in his memory.

"Huh—what's that?" said the latter, somewhat embarrassed. "Well, they are, you know, Tom. That was the exact truth."

"So it was," Ballou admitted. "I'm not kickin'."

After supper, as usual, the men lay around the fire, their pipes going. Fothergill and Dunleath sat apart, talking in low tones. Old Hayes was spinning one of his interminable yarns. But Tom Ballou sat by himself, his elbows on his knees, both hands cupped around the bowl of his pipe, and had nothing to say to any one.

I helped Louis clean up, and afterward I strolled away with him to the river bank, where he sat down and filled his pipe and opened the last button of his shirt, exposing his great, hairy chest to the cool of the night air drafting along the river.

"Sacré!" said Louis feelingly. "Dat cookin' she's no job for man. I roas' myself for mak' dat pork an' bean an' bannock. An' dat bonch she's eat heem up lak wolf, an' nevaire tell me no t'anks!"

"Somebody has to cook," I said, with little sympathy, I am afraid, and Louis snorted.

"Yas! Well, mebbe if some of dose feller try it heemself he don't find heem some snap, I bet my life. Batême! I don' know for why I evair learn to cook, me."

But I paid no attention to his grumbling, for just then my eye was caught by some curious old wounds in the bark of a poplar. They looked like initials cut in the bark of a young tree and overgrown.

"What are these, Louis?" I asked.

"Mebbe bear claw heem," Louis suggested after casual inspection.

"No, they aren't claw marks. It looks to me as if somebody had cut his name there a long time ago."

"Hey?" Louis ejaculated. "Cut hees name." He rose and looked at the old marks. "Well, by dam!" he exclaimed, and scratched his curls, looking around in a puzzled sort of way as if he were trying to remember something.

"I can't make it out, can you?"

"Non!" Louis replied. "*Pas du toute*. I guess she don' mean not'ing, dat."

"It's a name or initials," I stated positively. "I wonder who cut it there. I wonder if it was Nitche McNab."

I mentioned the name thoughtlessly, but Louis fairly jumped.

"Nitche McNab!" he cried. "What you know 'bout heem, hey?"

"Just what I've heard. He used to be up this way, didn't he?"

"How I know?" growled Louis. "He's bad man, dat, an' dead since long tam—"

"But I thought you didn't know him. When we asked you if you knew him—you and Tom and Hayes—you had never heard of him."

"You ain't hax 'bout Nitche McNab when I'm dere."

Neither we had. Like Ballou, he had not identified Nitche by his given name. He asked me numerous questions, and, since Ballou had been told our object, and as everybody would know in a couple of days or so, I saw no reason why I should not enlighten Louis.

"Ba gosh!" he cried. "Is dat for why we come here?"

"Yes. But don't tell any one just yet. Tom knows."

"By gar," he cried fiercely, "he's lie to me!"

"He didn't know till an hour ago."

"You know where dat cache is at?"

"I know where it is said to be. I can't tell you just now. I guess maybe

I shouldn't have said anything to you until we got there."

"Dat's all right, *mon vieux*," he replied. "I don' say not'ing, me."

As it turned out we were nearer the chain of the Burntwood Lakes than we had thought, for the next afternoon we opened the first of them. It lay beneath the slope of the afternoon sun, a watery gem, dotted here and there with small, rocky islands and shored with fir and spruce and cottonwood. As we went on, the islands became more numerous and the shores deeply indented with bays and receding channels, so that at times it was hard to tell just which way the lake itself trended.

We were glad of still water, after the current we had fought for so long. And we made camp that night in a sheltered bay inhabited by a brood of half-grown fish ducks which flapped away in fright. Here we came upon the spot of an old camp fire, but the rain had washed the ashes over the charred sticks. Mr. Fothergill was positive that it had been an Indian camp, and nobody disputed him.

"What's the name of this lake, Tom?" he asked.

"The Injuns call it 'Saguhegun mensesansun.' Good name, ain't it?"

"Very appropriate," Mr. Fothergill agreed.

"What does it mean?" Dunleath asked. And Mr. Fothergill hesitated and stuttered:

"It means—er—well, it's a little hard to put it in English. But a free translation—a very free one—would be—let me see—"

"It means 'Lake of many little islands,'" I said to help him out, and I could see a laugh in Jim Dunleath's eyes.

"Yes, I suppose that would be a fairly correct translation," said Mr. Fothergill. "It doesn't convey the precise idea, but it will serve." And he asked

Ballou about Ahtikamag, which, in the Ojibway tongue, means "white fish."

"It's the last one," Ballou replied. "They lie sorter north and south. We go through this and two more, and then we come to Ahtikamag."

"Ba gosh," Louis Beef put in, "I t'ink date Whitefish Lac, she's—"

"We come to Ahtikamag like I said," Ballou repeated. "It's the last lake, and then there's river again. We can't go wrong."

Louis opened his mouth and shut it again without saying anything. Old Hayes cut off a chew of tobacco and licked his knife blade as a dog cleans a plate.

"Ahtikamag!" he said. "We keep straight ahead for it, Tom, hey?"

"Sure," said Ballou. "Unless you think you know better."

"Me?" said Hayes. "No, of course not. This country's plumb strange to me. Funny thing, too, ain't it? I been around quite a lot, but I ain't never seen these lakes. If you asked me to take you to this Whitefish Lake I'd be as apt as not to git balled up and take you another way that'd be dead wrong."

"Well, I'm not askin' you," Ballou told him shortly.

He seemed put out about something, for I had never heard him use that tone to Hayes before. However, later the two of them and Louis went down to the beach and smoked together most amicably.

Mr. Fothergill and Dunleath spread their blankets beneath a big spruce and turned in. So did Ballou. I did the same, nearer the fire, and I lay there comfortably, listening to old Hayes talking to the younger men, grumbling at creation in general, as is the custom of many old men, who, whether by their own fault or not, have not had what they consider their deserts.

Then he began a long-winded yarn about some placer, and in the middle of it I dropped to sleep under my bush.

In the morning we encountered a heavy wind, which tore the lake into choppy waves. It was too stiff to paddle against, and so we put ashore to wait till it dropped. But it blew that day and all night and most of the next day, so that we could do nothing.

Lake Ahtikamag, when we opened it, was the largest we had seen, being about twenty miles in length by about three in breadth. It had several islands, and one of these was of a most peculiar formation, having high walls of rock, so that a landing could be made only in one place, and in the middle of the island there was a huge sink hole, like the mouth of a giant well, the sides dropping straight down. This hole Dunleath and I discovered later, and we sounded it with a line, but could get no bottom; nor did there appear to be any water in it, though we let our line down far below the lake level.

We ran down the lake rapidly about sunset, with a rising stern wind and a following sea which made the canoes leap and surge and yaw, and finally Ballou's canoe, which was in the lead, turned into a bay into which a good-sized creek emptied.

"Here we are," he said as we beached beside him. "I guess this is your creek."

"The letter says the creek is near the upper end of the lake," said Dunleath. "This is only about halfway."

"This is the only creek," Ballou replied, "so far as I know, but it's easy enough to find out. Anyway, this is a good place to camp, and in the morning we can see."

After supper Mr. Fothergill took the men into his confidence, a thing he had been aching to do for weeks, telling them that we had come to find a lost fur cache and that we were now on the very ground. It did not create any sensation. Conover asked if it was Nitche McNab's old cache, and Mr. Fothergill admitted it, at which I saw Dunleath

frown, though I could not see what difference it made, since Ballou knew and I had admitted it to Louis. No doubt, all knew about it. Mr. Fothergill went on to say that if we found what we had been led to expect he would double every man's wages. He waited for applause, but got none. They took the announcement impassively. For a moment I thought I saw the ghost of a sardonic grin flicker around old Hayes' mouth. But I must have been mistaken, for he backed up Ballou when the latter expressed his thanks.

That night for a long time I was too excited to sleep. Dunleath, too, was restless, and finally he rose on his elbow, filled his pipe, and lit it. By the light of the match he saw my eyes.

"I thought you were asleep," he said.

"No, I keep thinking of the cache."

"So do I. It means a lot to me."

"We'll find it," I prophesied. "This must be the right place unless there's another creek, and that's easy to find out."

"Yes, that's so. Of course it's a gamble—the worth of whatever we do find." We talked in whispers, though there was little danger of waking Mr. Fothergill, who was snoring. "Listen to him!" Dunleath went on. "That's what it is to have money. An assured income beats an easy conscience as a soporific. Money may bring some cares, but it gets rid of a lot of others. There are times in a man's life when it is nearly indispensable as a means to an end. Good night, old boy!"

But I lay awake long after he had tapped out his pipe and gone to sleep. My boyish imagination was busy. I could see the great, swarthy Nitche McNab and his henchman, Joe Barbe, stooping beneath the bales of furs, trotting in feverish haste inland from their canoe, laboring like demons lest they should be interrupted at their task. And when I slept I dreamed that I was working with them, caching the price-

less spoil of the northern tip of a continent, while the animals which had worn it as their garments ran nakedly beside us, ghastly and ghostly carrion, mocking our efforts with mews and growls.

CHAPTER IX.

FAILURE.

We were up at dawn, and as the sunshine crept down the low hills to the west we sorted out axes and picks and shovels and crowbars, and started up the creek.

The going was rough. The bush was thick, and there was down timber criss-crossed and piled at every angle by some big wind. Probably it had all been standing when Nitche and Joe Barbe packed in the furs. If not, they must have had a sweet job.

Soon the creek bottom narrowed. The sides became high, rocky, with much loose shale and many fractures. On the whole, it was about what the letter had led us to expect; and here and there, in the creek bed, there were reddish boulders.

At the end of what we estimated to be half a mile, Mr. Fothergill called a halt. Sure enough, on the opposite side of the creek, high up near the rim of the bank, was a big, broken fir stub, surmounted by the rough, stick nest of a fish hawk.

"By George!" Mr. Fothergill exclaimed. "I've hit the very spot." He spoke as if he alone were responsible for our guidance.

"Looks like it," Jim Dunleath admitted. "But I don't see the boulder."

"Hidden by second growth, likely. Anyway, there is the hawk's nest."

"And there is another," said Dunleath, pointing farther up the creek.

I looked, and saw a second hawk's nest. Indeed, these lakes seemed to be the habitat of many fish hawks. All along it were their nests, old and new.

This bird returns to the same nest year after year. And I presume some instinct brings its offspring back to the district where they were hatched. These in turn build nests for themselves. But the fish hawk is somewhat exclusive of habit, each pair being jealous of infringement on their chosen fishing ground, and so the nests are rarely close together. Ordinarily they are near the water, though I have seen them miles inland against a mountainside, and the birds flapping heavily to them with their prey in their claws.

"Well," said Mr. Fothergill, "it's one or the other. We'll look here first for the boulder."

We crossed the creek and climbed the opposite bank, which was the more sloping of the two, and covered with a tangle of small growth. Through this we pushed, quartering the ground like hunting dogs. But we found no boulder.

"It's mighty funny," said Ballou. "This seems to be the place, all right."

"How old is that nest?" asked Dunleath.

"Hard to say. Them birds fix up their old nests every season. I guess they nest one place till they die. This looks pretty old. But then so does that other nest. I wish we could find that rock. Of course it may have loosened and rolled down into the creek bed. Well, let's look around the other nest."

But, though we subjected the vicinity of the other nest to a like careful search, we found no boulder. We looked at every rock which seemed to have rolled down into the creek bed, and found several which might roughly answer the description, though we could find no line on any of them, and even if we had found the mark it would not have done us much good.

"Well," said Mr. Fothergill, "this is the place, without a doubt. One of those rocks is the boulder Nitche speaks of. But, as it is out of place, it is not very important. The only thing to do

is to pick out likely spots opposite each nest and excavate. In that way we are certain to find the cache, though it may take a good deal of work."

"I'm not satisfied that this is the right creek," said Dunleath. "I'm going to the end of the lake, just to make sure."

I went with him. We found one small creek, and followed it inland; but it merely ran along through brush, with sloping, couleelike sides, and no sign of a hawk's nest or boulder. And so we came back convinced that Mr. Fothergill's plan was the only feasible one.

It was hard, monotonous labor. And after we had been at it for several days there grew the depressing feeling of futility. The men began to growl among themselves. They were not hired, they complained, to strip the whole country down to bed rock. And they began to scoff at the existence of a cache. However, they kept at it for a week, during which time they had really moved an immense amount of soil, gravel, and loose rock. And then old Hayes quit cold.

"I ain't no bohunk!" he declared, with an oath. "I'm a heap too old to use a muckstick, anyhow. You young fellers can keep on, if you like. I'm through."

"Me, too," said McGregor.

"Yas, by gar!" the half-breed declared.

"You see," Ballou explained to Mr. Fothergill, who was most indignant at this defection, "they don't take no stock in this Nitche yarn. The way they figger it out, therē ain't no chance of findin' the cache. And then they say they was hired for canoemen, and not for a steady pick-and-shovel job. So they was, too, when you get right down to it. They didn't mind it first, but they say it's lastin' too long."

"Don't you consider McNab's letter genuine?" asked Mr. Fothergill.

"Well, of course I never seen no writin' of Nitche's," Ballou replied. "By

the way it was found, I guess it's the real thing. There always was a yarn that he had furs cached some place, and this place fits all right. But the marks he speaks of ain't in place. There's two hawks' nests, and neither of 'em may be the right one. That may have blowed down. We've stripped off a lot of surface and found nothing, and it begins to look like a matter of luck. It's your shout, and far's I'm concerned I'll stay with you as long as you want, and so'll Louis. But the other boys won't. Maybe if you was to put a time limit on the digging, say three or four days or a week more, I might be able to talk 'em into giving you a run for your money. Would that be any use?"

To this Mr. Fothergill finally agreed, and Ballou interviewed the strikers. He had considerable difficulty persuading them to resume work, but at last they came around, agreeing to stay with the job for another week, but that, they said frankly, was the limit.

And they carried out their part of the bargain honestly. They worked hard, without shirking or grumbling. Even Mr. Fothergill had to admit that. But at the end of the week we had found absolutely no sign of the cache.

"The boys want to put a proposition up to you," said Ballou. "They want to do the fair thing, and if you was very strong for it they'd work another week, though they don't think it's no use. But if you're going to quit you won't need them no more. In that case, they figger they'd like to go over into the Pink. That breed has some yarn about placer ground. I don't s'pose there's a thing in it, but the boys wants to go. And they'd like to buy a couple of canoes and a grubstake from you and pull out. That way, of course, you'd save wages for the back trip. What do you think of it?"

"They've kept their bargain and we'll keep ours," said Dunleath. "We may as well quit now as a week from now.

We may as well save what we can, Wally."

"They can take their wages and canoes and grub and go to the devil!" said Mr. Fothergill.

"They want to buy 'em straight, so's there'll be no kick nor obligation either way," said Ballou. "You put your price on 'em, and they'll take 'em at that."

"I'll leave it to you," Mr. Fothergill told him. "Sell them what they want for whatever it's worth."

"How many are going?" Dunleath asked.

"All but Louis and me," Ballou replied.

But the next day Ballou said that he was thinking of going with them himself.

"They want me to go," he explained, somewhat apologetically. "They say I know the country better than any of 'em. I dunno but I'd like to go. When a man's been a prospector, he never gets over it. You don't really need me no more. Louis will go along with you and cook, and get the home camp ready for winter if it should freeze up before we get back. What do you think?"

"It's your shout, Tom," said Mr. Fothergill. "There are no strings on you."

"Then I'll go with the boys," Ballou decided. "I've been sorter hankerin' for a little prospectin'. Not that I expect to find more'n colors, but I like the game."

On that basis matters were arranged. We retained the largest canoe, which would hold the four of us and our outfit very nicely. One canoe was cached, to be picked up by the men on their homeward way, and they took the others with them.

When they had gone, we lingered for a day, poking around, hoping against hope, which I suppose is human nature. But we found nothing whatever, nor could we avoid the irresistible conclu-

sion of absolute failure which settled upon us.

"Oh, well," said Jim Dunleath, "what's the use of lingering over the grave? Let's get out of here."

"I hate to quit," growled Mr. Fothergill. "I'm dead sure that cache is here somewhere, and next year I'm going to come up with an outfit that will work and find it."

"You'll only throw good coin after bad," Dunleath told him. "It's a dead card. I'm sorry I let you in for it."

"What the devil do I care for the money?" Mr. Fothergill returned. "I hate to give up, that's all. And then I know you needed those furs in your business."

And so when we pulled out for home we were a very glum outfit. Mr. Fothergill nursed his grievance against the men. Dunleath was silent, evidently bitterly disappointed. Louis had nothing to say, but kept shaking his head and grumbling French oaths to himself without any apparent cause. And I was very down in the mouth, for my dreams of wealth were gone, and I did not believe that Mr. Fothergill would go to the expense of organizing a second expedition.

We cleared the lakes and got into the river, and were just going ashore for the night when a canoe with two white men appeared, coming upstream. It was a slim though weather-beaten craft, and by the way it lifted at every stroke it was plain that its occupants knew their business.

"Evenin', gents," said the man in the bow. He had a gray beard and child-like blue eyes, and I had a faint recollection of having seen him somewhere. But when I looked at his partner in the stern and saw red, curly hair and eyes of a hard, clear blue, with a mocking, whimsical devil looking out of them, I knew both of them.

"Dinny Pack!" I cried. He looked

at me, his eyes puckering at the corners.

"That's who," he admitted. "But I can't make no come-back, young feller."

"Bob Cory," I told him, "on the Carcajou. You licked Nootka Charlie when he kissed Peggy."

"Well, I'm durned!" he exclaimed. "Are you that kid? You've shot up and filled out so I wouldn't have knowed you. How's chances to camp near here? Ike and me ain't seen no white folks for a month."

They came ashore with us and shared our supper and fire. They had been knocking around all summer, partly prospecting and partly looking for a good trapping country. Now they were on their way up to the lakes, where they expected to meet two friends of theirs named Rowan and Cass, who had gone over into the Pink or perhaps the Poorfish and had arranged to be back about that time.

Dinny Pack volunteered this information. His partner, old Ike Toft, kept silent, smoking contemplatively. Neither asked what we were doing or where we had been. But I told them we had been to the lakes and were on our way home, and that part of our outfit had gone on to prospect on the other side.

"May meet 'em," said Dinny. "This is sorter new country to me. Ike knows it, though, mighty well. Of course there ain't much country he don't know."

"Now, Dinny!" said his partner.

"Well, there ain't," said Pack. "You been travelin' her forty years, about."

"Oh, well, she's a big country," said Toft modestly.

"It was up here," said Pack to us generally, "that old Nitche McNab cached his furs when he had to make a get-away. Maybe you never heard about that." And, taking it for granted that we had not, he told us the story. "Ike," he concluded, "was with the bunch that was after Nitche."

"What? Is that so?" asked Mr. Fothergill.

"Yeh, I was along," Toft admitted.

"And nobody ever found the furs, to your knowledge?"

"Somebody got 'em. We found the cache, but she was empty."

"Have you any theory about that?"

"Well," said Toft, "I allus figgered that Nitche done that. While we was chasin' his gang he slipped in behind us and lifted the cache himself. That's what I think."

"But what did he do with them?"

"I dunno. I guess he'd cache them again somewheres till he got a chance to get out of the country with them."

This guess of Toft's tallied so exactly with the evidence which we possessed that my respect for him rose.

"Do you think he ever got them out?" Dunleath asked.

"Might have. I never heard no more about him. He seemed to disappear."

"He couldn't have moved the furs very far single-handed," Mr. Fothergill pointed out.

"No," Toft agreed. "But then he wouldn't need to. I guess he cached 'em again somewheres on them lakes. Pretty lakes, ain't they? Which one was you camped on?"

"On Ahtikamag."

"Nice place to camp."

"That's a curious island in it," said Dunleath. "I mean the one with the steep, rocky shores and the sink hole in the middle."

Toft shook his head.

"That island," said he, "ain't in Ahtikamag. That's in Shingoos."

CHAPTER X.

LOUIS BEEF DESERTS.

We stared at the speaker and at each other.

"Not in Ahtikamag!" Dunleath exclaimed. "Are you certain?"

"Sure. It's in Shingoos, the last lake

as you go through 'em. You go through that lake with all the islands, and a couple more smaller ones, and then you strike Shingoes."

"Yes, that's what we did. But we thought it was Ahtikamag."

"No, Ahtikamag lies off to the west. It's fed by the Little Pipe. Unless you was lookin' for it, you wouldn't know it was there at all, just passin' through. The channel leadin' in to them lakes looks like a blind bay on Saguhegun." He spoke with the certainty of absolute knowledge.

"By George!" Mr. Fothergill exclaimed. "Old Tom made a mistake."

"It looks like it," Dunleath agreed. "That would account for a lot of things. Do you know," he asked, "if there is a creek making into Ahtikamag on the west side near the upper end?"

"Yeh, about a couple of miles from the end. She's quite a crick, too. She cañons a half mile or so from the lake. I went up her once, a good many years ago."

"Well, I'll be hanged!" Mr. Fothergill exclaimed, in disgust. "Here we've wasted two weeks and let our outfit break up. I could have sworn old Tom knew the country. Louis, do you hear that? We made a mistake in the lake."

But Louis, when told what Toft had said, scoffed at it.

"I guess I know bettaire as dat," said he. "I guess I know Tom purty well, an' he don't mak' no mistak', heem."

"Well, I ain't sayin' he did," said Toft mildly. "All I say is that that sink-hole island ain't in Ahtikamag. That's all. I don't know nothin' about this here Tom."

"Ba gosh," said Louis, "I see dat island my own self. An' for sure she's dere."

"If you seen her," Toft responded, "you seen her in Shingoes Lake—unless she's moved."

"Bah! You mak' me tire'," scoffed Louis. "I guess you ain't know dis

co'ntree bettaire as my partner, ol'timer."

"I don't claim to," Toft returned. "I'm merely tellin' these gents what I know, because they asked me."

"Well, I guess you ain't know so moch," said Louis contemptuously.

Toft let this go without reply; but Dinny Pack took a hand.

"Look here, you big pea soup," said he "you want to go plumb easy on that line of talk, savvy!"

"Is dat so?" Louis retorted ironically. "Well, I guess I do my own talkin', yo'ng feller, wit'out hax you!"

"That will be plenty, Louis," said Dunleath quietly. And to Toft: "Our guide had no doubt that we were in Ahtikamag. He took us there without any hesitation."

"Well, of course I don't know anything about that," Toft replied. "It's none of my business. You asked me about the island and I told you it was in Shingoes. So it is. That's all I've got to say."

"We'll go back," Mr. Fothergill announced. "Will you men take us to the real Ahtikamag?"

The partners looked at each other. They appeared to arrive at an understanding without words.

"If you want us to," Toft replied. "It's pretty much on our way, anyhow."

"Of course we expect to pay you," said Mr. Fothergill. "You name your figure."

"Sho! 'Tain't worth nothin'," said Toft.

"It is to us," Dunleath told him. "It's pretty important."

"So," said Toft. He asked no question, even by inflection. Possibly this decided Dunleath.

"We are after Nitché McNab's cache," said he, "and we think it is on Ahtikamag. We'd like to make a deal with you to help us find it."

"You can make it," Toft replied.

They made it then and there, and

Dunleath told him what we knew about Nitche McNab and the cache. But Louis, who had listened scornfully, made objection.

"Ba gosh," said he, "I t'ink all crazee biz-ness, me. Tom, he's know dem lac, all right. We hunt on dat Ahtikamag already. I ain't want for go back dere an' waste my time."

"You're paid for it," Dunleath reminded him tartly. "And we're not going to the same place."

"You'll go some fool place," Louis returned. "I want for pass myself on dat Carcajou, me. I got plentee for do dere. Dat's de bargain we mak' wit' you. Dem boys an' Tom dey go prospec', an' we pass ourself on home."

"Nonsense, Louis!" said Mr. Fothergill. "We're not going home now, when there's a good chance of finding what we came after."

"Good chance not'ing!" scoffed Louis. "You hear crazee story 'bout some lac, an' you believe him. Dose man she's fool you wit' dam lie!"

"What's that?" said Dinny Pack sharply, getting to his feet.

"I say you fool dese pilgrim wit' dam lie," Louis reiterated flatly. "You don't know not'ing about dem lac."

"Maybe I don't," Pack admitted. "But my partner does if he says he does, and no pea soup's going to call him a liar. Take it back or eat it!"

"Hold on, hold on!" cried Jim Dunleath, springing up.

"I don' tak' not'ing——" Louis began, and Dinny Pack's fist cut the sentence in half.

It cracked against Louis' jaw like a mallet on a plank, but with little more result, though it would have dropped an ordinary man. But Louis was not an ordinary man.

With a tremendous bass bellow, he sprang at Pack, and, though he took another punch which should have stopped him, it entirely failed to do so. He caught him about the body, and in

an instant there was a furious struggle which whirled about the fire, scattering cooking utensils in all directions. They went right through the blaze, stamping it to a red glow and plunging us into partial darkness, and as they fought they cursed pantingly through clenched teeth.

Dunleath tried to part them, but the weight of their locked, twisting bodies brushed him aside. They went down, still locked, rolling over and over like dogs, for neither could pin the other to the ground.

It was Louis who at last came uppermost and reached for Pack's throat. But Jim Dunleath and Mr. Fothergill both caught him and dragged him off. And the former got a twisting grip on him which held him, strong as he was, momentarily powerless.

"Quit it, Louis!" he cried. "No more of this goes, understand!"

"He's ponch me on my face," cried Louis. "Ba gosh I bus' heem up for dat!"

"Turn him loose!" Dinny Pack challenged. "I'll bet he don't clinch me again."

But his partner pushed him back, and the others held Louis, and finally they calmed down a little.

"Make it up," Jim Dunleath advised. "You shouldn't have said what you did, Louis. Shake hands and let it go, Pack."

"Well, mebbe I tak' dat back w'at I say," said Louis. "I shake hands wit' heem if he's lak." But I thought I saw the ghost of a wicked smile in his eyes.

"Suits me, if you say so," said Dinny Pack. "I never refused to shake with a good man, if he wanted it that way. And I'll own up that you're the strongest man I ever had hold of." He held out his hand.

"You t'ink so," said Louis. "Well, we jus' shake on dat. Catch holt."

He caught Pack's hand. For a moment it looked like an ordinary hand-

shake, and then I saw that it was not. The big Frenchman did not let go. He was putting all his power into his fingers. From wrist to shoulder I saw the sinews and muscles tauten, harden, and swell. The veins stood out upon his forehead with the concentration of the grip.

But Pack, I think, had divined his purpose before it was too late. He had shot his hand in thumb crotch to thumb crotch, and before the heaviness of the grip was laid on him he had made a quick step forward, so that the two hands were close beside his hip. And this gave him added power and leverage. Less heavily muscled than Louis, he held him even by superior fiber.

But gradually the Frenchman's vast strength told. I could see Pack's arm quiver a little with the strain which he was now forcing, and Louis knew it, too. He grinned, and suddenly dropped his shoulder six inches. The action brought his face close to Pack's, which grew white. And then Louis loosed the limp hand and laughed.

"By gar," said he, "you'll be strong man, too, but not so strong lak ol' Louis. I guess mebbe dat mak' us square on dat ponch you hand me, hey?"

Dinny Pack wrung his powerless fingers.

"You're lucky I don't hand you another," he said. "Well, I can take my medicine when I can't help it. Only don't try nothin' like that again."

But Louis laughed as if he regarded it as a huge joke, and filled his pipe.

"All right," he responded, "we be good frien's now, hey?" And, turning to Mr. Fothergill, he said: "I guess, if you want for pass yourself on dose lac again, dat's your biz-ness, an' I don't kick some more. I come wit' you. I guess you don't get along so well wit'out me to cook, yes!"

And so, the trouble having blown over, leaving a clear sky, we rolled up

in our blankets, and I for one slept like the proverbial log.

I woke in the morning to see old Ike Toft by a freshly kindled fire, busy preparing breakfast. And while I was wondering hazily why he was doing Louis' work, Dunleath stirred and sat up.

"Hello!" he said. "What are *you* rustling grub for?"

"Somebody's got to," Toft replied.

"But where's Louis? That's his work."

Toft greased the pan methodically.

"I dunno where he is," he answered. "But it's a cinch he ain't here. And neither is our canoes. Dinny, he's piked off downriver to look for 'em."

CHAPTER XI.

FORESTALLED.

Dunleath shook Mr. Fothergill awake, and at first he quite refused to believe the news. But when he saw that the canoes were gone, and Louis' blankets also, and in fact everything that we had not brought up to the camp, conviction was forced on him and he swore like the British army in Flanders over a century ago.

But that did not help matters at all. The cold fact was that Louis had set us afoot in a wilderness with very little food and a most inadequate outfit. We had arms and ammunition, because we invariably brought these up from the canoe at night, and so we could scarcely starve, but it was a blue lookout nevertheless. And then there was the mystery of Louis' disappearance. Why had he gone, and why had he taken both canoes?

"The infernal scoundrel!" Mr. Fothergill stormed. "I wouldn't have believed it. The last thing he said was that he would go back with us. I can't understand it—unless he has gone crazy."

"If he went crazy he was mighty quiet

about it," said Jim Dunleath. "I don't understand it myself, but I think we may eliminate that theory."

"He sure was quiet," said Toft. "I sleep mighty light—a man does when he gits to be my age, knockin' around the way I have—and I woke once thinkin' I heard somethin', but I didn't hear no more, and of course she wasn't my camp and a man might have got stirrin' around and it wouldn't have been none of my business. So I went to sleep again. Then, when I got up just before day, I didn't see the Frenchman, nor no blankets where he had bedded down. And then I looked around and found the canoes was gone. So I woke up Dinny and he hit off downstream. I guess he'll do some travelin', too. I told him if he come up with the Frenchman to holler at him once."

"Once?" said Mr. Fothergill inquiringly.

"You think he shouldn't, maybe," said Toft. "Well, o' course it's a matter of opinion, and you got a right to yours. Anyhow, Dinny promised. he would."

"Why shouldn't he?" asked Mr. Fothergill. "I don't understand."

"Oh," Toft explained, "I thought you was kickin' at it. Lots of fellers would beef the Frenchman without givin' him a chance to come ashore. That's what I meant. But Dinny'll holler at him once, and then if the pea soup don't come in he'll get him right there."

It was odd to hear the little man with the gentle voice and the childlike eyes talk in this matter-of-fact way.

"Stealin' a canoe in this man's country," he went on, "ain't no diff'rent from stealin' a horse on the plains. It sets a man afoot. And this is no country to be set afoot in."

"He can't take both canoes far," Jim Dunleath pointed out.

"No, he'll cache one or bust it. Or if he just let it loose there's fast water

below here that'd save him the trouble. I sure hope Dinny comes up with him."

But Pack did not return, and after breakfast Toft and I started downstream.

"You see," he said, "there's just a chance that all the Frenchman wants is a start for wherever he's went to. He might cache the canoe somewheres along the bank or tie it up or just let it float on the chance of it lodging. He'd figger we'd have sense enough to hunt pretty close for it before we'd try to get out overland. Now Dinny he was out for the Frenchman, and so he wouldn't look for nothing but him. He'll go fast. We can go slower and look closer."

So we prowled along the bank, looking into eddies and jams of driftwood and beneath sweepers for some sign of a canoe. And thus, nearly five miles downstream, we came on our big canoe held by the current against a fallen tree close under the bank. It was impossible to say whether it had drifted in there by itself or not.

"So he's taken our canoe," Toft commented. "I thought he would. Well, we may's well git in and keep on down to pick up Dinny. He'll keep hikin', and the farther he goes without seein' the Frenchman the madder he'll git and the farther he'll go."

Luckily Louis had left a couple of paddles, but it was not till the afternoon that we found Dinny Pack, sitting on the bank, smoking. He was wet to the waist, his face was scratched, and his clothes torn. It was evident that he had found the going rough.

"You didn't get him, did you?" was his first question. "Nor me," he said, as Toft shook his head. "I ain't seen hair nor hide of him. I run into a swamp back there that stopped me. I guess he's made his get-away with our canoe."

"Looks like it," Toft agreed. "I was hopin' you'd come up on him."

"I did all I could," Pack responded.

"Them last few miles was pretty rough, and I had to keep where I could see the river."

It was late in the afternoon when we reached camp, and nothing more could be done that day. But we had a canoe which would hold all five of us, and it was now possible to go back to Ahtikamag. We could get along quite well without Louis.

But the more I considered his action the less I could understand it. He had entered emphatic objection to going back to the lakes. But that seemed due principally to his loyalty to Ballou and to resentment of doubts of the latter's knowledge of the country. And he wanted to get home to the Carcajou. But would that drive him to the point of stealing a canoe to accomplish it? I milled these things over in my mind, without any result. The more I thought the more puzzled I became.

However, with renewed hopes of finding the fur cache, we all brightened up a little. If we found the cache we would intercept Ballou and the others on their way back from their prospecting.

"It will be a horse on old Tom if we do find anything," said Mr. Fothergill. "It's one on him, anyway, about the lake. I'll rub that into him when I see him. If we find the furs, we'll need all the canoes. I wish I knew just where he has gone."

"Kill your meat before you skin it," Pack advised.

"I'm an optimist," said Mr. Fothergill.

"I guided a geologist once," said Dinny gravely, so that I was not sure whether he was joking or not, "but an optimist is a new one on me."

"An optimist," Mr. Fothergill explained, "is a man who looks on the bright side and hopes for the best."

"I know that kind," said Dinny. "They hope the game's square, and they don't watch the dealer. The system is

wrong. In most things you want to figger the chances is agin' you. Then you organize yourself to beat 'em."

"Right!" said Dunleath.

"There's no sense in taking a gloomy view of anything," Mr. Fothergill stated. "'Trust in God and keep your powder dry.' But keep hoping. That's my motto."

"All right to keep a-hoping if you keep a-humping," Pack agreed. "Plain hope never got a man anywhere he wanted to go. What I say is that jails is full of these here optimists that hoped they wouldn't be caught and was careless. What's the other end of the bettin'? What's a feller that don't look on the shiny side?"

"He's a pessimist."

"Then that's me," said Dinny. "I copper my bets. I play 'em to lose, and when I make a winnin' it's a joyful surprise. I figger there's a hoodoo on me. At the top of a bad bit of water I say to myself: 'Dinny, here's where you get dumped, and chances is you drown. You know you ain't lived right, so you better be plumb careful.' So I get through all right. I ain't never been sick in my life, but I figger my luck won't last. I rap on wood and I cross my fingers and I bless myself when I sneeze and I always buy the best ammynition there is. I organize myself on a losin' basis and I get along. Now about this here cache, I figger we ain't got a chance in the world to find her. And so I'll bet we do!"

We all laughed at this contradictory philosophy.

"There's not so much difference between us, after all," said Mr. Fothergill. "But if we find the furs, Ballou will want to crawl into a hole. And wait till I tell him about that rascally Frenchman. He'll be as indignant as we are. When we get back to the Carcajou I'll have the dog arrested."

Old Ike Toft had said nothing. Now he removed his pipe and asked:

"What makes you think he's gone back to the Carcajou?"

Mr. Fothergill stared at him.

"Of course he has. He didn't want to go back to the lakes. That was what started the row."

"Why didn't he want to go back?"

"Principally, I think, because what you said reflected on Ballou's knowledge of the country."

"You don't know just where this Ballou has gone?"

"No."

"My tumtum is," said Toft, "that the Frenchman's gone to find him."

"Why do you think that?" Dunleath asked quickly.

"I dunno's I can tell you. I just think it. I know he made a strong play about goin' home; but then he made a stronger one about not wantin' to go back to the lakes. That might have been because he didn't want you to go back there."

"But why on earth shouldn't he want us to?" asked Mr. Fothergill. "The only reason I can think of is that it might prove Ballou's mistake."

"May be something in that. Anyway, I think he's gone to join them tillikums, wherever they are. Maybe they've heard of some good placer ground somewheres, and the Frenchman was sore at not bein' in it, and bein' sent back with you. Did he kick at comin' with you when your outfit split up?"

"He seemed sulky about something," Dunleath replied thoughtfully.

"Then I'll bet that's it."

"Why, Ballou himself was coming with us up to the last moment," said Mr. Fothergill. "He took no stock in this prospecting—told me so himself. He went principally because he knew the country better than the others, and they wanted him."

"If he don't know it better than he knew them lakes," said Dinny Pack, "they ain't got much of a guide."

But Mr. Fothergill, while admitting

that Tom Ballou might have made a mistake for once, would hear nothing in disparagement of his general knowledge. He got quite warm about it, and Dinny, seeing this, winked solemnly at me and said no more.

Now our big canoe, as I think I have said, was a four-fathom bark, and with five paddles to drive it it cut the water like a launch. We soon made the lake of islands, and Toft turned in behind three of the latter which lay close to the western shore. At first sight, the shore line seemed to be unbroken; but presently we opened a bay which seemed to run far inland. At the end of the bay was a channel, marshy on either hand, with a slow current.

"Just opposite them islands," said Toft, "was where Nitche had his cache that was lifted. If you're right, he took 'em up this channel and cached 'em on Ahtikamag while we was hellin' along the other lakes, through Shingoes, and into the river again. He sure must have worked to do it."

The channel continued for about three miles, as nearly as I could judge. It expanded, and we came upon a small lake. Passing through this, a beautiful sheet of water opened before us.

"This is Ahtikamag," said Toft, "the lower end of it. It's a good twenty miles between it and Shingoes, where you were, and there's a sort of ridge of hills between, so you couldn't see it. Not many people come to this. I ain't been here myself for nigh twenty years."

"You seem to remember it pretty well," said Jim.

"I remember most places where I've been. And then we combed this country pretty close, lookin' for Nitche's cache. I come back afterward and looked."

Lake Ahtikamag was as large, if not larger, than Shingoes, and, as in the case of the latter, there were a few islands of varying sizes.

We had camped overnight at the first small lake, and we entered Ahtikamag on a hazy morning. There was not a breath of air. Shadows lay in the water, and the shore lines were reflected softly. Except for the calling of a loon and the dip of our paddles, the silence was utter. The low hills were clad in faint blue and purple lights, less than color, impalpable, mysterious, resembling the thin blue-gray of smoke.

"Looks like a weather breeder to me," said Toft. "Just as like as not to blow. This lake can raise a dirty sea when she likes."

As we came near our destination, a faint murmur became audible.

"That's the crick," said Toft. "She runs fast out of a cañon. That's her a-growlin'. We can paddle up it for a ways. Then it shallows and gets too fast."

The creek entered the lake in the shelter of a narrow, wooded point. The entrance was deep, and the current strong, swirling along by cut banks. Digging hard, we worked our way upstream. We rounded a sharp turn, and Pack, in the bow, exclaimed sharply. I looked up. There, on a shingly little strip of beach beneath a steep bank, half a dozen canoes were turned bottom up.

"By George!" cried Mr. Fothergill. "Somebody's before us."

And old Toft grunted.

"I called her pretty near right," said he. "That there littlest canoe belongs to me and Dinny. It's the one the Frenchman got away with."

"And," I said, "those others—all but one—are our canoes, too. I'd know them anywhere."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CACHE.

There was absolutely no doubt about it. And therefore it was clear that Ballou and the others had not gone prospecting at all. Their camp was just

visible through the trees, a hundred yards or so inland. There was a lean-to and a smoldering fire with a faint curl of smoke. But nobody was in sight.

"Well," said Jim Dunleath, "what do you think, Wally? Do you see anything resembling a fine, large double cross?"

Mr. Fothergill wagged his head helplessly, as if the irresistible conclusion were entirely too much for him.

"Tom Ballou!" he said. "Old Tom Ballou, of all men!"

"'Brutus is an honorable man. So are they all, all honorable men.'"

"There may be some explanation."

"The explanation is very simple, and you know it as well as I do. Ballou deliberately misled us. He took us to a place roughly corresponding to the description we had, and allowed us to hunt until we grew discouraged. He hurried things up by a pretended strike of the men. This prospecting yarn was all bunk. As soon as our backs were turned, Ballou and our precious ex-employees came here. Louis was to herd us along, and that was at the bottom of his grouch. He didn't like the job, because he was afraid they would hold out on him. Of course, when he knew we were coming back to the real Ahtikamag, he had to get back ahead of us to warn Ballou. I don't know why he didn't destroy our canoe, but I suppose he thought we wouldn't find it as soon as we did. Well, that's how it stands. Ballou and the lot of them are in this to get the furs themselves. What are we going to do about it?"

Mr. Fothergill swore. It was hard medicine, after all his eulogies of Ballou. But for my part I was scarcely less surprised. In all the time I had known old Tom I had never heard of his doing a dishonest act. He was the last man I should have suspected of deliberate treachery. But here was proof.

"Well," said Dinny Pack, "if you're

goin' to chew the rag about it much, I'd do it some other place. I don't know this bunch, but if they was to come back and find us here I b'lieve there'd be the makin's of trouble. We know they're here, and they don't know we are. We got it on them that much. If it was me, I'd pull out till I figured out the 'best play.'

"That's right," Toft agreed. "I guess they're up the creek lookin' for the cache. 'It's gettin' on time for 'em to come back to eat."

"Then we'll go," Dunleath decided.

We dropped downstream, and, keeping in close to shore, landed a mile or more below the creek. There we ate lunch. While we ate, we discussed the situation, but we did not get very far ahead.

To begin with, Ballou and his men outnumbered us. And then there was the strange canoe. Where had that come from? Anyway, it meant a couple more men. They were on the ground, in possession. Most of the canoes were theirs by right of purchase. As to the cache, though we had Nitché McNab's letter, of course that constituted no ownership that they would recognize. If they found the cache, they would keep its contents. But had they found it?

"Not likely," said Toft. "Even if they do, the furs may not be any good. And if they ain't, it might not be worth while hornin' in on that crowd at all. My tumtum would be to go slow on this till you know where you're at. If we was to strike back to where we could look down into the creek bottom at the foot of the cañon, we might find out something."

The suggestion was good. Toft led the way inland through heavy timber. It was a steady climb at first, but when we turned in the direction of the creek the going was better.

"Gettin' near to it now," said Toft. "We ought to be about opposite the

foot of the cañon. Go careful when you git close. A man shows up agin' a sky line."

We looked down into a deep, wooded gorge. Below us, the lips of the cañon spat a torrent of swirling water which, spreading, brawled noisily in a boulder-strewn course of frosted silver. On our side the drop was abrupt, rocky, gray with miniature slides of shale and small stuff. But across the creek the slope was easier, and covered with a growth of fir and spruce.

"I guess that's your hawks' nest," said Toft. "I seem to remember it now."

It surmounted the broken top of a giant fir nearly opposite us. It was by far the largest nest that I had ever seen, a mass of weather-beaten sticks, the size of half a hogshead. Though the treetop was broken, the tree itself was living. Perhaps a century had gone by since the first pair of broad-winged fishers of the air had chosen that broken top for a nesting place and laid their first foundation timbers, wedging them cunningly with beak and claw. And since that time others had followed, adding to the structure as seemed good to them. Now the nest was deserted. No doubt the birds of that season had flown. But, strewn on the nest and caught in the bushy treetop, were the whitened vertebrae of the fish which had nourished them.

"And there is the red rock!" I cried, in excitement.

It lay downhill from the tree, a great boulder, the only one on the hillside visible from our position. How it had come there was a mystery. Perhaps it was a solitary relic of a day when a great ice sheet overlay and overrode the land. But at any rate there it was, just as it had been when Nitché McNab and his henchman had packed in their spoil. And from it a line, like a survey line, had been cut through the undergrowth, no doubt to allow Ballou to sight along the mark for the cache.

Following this line with the eye to our own side of the creek, we could see where they had been working, moving a mass of rubble and slide stuff; and their tools lay scattered about as they had dropped them to take their nooning.

"Knocked off for grub and ain't come back yet," said Dinny Pack. "They've stripped off quite a bunch of stuff."

"Keep down!" said Toft. "They're comin' back now."

They came along close to the creek, Ballou first, walking by himself, then Hayes and McGregor, and the rest of the crew strung out anyhow. But with them were two men whom I did not know.

"By gosh!" whispered Dinny Pack. "Look-a there, Ike!"

"I see 'em," said Toft. "Was them two men in your outfit—I mean the big, black-complected feller and the older one with the whiskers and the handkerchief round his neck?"

"No, they're strangers to us," Dunleath replied.

"They make durn good strangers, too," Pack growled. "But you ought to know 'em, Bob. That big feller is Charlie Simmons—Nootka Charlie that got fresh with your sister—and the old pelican is Siwash George Collins. Both squaw men—more or less—and both bad actors. Me and Ike know 'em, don't we, Ike?"

"Some," Toft agreed briefly. "Which is this here Ballou?"

I told him, and pointed out the others. They picked up the tools and attacked the base of the hill with an energy that told of personal interest. Because they were almost directly below us, we could not see what progress they were making, but there was no doubt that they were working hard.

"Dig, ye gophers!" muttered Dinny. "I always did admire to watch other fellers work!" And quite unconsciously he began to boss them profanely, like a two-fisted Connemara foreman of a

construction gang, only he did it under his breath.

We lay and watched them sweating and toiling among the hot rocks. It was evident that so far they had found nothing, but from their energy it seemed that they believed themselves on the right track. Suddenly one of the men shouted, and the others clustered around him, throwing away the dirt and rubble from one spot. Then Louis Beef sprang in close under the rocks and began to throw out small bowlders the size of a man's head as if they had been cushions. We heard him yell triumphantly.

"I guess they got her," said Toft calmly.

"Looks like it," Dunleath agreed ruefully.

Ballou went out of sight, and Hayes followed him closely. One by one the others disappeared.

"That's her, sure," said Dinny. "Niche McNab's old cache that was all same fairy tale! Well, maybe there ain't a darn thing in her, after all."

But in a minute a man came out with a bale on his shoulder, and another and another similarly laden, and still they kept coming, and the first went back for more. On his last trip, Louis brought out a small keg.

"Them's the furs," said Toft. "I wish I had a dollar for every one of them things I've packed."

They dumped the bales on the ground, and Ballou ripped one open with his knife, while the others crowded closely around him. We watched breathlessly. Now it was to be known whether the contents of the cache was valuable or worthless.

Ballou had a skin in his hands. It looked like the pelt of a fox, and of a black fox at that. The men pressed in and helped themselves to other skins, holding them up, turning them to the light, blowing up the nap of the fur, pulling at it to test its condition.

And then somebody yipped shrilly like a coyote. Another jumped into a few quick dance steps and struck Louis a tremendous blow between the shoulders. Louis caught up the keg, and, holding it tilted to his mouth, made believe to drink from it. The pantomime was more convincing than words. The furs were still good.

They went into bale after bale, apparently with like result, and then they sat down, and the smoke of their pipes rose blue above them. Louis sat on the keg, his legs curled around it, and roared forth an old French chanson, beating a thunderous accompaniment on its sides with his great hands.

"What's in the keg?" I asked Dinny.

"Rum or high wines, I guess. Maybe brandy. Nitcher must have lifted it from one of the posts. And lyin' there twenty years! She'll have a kick like mules." His tongue slid out a little and caressed his lips furtively. "It's six months and better," he said plaintively, "since I had a drink."

"You had enough then to do you six years," his partner returned unfeelingly.

But the inaction of the group below us did not last long. They shouldered a load each and started down the creek.

"Packin' them down to camp," said Toft. "I judge there's about four canoe loads there. Well, they'll have 'em all down by night, and like as not they'll pull out in the morning."

"Unless they're stopped," said Jim Dunleath.

"How was you thinkin' of stoppin' them?" Toft inquired mildly.

"There's only one way," Mr. Fothergill put in. "We'll hold them up, get the drop on them, make them put up their hands."

"Sounds all right," said Toft, "only it ain't always so easy to hold up a big bunch like that. What would you do if they didn't obey orders—when you told 'em to sky their claws?"

"Well"—Mr. Fothergill hesitated—

"of course I wouldn't like to shoot a man. It wouldn't do—wouldn't do at all. There would be a devil of a row about it. But it won't be necessary to shoot. They wouldn't dare refuse, I'm quite positive of that. We can bluff them."

"That system is no good," said Toft. "You never want to start out to hold up nobody with the idee that you're runnin' a sandy. You may show it's a bluff, or you may be slow decidin' what to do if your hand's called. And while you're decidin' you get killed. You want to go in with your mind made up cold to plug any man that don't do what he's told to do and do it quick. With a bunch like this here there's always liable to be one man that'll take a chance. That makes a chance for somebody else, and then she's gen'ral. I don't know this crowd of yours, but I know Nootka and his partner, and I'm tellin' you that holdin' them up ain't no cinch."

"That's right," Dinny affirmed. "We know them two pelicans, and a couple of your crowd is bad-lookin' old-timers. If you want to make it a holdup, me and Ike's agreeable. Only it's got to be understood that if we fill our hands we play 'em for all that's in 'em. How are they fixed for guns?"

"Each of our men had a rifle," Dunleath replied, "and I think one or two have six-shooters. Hayes has—always wears it."

"Bad old rooster, is he?"

"I don't know. As for myself, I never shot anybody or at anybody, and I don't want to. I don't know whether I'm afraid or not. Perhaps I am. There are nine of them and only four of us."

"Five," I amended.

"I'm not counting you, Bob."

"Why not?" I demanded indignantly. "I can shoot a whole lot better than you can."

"Very true. But I'm responsible for your safety, and you won't be in any

holdup deal if I can help it. I promised your folks to look after you."

"I can look after myself," I growled. "I suppose that's some of Peggy's foolishness. She thinks I'm a kid."

"So you are," Dinny Pack put in. "What your sister says goes."

"Mind your own business!" I snapped. "Where do you get action in this, anyway?"

He grinned at me.

"Don't get hostile for a minute, kid. There'll likely be plenty of trouble to go all around. Well, I dunno's I'm hankerin' after no holdup deals myself. I wisht I could work out some other way."

Now with his words suddenly an idea popped from nowhere into my head; but I kept it to myself partly because I was used to doing my own thinking and partly because I was angry with both Dunleath and Pack. They thought I was a kid, did they? Well, I would show them!

CHAPTER XIII.

I PLAY A LONE HAND.

Since there was nothing to be gained by remaining longer, we went back to the shore and our canoe. By that time the afternoon was far gone. The low sun hid itself behind threatening clouds, and a rising wind, coldly edged, began to strain through the treetops. The surface of the lake darkened and soon began to run in little, choppy, white-topped waves. Toft's prediction of a blow seemed to be coming true.

With the darkness we made a fire and had a hot meal. Afterward Toft told us more of Nitche McNab.

"He was too durn cute to camp on that creek when he was shifting the furs," he said. "He must have worked day and night till he got it done, and I guess it would take him about a dozen trips. The only place he built a fire was at the cache he was lifting. It

fooled us all. We combed that country till the weasels got to know us. After the others had quit, I sorter nanitched round by myself for a while. I figgered Nitche or some of 'em might come back, and I was lookin' for 'em, specially Nitche. There was a thousand dollars on his scalp. It wasn't that so much, but I'd got it straight that it was him killed a tillikum of mine." So I was lookin' for him. Yes, I prospected this country pretty gen'ral. That's how I come to this here creek. I went up her to the cañon, and I thought I saw sign of a trail, but I couldn't make sure. I was within ten feet of that cache, and I didn't know it. That's nigh twenty years ago. Funny I should be here now, ain't it?"

While it was quite early, I spread my blankets a little distance from the fire, behind a clump of black birch, where I was in the shadow. After a while the men drew closer together. Toft seemed to be explaining something by means of a diagram which he drew on the ground with a stick. Finally I caught my own name.

"We'll leave him to keep camp," said Pack.

I grinned to myself in the shadow. Keep camp! Nothing was farther from my thoughts. I waited till they had turned in and were sleeping, and then I rolled softly out of my blankets and made my way carefully to the canoe. From it I took a coil of light line, and then I stole cautiously along the shore toward the creek.

Now the idea which had come to me, and which I considered exceptionally brilliant, was to steal Ballou's canoes. And because Dunleath and Pack had chosen to treat me as a child I would accomplish it alone. As I think it over now, I can see that the plan was not only foolhardy, but foolish; but at the time I considered it a Heaven-born conception.

I followed the shore until I came to

the creek, and it was not by any means a stroll on a beach. Most of the way the water lapped right up on the rocks, and there was brush and fallen trees. However, by taking my time and going carefully I got along very well, and at last I could see the distant glimmer of a fire and hear the sound of voices.

This rather upset my calculations, for I had thought they would all be asleep. But I heard a snatch of song and loud laughter, and I thought of the keg of rum, or whatever was in it. No doubt they were celebrating their luck. Well, the more noise they made the less they would hear. And so I went ahead.

Now I do not want to give the impression that I was a young Leatherstocking, or any wonder in the woods. I had merely learned, by still hunting, to move quietly and feel the ground for crackling sticks and so on before I put my weight on it. Also I had learned infinite patience. This was a new kind of still-hunting, and it sent delicious thrills up and down my spine and in the roots of my hair. This was a real adventure, such as I had read of and longed for, and it was all my own. I relished it with the keen zest of boyhood which invariably overlooks and minimizes difficulty and danger, because life runs then so redly and strongly.

Finally I came to the bank above the little shingly beach where the canoes lay. I slid down, and, using great care to avoid noise, turned them over. Then I eased them, inch by inch, into the water, fearful of the grate of stones on their bottoms, though the wind was roaring through the trees. When they all lay with their noses to the beach I took the coil of light line and made the bow of one fast to the stern of the next, so that they would ride in a string behind me when I got into the leading one. I shoved them out so that they rode in deep water. But instead of getting in and going, as I should have done, I hesitated.

Now that I had the canoes—or as good as had them—I wanted to hear what the fur thieves were talking about. They thought they had everything their own way. It would be rich to hear them. I only regretted that I could not be there when they missed the canoes. Finally this foolish desire got the better of prudence, and I made the leading canoe fast, stowed my rifle in it carefully, and crawled up the bank and toward the fire.

Many writers who describe a camp fire speak of the "circle of light" cast by it. You would think there was a definite ring, beyond which nothing was visible. And, of course, if you sit facing a fire you cannot see very far or very much. But if you turn your back to it you can distinguish a man's face or a blazed tree for a surprising distance. Knowing this, I took no chances. They had a big fire, and I kept close to the ground, moving in the shadows, and brought up in a little hollow behind a bush where I could see and hear.

The first thing I saw was that there was a woman in camp. She was a squaw, and she sat a little apart from the rest, mending gloves or moccasins by the firelight. I could not tell much about her, except that she looked like a young woman, and no doubt she belonged to Nootka Charlie or Siwash George. Nor did I derive any satisfaction from the talk I overheard. It had nothing to do with the furs or with their plans. They were telling stories principally, and these were either lewd or blasphemous, and sometimes both. I don't know whether the woman understood them or not, and nobody seemed to care. There was no profit in listening to that sort of thing, and I should have gone anyway. But just then somebody proposed another drink, and Conover discovered that the water bucket was empty.

"I can't down this hooch straight," he complained.

"Who was your nigger last year?" said McGregor. "Get water yourself if you want it."

That settled my listening. I slid back into the shadows and made for the canoes. I cast off with hands that fumbled with eager hurry, jumped into the leading craft, and shoved off into deep water.

In an instant the current took the bow and whirled it out and around. I paddled hard, striving to straighten out my unwieldy string, and as I did so I heard the clank of the bucket bale as Conover came down to the landing. The gravel grated beneath his feet, and then his startled oath burst like shrapnel.

"Canoe is gone!" he yelled. And, an instant after: "I see them. Come on, boys, get a move on! Bring my gun!"

Sudden uproar in the camp answered him. I paddled as quietly as I could, merely keeping the canoe straight and letting the current do the rest. It was taking me lakeward rapidly. I did not know whether Conover had really seen me or not, but no accurate shooting was possible in that darkness. I was willing to take a chance on that. In the excitement of the moment I did not consider the possibility of being hit.

The next moment I did consider it, for a slender shaft of fire lanced the night, and a bullet whined behind me; and, deflected by some branch on the farther side of the creek, it keyholed and wailed away into the darkness in a high-pitched note like some ghostly violin.

I ducked promptly and automatically, though by that time the bullet was far past me. I squatted low in the canoe, but I kept my paddle going. Another bit of lead tore above my head, and a third hit the water in front of me. The man behind the gun was evidently spraying the channel with lead on general principles.

The lake loomed in front of me. I threw every ounce of power into my paddle to gain it, because when I emerged from the background of the creek's bank, although the night was as dark as a cord of black cats, my string of canoes would probably be visible. And of course the men would make for the mouth of the creek on that chance.

Suddenly my paddle jarred and was almost torn from my hand. Bullets sang all around me, spatted and ricocheted on the water, buzzed through the air above my head. Half a dozen rifles blended in a rattling fire. Apparently they were all unhooking their guns straight downstream in the hope of hitting any one who might be there. I dropped flat in the canoe, and waited till the fusillade ceased.

My paddle blade had been split, but I had a second paddle in the canoe, and, working furiously, I emerged from the creek to the lake. In spite of the wind it was calm enough there because the long, narrow point sheltered the creek's mouth. But on the other side of the point I could hear the waves swashing against the shingle, and the trees were bending with the gale.

I drove my heavy string straight out, because there was nothing else for it. I had to get clear of the land before I was seen, wind or no wind, and I had made perhaps more than a hundred yards from the creek's mouth when I heard a yell behind.

After that one yell they wasted no time in hailing, but began to shoot. They could not have seen me more than dimly, and of course they could not see their rifle sights at all. Their shooting was entirely guess as to elevation. Nevertheless, it was close enough to be unpleasant. Several times I heard bullets strike the canoes behind me. They seemed to buzz all around. But this time, with no current to assist me, I had to keep paddling to get out of range as soon as possible. I think they

lost sight of me almost immediately. At any rate, their bullets began to go wide, and they stopped firing as the nose of my canoe lifted to the first surges which came around the point.

Intent on getting out of shot, I was out of shelter before I knew it. Then for the first time I realized the strength of the wind. It ramped down on me like a stampede, took my string of canoes, and blew them to leeward like the tail of a kite, and they dragged me after them. In fact, it was only the drift of the light canoes that enabled me to keep head to wind at all. I was traveling stern first, and all my efforts with the paddle barely sufficed to hold the bow on.

At first the sea was not bad. It was short and choppy, and the canoes jumped and tugged, but as we drifted farther it rose alarmingly, in crested rollers which I did not like at all. I had to shift my weight for'ard of amidships to keep the bow to the wind, for the gale took it and flung it sideways, and I had all I could do to drag it back with the paddle. All the time I was being swept out and down the lake, and the sea got worse. Of course I had intended to bring the canoes triumphantly into shore by our camp, but I soon saw that I could do nothing of the sort, even with one canoe, let alone the lot. I was quite helpless so far as directing my course was concerned. All I could do was to drift and try to do that right side up.

I began to tire with the continued exertion. I was a strong boy; but, after all, I was only a boy with only a boy's endurance. My arms began to weaken with the dig and drag of the paddle. Once the canoe swung and almost broached, and a wave broke inboard, drenching me. I realized that it was impossible to continue head to wind, and the only thing to do was to turn and run before it. This involved abandoning the other canoes, and no doubt

they would drive down on one another in the seas and smash like eggshells. However, I could not help that. I should be lucky if I could slash through the rope which made me fast, without a capsiz.

But just then something happened. Instead of the canoes blowing out behind me, they were swinging around, tail first, and dragging me with them. And then I saw what caused it. The rear canoe of the string was water-logged. Probably it had been struck by bullets and filled gradually. Being water-logged, it did not drift as fast as the others, which blew past it, and, pivoting on it, were turning, stern first, to the seas. My canoe, which had been first, would, by this reversal of things, be last.

For a moment we were broadside on, rolling and tumbling in the trough, jamming together frightfully. White water creamed up yeastily in the darkness, broke, and flung its sprayheads at me. I was hit in the teeth by the top of a wave and almost choked. For a moment I thought I was certainly capsized, but I found myself afloat, digging hard with my paddle, not to keep bow on, but to turn stern to. And then by sheer luck the canoes swung past, straightened out with a succession of jerks, and there I rode to an accidental sea anchor.

With the change I shifted my weight to the other end and went to bailing, for I had shipped considerable water. I got the most of it out, and lay down with my back against a thwart. The canoe tossed and pitched, but the motion was fore and aft, and in that way a canoe will stand almost anything. All the time I was drifting down the lake, and pretty well in the middle of it as nearly as I could judge. It began to rain, in slashing squalls that blotted out the dim shore line, but as I was thoroughly soaked already that made little difference. The wind searched my wet

clothes, with a chill like November. By contrast the water overside seemed almost warm.

After a while the sky cleared partially, and a few stars showed through the driving clouds. But though I had hopes that the rain would have killed the wind it had not done so. If anything, it blew stiffer than ever.

Suddenly, in the ceaseless surge and boil of water, my ear caught a new note. To starboard rose a black bulk against which the water broke solidly. It was one of the small, rocky islands, and I was being driven past it within a few yards. Grabbing my paddle, I worked frantically, but the black shore slid by, and I could see the end of it and the gouts of the tossing waters beyond. And so I bent what was left of the line around a thwart, took the other end in a loop over my arm, and jumped in.

Of course I knew that I could get ashore myself, but I was afraid that the wet line might foul or snarl. Luckily it did neither, and, before it was all paid out, I got my feet on bottom. It was round, slippery bowlders, and the waves threw me off my first footing. But I got ashore just at the lower end of the little island, and snubbed my drifting flotilla so that it swung in with the send of the seas under the lee. Then I emptied out the water they had shipped and drew them up high and dry out of harm's way. And thus, so far, I considered that honors were even. For if Ballou had the furs we had the canoes, without which he could not move his plunder.

CHAPTER XIV.

BALLOU'S EXPLANATION.

However, I was far too cold and miserable to indulge in self-congratulation. I was shivering like a wet puppy, and my first necessity was warmth. There was plenty of dry wood, and I found a

dead cedar and shredded bark from it. I had matches in two empty rifle shells shoved hard together, a contrivance for which I had to thank Ballou. This makes a water-tight joint, just as good as any of the patent match safes that are sold nowadays. I had left my coat in the canoe when I had jumped overboard and the safe in its pocket, but I have left the thing in water for an hour and still had dry matches. Anyway, the first match I struck, after I had found a dry stone to scratch it on, caught, and soon I had a fine fire, before which I revolved like a roast on a spit, my water-shriveled skin sucking in the grateful warmth.

I had built my fire close under a slightly overhanging wall of rock five or six feet high which served as a reflector. As soon as I lost my first chill I stripped and hung my clothes on sticks to dry, squatting on my hunkers like a young cave man in the space between fire and rock, where I was comparatively comfortable by shifting about now and then. When my clothes had pretty well dried I put them on, though they were steaming a little, leaned back against the rock, and slept.

I suppose if I did that now I should wake up with a selection of chills and threatened pneumonia. But when I woke in the gray of dawn I was merely very cold and stiff, and I rebuilt my fire and warmed up again. The wind had blown itself out, and the lake was running in blue ripples in the morning light. The east flushed with rose, and then orange, and the sun came up. I basked in its rays against the rock.

But basking—on an empty stomach—is no occupation for a boy. I had no food, and I wanted breakfast. And so I went up on the island to spy out the land.

It was a small island, not more than four acres or so in area, and I recognized it as one we had passed at a distance on our way up the lake. Far-

ther down was a much larger one. My drift had been about five miles, as nearly as I could judge. Along the distant shores there was neither smoke nor sign of life.

But in the matter of food luck was with me, for I flushed a spruce partridge or fool hen, as we called them. The slow bird took a limb a few feet above my head and sat there blinking at me stupidly. I got her with the second club I threw, and broiled her over the coals on a green, forked stick. It was a poor meal, but a great deal better than none at all. And when I had cleaned up that fool bird to little bare bones I went up on the island to a place where I could see the shore, and sat down, with my back against a tree, to line things up.

In broad daylight my adventure did not look nearly as brilliant as when the idea first struck me. Like most grand-stand plays, it had not accomplished much. I had the canoes, but I had lost my friends. Though Ballou had lost the canoes, he still had the furs, and we were farther than ever from getting them, since he must now know that we were in the vicinity.

It was certain that with the first light the fur thieves would go down the lake, knowing that it would have been impossible for whoever took the canoes to paddle the other way against that wind. They would be searching the shores and watching the lake. They ran a very good chance of finding my outfit, unless the latter had heard the shooting, and, warned by it, had effectually cached themselves. It would never do for me to go paddling out on the lake in daylight, because I should be seen, and if I landed anywhere I would likely be captured if I was not shot. And so I could see nothing for it but to stay where I was until night.

That was a very long day. I found no more fool hens, and not even a rabbit, though I combed the island fine,

and when I got into the smallest canoe at night my stomach felt like a slack drumhead.

I paddled up the lake slowly, looking for the wink of a fire, but saw none. The shores stretched black and grim and lonely mile on mile. Now and then a fish jumped, but save for that and the faint dip and drip of my paddle there was no sound on land or water. For the first time that I remember this night stillness and loneliness got on my nerves. It seemed to threaten. And it was not so much the loneliness, for I was sure that there were a dozen human beings within as many miles. The sensation was more as if something impended, as if the darkness spied on me with unfriendly eyes. Perhaps my empty stomach was mainly responsible. But as I drew near the shore I was as jumpy as a wild animal on a strange range.

My only hope of finding my outfit in the night was to see their fire. Otherwise I could do no more than guess at the place where I had left them, and I was pretty sure that they were no longer there. Finally, after coasting along the shore, and seeing nothing, I made up my mind to land, cache my canoe, and wait for daylight. Then, if I prospected carefully, I might find something. And, anyway, I could kill something to eat.

I spent the night miserably without a fire, because I wished to leave no trace of my landing, and with the light I carried the canoe inland and cached it in thick brush, where it could not be found save by accident. Then I was foot-loose, and I turned my attention to the fool problem.

There were plenty of ruffed grouse rustling their own breakfasts, but they were more canny than the fool hens, and though they treed and perked their heads at me I could not kill them with clubs or rocks because they flew whenever I got into good position, and I was

afraid to shoot lest the sound betray me. But finally luck came my way. Good fortune in this case took the form of a dignified old-man porcupine, ambling along serenely, indifferent to the rest of creation. When I had killed him I skinned him out of his prickly armor, and gathering the driest wood I could find so as to make a smokeless blaze, cooked him as well as I could, and ate nearly half of him. Having eaten all the straight porky I could hold, I searched for, and finally found, the spot where we had camped, but, as I had thought, there was nobody there, and no message. However, I had little doubt that they had gone toward the lower end of the lake, and accordingly I set out to find them.

I prowled along carefully, keeping near the shore, my eyes peeled for any sign of friend or foe. Going thus cautiously, I nearly scared the life out of a young black bear which was rooting like a pig beside a decayed stump. He scuttled out of sight as fast as he could go, leaving me grinning at his hurry and thinking how much lead he would have got in his system if I had not been afraid to shoot. And so I covered four or five miles without the least sign of man. But just as I emerged from a patch of timber and got well into a little glade perhaps a couple of hundred yards across three men emerged from the farther side. I recognized them, to my consternation. They were old Hayes, Peter the breed, and Nootka Charlie.

We saw each other at the same moment, and halted. But old Hayes waved his hand to me in the friendliest way.

"Hello, Bob!" he called, and began to walk forward.

"Hello!" I returned, and began to walk backward.

"Hold on!" he shouted. "I want to see you. It's all right. You needn't be scared of me, boy."

"Who's scared of you?" I retorted valiantly, but backing all the time.

Nootka Charlie twitched his rifle upward.

"You, kid, stay where you are!" he commanded.

"All right," I answered, and stopped. But as he lowered the weapon I wheeled, took two jumps to the right, swerved to the left like a snipe in a gale, and plunged into the bushes with a bullet ripping the twigs six inches from my cheek.

Perhaps the buzz of it in my ear rattled me. At any rate, I tripped, and pitched, headfirst, into the butt of a ten-inch spruce, so that I saw a bunch of assorted stars.

I must have been knocked out for a minute. I came out of the haze slowly, with the sound of Hayes' voice as if far off.

"You've killed him!" he said.

"Why didn't he stand, then?" asked a strange voice querulously. Somebody rolled me over. "Never touched him," the voice continued. "He's just hit his head on something. He'll be all right in a minute."

I opened my eyes, and sat up.

"Feelin' better, Bob?" Hayes asked solicitously. "That's good. What did you run for?"

"What did he shoot at me for?"

"Why, he didn't shoot *at* you," Hayes returned. "This here is Nootka Charlie, Bob. You don't want to have no hard feelin's. It was just a fool joke of his. That was all, wasn't it, Charlie?"

"Sure!" the other confirmed. "I wouldn't have hurt you, kid, not for a million dollars. I just banged into the air for hellery when you started to run. Shake, and let's be friends."

I think he knew who I was, and remembered his experience at our house with Dinny Pack. But he said nothing about that, no doubt thinking I did not remember him, and naturally I said

nothing either. We shook hands, and he helped me to my feet.

"Well, now, I'm durn glad to run into you, Bob," said Hayes. "Where's the rest of your outfit? Where's Dunleath and Fothergill?"

"I don't know," I answered truthfully.

"You don't! How's that? They must be around here somewhere."

"We got separated. I don't know where they are."

"Did you get separated before they took our canoes, or after?"

"Before," I replied. "I haven't seen them since." I was glad he put it in that way.

"And you don't know where the canoes are?"

"No," I lied. "They wouldn't let me in on what they were going to do that night. I don't know where they are, and I haven't seen them since. If they took the canoes in that wind they'd be blown down the lake. I was just looking for them." Feeling that this explanation was rather bald, I elaborated artistically. "You see, they wouldn't let me in on it because I was a kid. They make me tired. They left me on the shore, and they were going to pick me up when they got the canoes. They didn't do it, and I haven't had any grub since, except a fool hen and a porky."

"Well, we'll fix that grub proposition as soon as we get to camp," he said. "There's been a mistake all round. There wasn't no call for them to take the canoes, though the way it must have looked to them I dunno's I blame them much. That Frenchman's a fool. It's him that's to blame for the whole thing. I told Tom at the time, when Louis showed up, that one of us had better take a canoe and go down-river to find you. But he said you'd know him better than to think he'd do anything that wasn't right."

I stared at him in amazement.

"Right!" I exclaimed. "Do you call it right to put up a prospecting bluff and then come back to steal our furs?"

"There!" he said. "That's just what I was afeard of. That's just what I told Tom you'd think. Now you come along to camp and see him, and he'll tell you the whole thing. You've known him for years, and I'll bet you've never caught him in a lie."

If they wanted me to go to their camp there was nothing else for it. His words puzzled me very much. I did not see how Ballou could explain satisfactorily, but I had known him for a long time, and we had been the best of friends. Could we have been mistaken in our estimate of his recent actions?

I pondered over this as we went along. There was not the least suggestion that I was a prisoner. I had my rifle. Sometimes I was in front and sometimes behind. They did not seem to watch me at all.

It was afternoon when we reached the camp by the creek. The Indian woman and Louis seemed to be its only occupants. The latter grinned broadly.

"Hallo, *mon vieux!* So ol' Jackstraws roun' you up, hey? Well, dat's all right. Purty soon we——"

"Where's Tom?" Hayes interrupted.

"Tom, he's pass himself up dat creek."

"I'm goin' for him," said Hayes. "It's just as I said. They think we been tryin' to steal them furs. That's what you done by that fool play of yours. I want Tom to explain the whole thing to Bob here. So don't you go muddlin' things up worse. Bob will understand when Tom tells him."

Louis gaped at him for a moment.

"Well, ba gosh——" he began, and checked himself. "Sure t'ing," he said. "Yas, for sure he's understan' when Tom tells him. Oh, yas! For sure!" He nodded violently with each syncopated exclamation. But nevertheless he seemed like a man who laughs at a joke

because others do, and not because he himself sees the point of it.

However, while Hayes went to find Ballou, he set on the tea pail and gave me bread and cold venison and rice with brown sugar, which was a great deal better than scorched porky.

Nootka Charlie ate also, waited on by his klootchman. She was a young woman, very good looking for a squaw, and neater than most of them; but there was something hard in her face and eye which I did not like. Just once she spoke to Nootka in a tongue that I did not understand, and he answered briefly in the same language. When he had eaten he smoked, and she brought water from the creek and wood for Louis' fire quite as a matter of course, so that evidently Nootka was not trying to convert her to white women's customs. After that she seated herself and went to sewing a pair of moccasins.

Hayes came back with Ballou and Siwash George. But, like Nootka, the latter gave no evidence that he remembered me. Ballou greeted me without the least embarrassment, and went straight to the point.

"Hayes tells me," he said, "that you all think we double-crossed you—that we was tryin' to steal them furs. Is that so, Bob?"

"Of course it is," I replied. "What else could we think? You took us to the wrong lake. You made a bluff at prospecting to get us out of the way. And then, when we found out about this lake by accident, Louis took a stranger's canoe and came back to warn you. Isn't that plenty?"

"Lookin' at it that way, it is," he admitted. "But there's two sides to every story, Bob, and there's been many an innocent man hanged because appearances was against him. You've known me some years, and we've been friends. You never knew me to do anything that wasn't straight, did you?"

"No," I acknowledged.

"So that if I'm crooked now it'll be for the first time," he went on. "I wouldn't play a low-down trick like stealin' them furs, not if they was worth a million. I ain't built that way. Now let me tell you about it:

"In the first place, I was fooled on that lake. I sure thought she was Ahtikamag. I'd have been thinkin' so yet if we hadn't met up with Nootka and George here, and they told me different. Ain't that so, George?"

"Sure, that's so," the old squaw man confirmed. "It was a horse onto you all right."

"I own up to it," Ballou agreed. "Well, then, when I found that out we turned right around and come back, hopin' you'd maybe stayed on the lake for a couple of days. But you'd went. I didn't know what to do. I ought to have sent a canoe after you, but I figured you'd got a long start and it would take a week to catch you. And then maybe for nothing. So we come here to see what things looked like. Well, then, along comes Louis, and on the lower lakes he meets up with Nootka and George, that's comin' along easy behind us. So he come with them. And he tells us you'd run into two strangers and was comin' back with them. So, you see, we was expectin' you."

"But what did Louis leave us for?" I asked skeptically. "And why did he steal that canoe and turn ours loose? That looked pretty bad."

"So it did; it looked mighty bad. He shouldn't have done that. But the size of it is he got rattled. He didn't like them strangers, and he had a notion that they wasn't straight. He heard something that made him think they might try to hold you up for the furs, and the best thing he could think of was to find us. To get time for that he turned your canoe loose, knowin' you'd find it after a while, and he took

theirs. That's how it was, wasn't it, Louis?"

"Dat's it," Louis agreed. I ain't lak dem feller, me. I t'ink mebbe dey roll you for dem fur if dey get de chance."

"If Louis had wanted to set you afoot he would have busted up your canoe," Ballou continued. "I'd have sent him right back, only you was comin' anyhow, and then we found the cache. The very next day we was goin' to load up and start to meet you, only that night our canoes was took. At the time we didn't think of it bein' you, not knowin' you was feelin' hostile, and that's why them canoes got away in the smoke. I guess we didn't hurt nobody, though, and I'm mighty glad of that. Now that's the straight truth, Bob, and so there's no reason for anybody hidin' out. All there is to do is for them to bring back the canoes, load up, and start for home."

Now as he told it, with his steady eyes on mine and his prophetlike beard giving him dignity, the explanation sounded very plausible, perhaps more so than it looks in print. And then I had known him and Louis for years, and they were my friends. Rightly or wrongly, I am slow to believe evil of friends if there is any doubt whatever.

"Well," I said, "that's different, of course. But you can see how things looked to us."

"Sure I can," he said heartily. "Hayes tells me you don't know where Dunleath and Fothergill and the canoes is. Well, of course they're down the lake somewhere. Thinkin' we were out to steal them furs—and specially after that shootin'—they'd lie low, and the more we looked for 'em the closer they'd stay cached. If we went with you they'd think we was maybe puttin' up a job. So the best thing is for you to go out alone and nanitch around and prospect for 'em. You can find sign as well as anybody, and if you go down along the shore and show yourself

plenty, and maybe build a smoke or two or shoot a few times, you'll find 'em. Then you can explain to 'em how they've been barkin' up the wrong tree. We'll all stay right here in camp, so's you can deal it any way you like."

"I suppose that's the best way," I agreed.

"Then that's settled," he said, with an air of relief. "Now come and take a look at these furs. They're most of 'em as good as when old Nitche cached 'em. You're sure a lucky kid to find 'em. I'll bet your sister'll have an outfit for winter such as a princess would give half her crown for. I can just see her at the landin' when we come in with the canoes loaded down."

CHAPTER XV.

IGNACE MOUNTAIN.

My feelings as I set out to prospect for my friends the next morning were very different from those of the day before. Then I had been hungry, and suspicious of every bush and coulee. Now I went along gayly, well fed and light of foot, the joy of strong youth in my heart and its resilience in my limbs.

I suppose most of us who are getting along in life remember rare, far-off days when the sunlight seemed pure gold, and the light breezes extraordinarily fresh and sweet, and the little, crisping waves lispig to the beaches called and called, and their dancing play spoke to us as a babe's eyes to its mother. Or, if our early surroundings were different, it may be that we remember certain days of warm winds, and rippling, brown grasses, and the steady drum of a pony's hoofs; or perhaps it may be the sousing dip and lift of a slicing, creaming forefoot through blue water, and a slash of spray over the weather bow, and the thrumming, deep-sea voice of a tautened stay. But whatever it is we will never forget the

sweetness of those rare, bygone days. At such times it seems to me we must have unconsciously brushed the hem of something better and higher than our everyday lives, and that is why we remember.

At any rate, that for me—at least the early hours of it—was such a day. I could smell the water and the wet rocks and the leaves and earth and moss, and distinguish between their scents. The joy of life saturated my whole being. I felt the impulse which drives a healthy young animal to play, and I traveled fast because of it.

But when I had been going for some hours my superfluous energy worked out. I had fired a shot or two, as suggested by Ballou, but I had built no smokes. Toward noon I found a little, trickling creek, and by the mouth of it I built a fire with a big smoke. Beside this I sat down to rest and eat and to wonder what logically had become of my outfit.

It was clear that they had pulled out in their canoe, no doubt warned by the shooting. And they must have gone down the lake, as they could not have paddled against that wind. They would reason that whatever had happened to me could not be cured. But they would keep a close watch on the lake from some vantage point, and, not seeing any canoes on it, they might deduce a connection between that fact and my disappearance; for if Ballou had both furs and canoes naturally he would have pulled out without delay.

And then I became aware that something or somebody was near me. I had heard no sound, seen nothing, and yet I could feel some strange presence. I looked behind me.

There, scarcely fifteen feet distant, stood an Indian. He was a man of thirty or so, well built, and he had been at one time rather pleasant-featured. But one side of his face was horribly scarred and twisted. His head was

bare, and his hair done in two braids which hung in front of his shoulders. A rifle was tucked under his arm, and a buffalo knife was at his belt.

Having known Indians all my life and found them no worse than other people, according to their lights, I felt surprise merely, mingled with a certain annoyance that he should have been able to approach without my knowledge, for I had a very good opinion of my ears.

"Hello!" I said. "Bo' jou', nitche!"

"Klahó-wya, tenas man," said he, using the Chinook, whereas I had given him the more Eastern form of greeting. And this told me he was from farther west.

Now "tenas man" means small man or boy, as the case may be, and it ruffled my dignity.

"Why do you sneak up behind me—mamook halo noise?" I demanded. "That's a cultus trick!"

"You mamook tumtum," he replied, signifying that I was so lost in meditation that I had not heard him.

"Well, come and sit down, anyway," I said.

As he came forward I saw that his right leg was shorter than the other, so that he walked with a limp. He sat down, and, taking a pipe from his fire bag, filled it with a mixture of tobacco and kinnikinnick, as I could tell by the peculiar, pungent odor of the smoke. He smoked in silence, and I sat in silence, looking at his scarred face.

"Where you come from?" he asked at length.

I told him, and asked him the same question, and he replied that he came from the Smoky River country. He spoke very good English for an Indian, using only an occasional word of Chinook after the first.

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

"Look for fur country. Mebbe trap."

"You have come a long way for it."

"Yas," he admitted, "long way. What name, you?"

"Bob Cory. What's yours?"

"Me Ignace Mountain."

"Are you alone?"

"Yas, all alone," he replied somberly, and frowned at the ground. "Where you camp?"

I told him where Ballou's camp was, and he flicked a quick glance at me.

"How many man stop?"

"Nine men. One woman."

Again his glance flickered at me, a sudden fire in it.

"Mebbe white woman?"

"No, she's an Indian."

He drew a long breath, exhaled a cloud of pungent smoke, and shook his head.

"No good!" he commented. "Nine white men, one klootchman. Mebbe she mesachie klootchman, hey?"

I told him that she was the wife of one of the men.

"What you call him?"

"His name is Simmons—Nootka Charlie, they call him."

"Um!" he grunted. "You think lep-let malieh?"

By which he meant a marriage by a priest; in other words, a proper ceremony. Of course I knew nothing about that, though I did not suppose there had been anything of the kind.

"Um!" he said again. "What they mamook here?"

It was not necessary to tell him about the furs, and I said they were prospecting.

"Hiyu white man stop," he said. "Mebbe other white man him prospect, too?"

"Other white men?" I cried. "Do you know where they are?"

"Ah-ha," he assented.

"I'm looking for them. Will you show me their camp?"

"Him your tillikum?"

"Yes."

"Him tillikum of other white men—tillikum of Nootka Challie?"

I told him they did not know Nootka, and were not especially friendly with the others, but they were my friends.

"No go now," he said. "Bimeby polaklie chako. Mebbe then."

"Why must we wait till dark?"

But he would not answer that, and merely repeated the words. When an Indian gets to repeating himself you might as well argue with a stump. So I gave it up.

"Why you make smoke?" he asked presently, and I told him. "No good," he said. "You come!"

He got to his feet, and limped off without another word, and I followed him because I knew that if I didn't he would just let it go at that and be off on his own business, whatever it was. In spite of his short leg he traveled fast; but he did not go far, though, by accident or design, he seemed to choose the roughest, stoniest walking. He led the way up the sharp shoulder of a rocky butte which commanded a good view of the lake. I could see in the distance the little island on which I had landed with my stolen canoes, and nearer another and larger one. He pointed to the latter.

"Your tillikum stop!" he said.

Well, I wondered why I had not thought of that before. If, somehow, my friends knew that Ballou had lost his canoes, an island would be the most natural place for them to stop. And, anyway, they could see more from an island than from the mainland. I could have found them at any time by paddling down the lake.

"You got canoe?" I asked, and he nodded.

And so I let it go at that, knowing it would be useless to urge him until he got ready. We settled down in the bushes that fringed the summit of the butte. But five minutes afterward Ignace touched my arm and pointed.

Sighting over his hand, I saw the figure of a man moving near the shore, and as he came closer I recognized the half-breed, Peter. The smoke I had made was now faint, but he disappeared, heading straight for it.

Ignace Mountain grinned twistedly at me.

"Smoke hiyu no good," said he. "Him nanitch for you. You no nanitch for him, hey?"

I certainly was not looking for the breed. I wondered why he was prowling there, for Ballou had said they would all stay in camp. I didn't like the look of it. Of course the breed might have some message for me, but I decided to lie low. Presently he came out of the bushes, on the farther side of the little creek, and the last we saw of him he was heading down the lake.

The afternoon dragged on. I slept, but the Indian did not. Whenever I woke he was lying as he had lain at first, flat on his stomach behind the screen of bushes, his somber eyes watchful. He must have been a rather handsome fellow before he had met with the accident which had so horribly disfigured him. I wondered, as I looked at the scars, what had caused them. He caught my glance, and, interpreting it, tapped his twisted face with his finger.

"You look," he said simply. "Bear mamook. Siam."

"A bear did it! A grizzly! Was he a big one? Tell me about it!"

"Not so big; but hyas bad. Me shoot um, think him mimoluse. Bushes thick—so!" He held up his fingers, interlaced, to illustrate. "Me go in. Him no mimoluse. Me shoot again. No good—too close. Then we fight." He tapped the handle of his big knife. "Steep hill, all rock. Roll down um." He twisted over on his back, his left arm held protectively over his face, his right arm jerking in short, vicious stabs. "Me go all same mim-

oluse—all same dead. Bimeby wake up. Bear him mimoluse. Leg bust." He glanced down at his crippled limb. "Hyas bad, you bet!"

"Were you all alone?"

"Yas, all alone. Me hyas sick."

As he told the story in his clipped phrases I could visualize the steep, rocky hillside, the dead bear, and the Indian, his face in tatters, his leg broken, miles from human aid.

"What did you do?"

"Not moch. Too sick. Bimeby—next day—make fire, eat bear meat. Bimeby split sticks to fix leg. Tie him up tight. Then me klatawa."

"How?" I asked.

For answer he put the butt of his rifle beneath his armpit, crutch fashion, and took a stick in his other hand.

"So!" he said simply.

"Great Scott!" I exclaimed. "How far did you have to go that way?"

"Mebbe moxt tahtlum—twenty mile."

I whistled in sympathy. Twenty miles of rough mountain going on an improvised crutch, with a broken leg, albeit roughly splinted, swinging and dangling, a pendulum of agony!

"Could you get a doctor when you got home?"

"No, no doctin stop in my country."

I asked no more questions. He had come through a hard mill, and the memory of it seemed to fall upon him like a deep shadow. He stared somberly into vacancy, with frowning brows and set mouth.

The sun was down when we descended from the butte. Ignace led the way through the growing dusk, traveling with swiftness and certainty. A mile down the lake, in dense brush, he had cached his canoe. And when darkness had fallen completely we put out upon the lake, striking out into the middle of it so as to be invisible from the shore. After half an hour's paddling the island loomed ahead of us. We drew into a little bay, and as the

bow touched the shore a voice from the darkness said:

"Don't get outa that canoe, friends! And don't get funny with no guns!"

"Don't get funny with yours, Dinny," I laughed.

His reply was not flattering.

"Well, by thunder!" he exclaimed. "Ike, I'm an Injun if here ain't that durn fool kid that we thought we was rid of!"

"Can't lose bad money nohow," said Toft's quiet voice, with a chuckle.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOMeward BOUND.

"By George," said Mr. Fothergill, "old Tom Ballou's straight, after all."

"About as straight," said Jim Dunleath, "as a clove hitch."

I had told them my story, receiving theirs in return. Briefly this was that they had been awakened—or, rather, Toft had been awakened—by the sound of shots. Finding me gone, he had sneaked up the shore, as I had done, and, coming within earshot of the camp, had heard enough to enable him to guess the rest. Immediately on his return, they had pulled down the lake in the hope of seeing me. We must have been within a very short distance of each other at one time. They ran clean down the lake, and in the morning searched the shores, beating Ballou to it, but found nothing. The next night they searched the islands, and found the canoes where I had left them. Thus they knew that I was neither shot nor drowned. Then they brought the canoes to the larger island and established themselves there, knowing that I had a canoe, and crediting me with more common sense than I displayed.

"I don't see why you should say that," said Mr. Fothergill, referring to Dunleath's comment. "Just look at this thing sensibly. We all make mistakes.

Tom has owned up to his. His explanation is plausible, isn't it?"

"It's too plausible."

"Nonsense! What's wrong with it?"

"Mostly that I don't believe it. Without the canoes they're ditched, and they know it. They hope to get them back by a nice, smooth story. And I don't like the company Ballou keeps. Those two—Nootka Charlie and his friend Siwash George—are bad actors, aren't they, Dinny?"

"Plenty cultus, both of 'em," Dinny affirmed. "Rustlers, claim jumpers, whisky peddlers, squaw men—they don't make 'em much worse."

"But they haven't a thing to do with the case," Mr. Fothergill argued. "Tom met 'em by accident. They merely told him of his mistake, and came along to show him the ground. We ought to be grateful to them. You're prejudiced, Jim."

"I am," Dunleath replied. "I tell you, I don't trust Ballou."

"Oh, bosh!" Mr. Fothergill returned impatiently. "I've known him longer than you have. Bob's known him longer still. Bob, did you ever know or hear of anything to his discredit—anything he had ever done that wasn't straight?"

"No," I admitted, "I never did."

"And there you are!" said Mr. Fothergill triumphantly. "A man's reputation in the country he lives in ought to count for something. 'By their fruits ye shall know them!' That's Scripture—in case you don't recognize it."

"Speaking of fruit," Dunleath retorted, "did you ever hear of 'a goodly apple, rotten at the core'? Which is Shakespeare, Wally, if it gets past you."

Thus it was nearly a deadlock in opinion. Pack and Toft were conservative, expressing none. For my part, I was betwixt and between, doubtful, but hopeful.

In the morning things came to a show-down. Dinny Pack, who had been to the upper end of the island,

announced that a canoe was coming down the lake.

As it neared our island we saw that Ballou was in the bow and Louis in the stern. Moreover, I recognized it as the one I had cached.

They made straight for the island, and Louis waved his paddle when he saw us. Without the least hesitation, Ballou stepped ashore and held out his hand to Mr. Fothergill.

"So Bob did find you," he said. "Well, I'm glad of that. It shows I had the right tumtum. I guess he's told you how come this mix-up."

"He's told us," Mr. Fothergill replied, "and it's all right with me, Tom. But Dunleath doesn't seem to understand it yet."

Ballou looked Jim Dunleath square in the face.

"What don't you understand?" he asked.

"If you want it straight, Ballou," Dunleath replied, "I find it mighty hard to believe any of it."

"That's plain, anyhow," Ballou acknowledged. "I'd rather have you come out straight than be holdin' something against me. Well, I dunno's I can say any more'n I told Bob. The furs are yours any time you want to take 'em. That ought to be proof enough. But what I want to say special is that the boys feel kind of sore. You see, I had a hard job to get 'em to come back to make another hunt for the cache. They done it out of good will, and because I told 'em it was the straight thing to do; and they had the gold fever pretty bad. Then you come along and lift the canoes. Well, them canoes was theirs—some of 'em, anyway. They bought 'em. This here one belongs to Nootka Charlie. We found it cached a mile or so below camp. Somebody"—his eye dwelt on me for a moment—"landed there and left it. Nootka and his partner don't know you at all, and they're sore, too. If we'd found it before we'd

have been here before, because I figured you was on one of these islands. Now, the boys want to pull out for the place they was headed for before we turned back. They've lost a lot of time over this, and they want to go now. I ain't goin', and neither is Louis. And here's the proposition: Let the boys have two canoes—enough to hold them and their outfit—and buy the others back from them. You got two men here. Me and Louis is two more. We can handle the rest of the canoes, and they'll hold the load. Of course, if you'd rather not have me and Louis that goes without a murmur. Only we're goin' home, and we've sure got to have some way of gettin' there. I guess you wouldn't see us walk."

"No, of course not," said Mr. Fothergill. "Hang it, Jim, this is a fair proposition. What do you say? You're the only one that's hanging back."

Dunleath looked Ballou in the face, and the older man returned his gaze without a waver.

"All right," he said at last. "I'll go you on it, Ballou."

"Shake!" said Ballou, holding out his hand. "Darned if I don't like you better for talking out in meetin'. Now, the boys will pull out quick as they get canoes. So if you'll let us have the two now we'll tow 'em to camp, and you can come along when you get ready. You'll find us there. You see," he added, with a quiet smile, "I'm not stackin' you up against a crowd you maybe think is hostile."

They departed, towing the canoes. Mr. Fothergill would have followed them at once, to show that he held no mistrust; but Jim Dunleath would not go. A couple of hours afterward the canoes passed, the paddlers hitting a steady stroke. They waved at us, and went on without stopping.

"Just as I told you," said Mr. Fothergill. "You can depend on whatever Ballou tells you."

"Except as to lakes and such trifling things."

"I wouldn't have your suspicious mind," Mr. Fothergill retorted, "for all the furs between here and Point Barrow. Why did you shake with him if you're going to talk that way?"

As we began to stow our dunnage, Ignace Mountain held out his hand to me.

"Goo'-by!" said he.

"You come with us," I said, "and we'll pay you well."

"Certainly," said Jim. "Another good paddler will come in handy."

"No," Ignace refused. "Me klatawa now."

And, so saying, he shook hands all around, and, having received part of a sack of flour and some tobacco, got into his canoe and went down the lake with swinging, driving strokes.

"That Injun," said Dinny, "is lookin' for a fur district, is he?"

"That's what he told me."

"Well, he's sure got a poor outfit. I'll bet he ain't got fifty pounds of grub. And no traps that I could see. Course, he can make deadfalls. But he ain't got no outfit to winter on."

"An Indian doesn't require as much as a white man," said Mr. Fothergill, with an air of knowledge. "He can draw subsistence—food and clothing—from the wilderness."

"He'd a durn sight sooner draw them from the company," Dinny returned. "You read that stuff in books, but it don't go. I s'pose before there was tradin' posts the nitches wiggled along without 'em—had to. But you can bet that an Injun nowadays outfits the best he can. When he goes out for the winter he takes all he can pack—if he can get it."

"Perhaps he couldn't get it."

"A good hunter can always get it—unless he's crooked, somehow. This fellow ought to be good. He's a long way off his range. It don't look natural to

me. I wouldn't wonder if he was in some sort of trouble."

"What do you mean?" Dunleath asked.

"Well, he may have slipped a knife into some other nitche, or shot him and had to pull out. You can't tell."

"That ain't our business," Toft pointed out.

"Course not," Dinny agreed. "Far's I'm concerned he could have cleaned out his whole band if he wanted to. If he come through that scrap with the bear, like he told Bob, he's a game nitche all right. Seems to be sorter lyn' low. I noticed he wasn't in sight while we was talkin' to Ballou and the Frenchman."

That was so, though nobody else had noticed it at the time. We embarked, and after bucking a head wind which had arisen reached the creek, and made up the stiff current, finding Ballou and Louis waiting for us, the latter with a good meal ready.

It was quite like old times to see Louis around the fire juggling grub. Dinny and he seemed willing to let bygones be bygones. All outwardly was harmony, and so far as I could see it was real enough.

Naturally I was jubilant. There were the furs. After all, things had turned out right. I saw opening before me the fulfillment of a number of boyish dreams. Now I would work no more on the ranch. Instead, I would go to the far North, with Dinny and Toft, if I could hire them, and hunt and fish and wash gold from the sands, and rove winter and summer to my heart's content. Uncle Fred should have money to meet his payments. And Peggy, who longed for cities and such truck, should have what her heart desired. For to me my share of the furs seemed wealth inexhaustible and limitless.

"Well, Bob, what are you going to do with it?" Jim Dunleath asked, and

I started, for I had not heard him come up behind me.

"How did you know what I was thinking of?"

"Guessed, mostly. I've been making a few plans myself."

"What kind of plans?"

"You'll probably be surprised," he said. "But the first thing I'm going to do is to marry your sister—that is, if she'll let me. I haven't asked her yet."

I grinned at him.

"I suppose you think that's news. Why didn't you take a chance the night you said good-by? You held her hands long enough. I sure thought you were going to kiss her."

"What the devil do you know about that?" he demanded, reddening, and I told him.

"I guess Peg will marry you," I predicted confidently. "Any one could see she was gone on you. But you ought to have seen how hostile she got when I told her so."

"You told her so? You young brute!"

"That's what she said. I don't see what there was to get mad about, but she swung on my ear. It was a real punch, too. You want to look out for her right if you marry her."

"She ought to have taken an ax to you. That was a deuce of a thing to say."

"I didn't mean any harm."

"Hell's full of people who didn't," my prospective brother-in-law growled. "Well, the only reason I didn't ask her then was that I was as poor as Pharaoh's lean kine. I decided to wait and see how we came out on this. Now it looks all right—if we don't slip up somehow."

"What can we slip up on?"

"I don't know," he replied. "That's what bothers me."

Of course he was referring to Ballou, and I considered him unreasonable.

The days that followed served to confirm me in that opinion.

We made an early start the next morning while the dawn fogs still hung heavy on the lake, shrouding island and bay and headland in clinging gray drapery.

Dinny Pack and I were together in one canoe. Bales of fur were piled between us. Ahead, in the fog, Louis Beef's big voice was raised in some almost forgotten voyageur's song, such as his kind had sung for generations on the water highways of the great North in red dawns and purple twilights. The tunk of unseen paddles punctuated it. I felt quite like one of the old voyageurs, companion of Champlain or Radisson, as I swung my own paddle, tracking the invisible canoe ahead by the running swirl of its wake.

CHAPTER XVII.

TREACHERY.

"May as well pull in here and camp," said Ballou, resting on his paddle. "I guess we'll have to portage them rapids. If it was high water and the canoes was light, and a dump didn't matter much, I'd run 'em. The way it is I guess it would be risky."

"It'd be taking a chance," Toft agreed. "There's one or two bad dips, and the way the water is now like as not we'd hit."

Below us sounded the sullen grumble of fast water. The river there ran between steep rocks, so that there was no foothold for lining down. On our way in we had been forced to portage half a mile or more over a poor trail. Ballou had hoped to run the rapid coming back, but the water had lowered dangerously.

Deferring to this experienced advice, we went ashore and made camp. Though it was earlier than usual, none of us felt like tackling the packing job on the heel of a day's hard paddling;

nor did most of us look forward to the carry on the morrow with much pleasure, though of course it was all in the day's work. My experience has been that nine white men out of ten absolutely hate packing. Indians, of course, are different. But then nobody but themselves knows what they really think about it.

But Louis seemed to rather enjoy the prospect.

"You t'ink mebbe de ol' pea soup he ain't so good lak he used to be," he said, with a grin. "Ba gosh, I show you! I bet any man five dollaire I pack five hundred on dat portage if I get heem on my back."

"I'll bet any man *I* don't," said Dinny. "'Bout two hundred is my limit, and I'd rather pack one."

"I bet ten dollaire!" Louis declared encouragingly.

"Bet with yourself and win," Dinny told him. "I seen a man pack eight hundred once. Me, I hate packin'. It's a Siwash's job. I wisht we was at the foot of that portage."

Louis grinned widely.

"You mak' lot of fuss 'bout not'ing," said he. "You ain't want to holler before somet'ing hurt you. Mebbe you ain't have to pack so moch lak you——"

"Shut up, Louis!" rasped Ballou sharply.

"Well, I'll jus' tol' him not for worry," said the big Frenchman. "If I'm young man lak heem——"

"That'll be all," Ballou ordered. "You're too blame fond of pickin' at people. It's made trouble for you before now."

Louis said no more, but he kept his grin, and chuckled to himself as if he had some private joke.

This was the first jarring note that had been struck in the five days that had elapsed since we left the lakes. Louis had been consistently cheerful and obliging, quite his old self. The way he handled his cooking job was

enough to make him popular. He could rustle a meal quicker than any camp cook I ever saw, no small consideration when you land tired and wolfish at night. He was an artist with a fire. At his will it seemed to burn brightly or produce beds of coals; while for others it would merely smoke and blacken. Ballou was the same as ever; capable, quiet, considerate, doing more than his share of the work. He and Mr. Fothergill were on the best of terms again, and the latter was planning a shoot in the late fall, on which Ballou and Louis should accompany him.

Now when we had eaten there was still an hour's light, and it occurred to me that I might occupy that time more profitably than by loafing in camp. Not that I wanted to do any packing, but we were low on meat, and I thought I might get a deer. Accordingly I picked up my rifle, and sauntered away as casually as I could, for I never liked company when hunting.

Once clear of the camp, I struck back and to the north, away from the portage. But when I had gone half a mile, to my disgust, the light wind which had been in my face switched to the south. There was no use hunting down wind, and so I turned around and angled off southward. This course finally brought me past the camp and opposite the fast water of the long rapid, at which no deer could drink because of the steepness of the banks. Therefore I put my best foot foremost to get below the portage while the light lasted.

I turned toward the river, and slipped along noiselessly, and at last I came upon what looked like a well-used runway, winding in and out, but trending in the direction of water. I followed it until I came close to the river below the rapid and the portage, where the banks were flat and the water swirled in pools, and there I established myself in a jumble of rocks at the edge of a spruce thicket.

As the light began to fail, away up the game trail something moved, a shadow among shadows. Gradually it seemed to detach itself, and I made out the shape of a young buck. But he seemed suspicious. Instead of coming forward boldly to drink, he halted, took a few steps, and halted again, this time half hidden from view. With that, and with the poor light, accurate work was impossible, and so I waited for a better chance. But he remained indistinct against a shadowy background. Possibly he had winded me, or perhaps my footsteps beside his accustomed trail had given some warning to his sensitive nostrils.

Suddenly I caught the white of his lifted flag, and then the bounding thump of his sharp hoofs. Whatever he had found to verify his suspicions, he was gone. Disgusted, I rose from my shelter, my hope of fresh meat vanishing. And then I ducked back into cover again, for from downstream I saw the figure of a man coming toward me. Just why I cached myself so promptly I do not know. I suppose I merely obeyed some primal, furtive instinct common to boys, savages, and wild animals. But as the man came nearer I recognized him. It was Hayes!

I drew a long breath of amazement and lay very still. What on earth was Hayes, whom we had supposed a hundred miles or so to the north, doing there? All my suspicions, which had been laid, sprang to life. I determined to follow him and see what he was up to.

But, opposite me, he halted, and, after scanning the foot of the portage for a moment, came over and sat down on a rock not twenty feet from my place of concealment. I heard him grunt and curse as some twinge caught his old body, and in a moment the smoke of his tobacco drifted across my nostrils. Very cautiously I raised myself and took a peep at him through the conceal-

ment of bushes. He sat smoking, facing upstream in an attitude of attention, as if expecting something or somebody. But whom?

For five minutes nothing happened. Then he whistled, and from the distance it was returned. A second figure came out of the dusk, a man, tall and bearded—Ballou! As I recognized him I sank low and almost held my breath.

"I begun to think you was hung up somewhere," said Hayes. "I looked for you last night."

"Too much pilgrim," Ballou returned. "Heavy loads and late starts. Dunleath won't leave the furs in the canoes nights. It's a case of load every mornin'. There ain't a chance to get 'em the way I thought."

Hayes swore. "So that she comes to a show-down at last, does she?"

"That's about the size of it," Ballou agreed.

"And that's what I told you from the start," said Hayes. "I told you these foxy plays was no good. They never won for me yet. My tumtum was to take 'em right to Ahtikamag, and as soon as we found the cache hold 'em up and leave 'em with about one gun and some grub. They'd have got out all right. There wouldn't have been no trouble—just two pilgrims and the kid. Instid of that you go fixin' it foxy, and what happens? Why, they meet up with two old-timers, that's both bad med'cine if I know anything—specially that Toft, I ain't sure I ain't seen him some place—and we have the bad luck to run into old Siwash George, and he's wise in a minute when he sees us pirootin' round that country, and he rings himself in and his partner, too. That's two more to split with. Then they kapswaller them canoes, and you make a fool dicker to git 'em back, and you say leave it to you, and we'll git the furs without no rough stuff, and without hurtin' nobody. You make me tired, Tom. The way to work a holdup

is with a gun. That's clean and simple, and you git what you start out to git."

"That's all right," Ballou returned. "I thought we could get them furs without no one but ourselves knowin' it. That was worth tryin' for, wasn't it? The country ain't like it used to be, when, if you killed a man, all you had to watch out for was his friends. If we could have got away with it we could have lived the way we been livin' and nobody the wiser. I've had a price on my scalp before now, and so have you, and it ain't pleasant. Well, I've done my best to get the furs without trouble, and it don't seem to work. I guess we'll just have to take 'em."

"Sure!" Hayes returned grimly. "When?"

"To-night," Ballou replied. "The farther we go the shorter start we get, and to market them furs the way we want to we'll need all our time."

"Now you're whistlin'!" Hayes grunted. "How will we do it?"

"Jump 'em in their blankets," Ballou answered. "Toft's the only one that don't sleep like a winterin' bear. He's about as wide awake as a weasel, but I'll look after him. Louis will handle the redhead—he's achin' to do it. Dunleath's the only other one that's any use, and McGregor can fix him. Make it for about one o'clock in the mornin'. I'll be listenin' for you."

"Good enough," Hayes agreed. "I'd ruther do it with a gun, like I'm used to, but mebbe this is better. Only no durn nonsense about this, Tom. Them furs are ours. We've earned 'em. When I think of the days when we was with old Nitch McNab—me and you and Louis—and how we mushed and starved and froze, and then was et alive by flies and hunted like wolves for the bounty on our scalps, you bet no man's goin' to stand between me and them skins. I'm playin' this with no limit. I don't want to hurt nobody, no more than you do, but by——"

His speech trailed off into crackling blasphemy. I listened with a very queer feeling in my stomach. Now, for the first time, a number of things were made plain. Hayes and Ballou and Louis had been Nitch McNab's men, members of that band of raiders who had harried the great company before I was born. It was due to Ballou's prudence merely, and not to his scruples, that we had not been robbed of the furs long ago. Now he had discarded both scruples and prudence. We were to be overpowered in our sleep, set afoot in the wilderness. All my plans for my future and for Peggy's future were to be knocked in the head.

I crouched among the rocks, quivering with impotent rage. I felt a wild, savage desire to shoot them both as they sat. I rose to peer out at them, and, as I did so, my arm dislodged a loose stone, which fell and, striking another, set up a most infernal clatter. I heard a deep oath from Ballou.

"Something in them rocks!" snarled Ballou. "If it's somebody——"

But I waited to hear no more, for I knew about what would happen if I were caught. Bent double, I dodged around a big, upstanding boulder, and made a leap across an open space for another at the edge of the spruce. But in the opening I was seen and recognized.

"It's that kid!" snarled Hayes. "He was listenin'!"

"Don't shoot!" Ballou cried. "They'll hear——"

"Let em!" roared Hayes. "What'll they hear if he gits away?"

Bang! The bullet hummed past my ear, and five others followed it as fast as he could work the gun. But, old hand as he was, he missed me completely. For I was going through the semidarkness in the brush like a scared cat, dodging and twisting like a rabbit, and he had to shoot principally by guess and the noise I made.

I came out on the far side of the spruce, and went across a hundred yards of open in the quickest time I ever made. I think I broke all records for the next cover. Just as I reached it, Ballou brought his rifle into action. I recognized the higher power of the weapon by the wicked zizz of the projectile even before I heard the ringing, clean-cut smack of its report. With a little more light he would never have missed me, but I suppose he allowed too much foresight in the twilight, and shot high.

Now I have never been one to turn the other cheek to the smiter. As a means of terminating hostilities I consider a fast, hard counter far more effective, as well as preferable. Even when I was running and dodging I was full of anger at being shot at as if I had been a hunted beast. And, so the minute I got into the second cover, I jumped behind a tree, raised my rifle, and cut loose at Ballou.

But what with excitement and exertion I could not steady my hands. The muzzle twitched uncontrollably. And when, after the second ineffectual shot, I jammed the gun against the tree for steadiness, my enemies had taken cover. I pumped three shots on general principles, and Ballou fired at the flash of the third, the bullet striking the tree in front of me with a swift "pluck." However, I had checked them, and I left them to figure it out, while I made tracks for camp.

I burst into it, badly winded from my haste.

"What's up, Bob?" cried Jim Dunleath. "What was all that shooting?"

"Ballou and Hayes tried to get me!" I gasped. "The whole crowd is on the river below here. Hayes and Ballou and Louis—— Oh, look out for Louis! Stop him!"

For at my words Louis Beef began to step backward softly. As I uttered his name he turned and bounded for

the brush as lightly as a lynx, in spite of his years and bulk. Before any one could make a move to intercept him he was gone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE STAND-OFF.

"Come on," said Toft, when, having recovered my wind, I had given them a more connected account, "we ain't got a minute to lose."

"What are you going to do?" asked Mr. Fothergill.

"Pull!" Toft replied. "This ain't no place to work a stand-off—too much brush and no chance for clear shootin'."

"But do you think——"

"Get a hump on you, Fothergill," Dinny interrupted. "Quit talkin' and grab your iktas. We got to be in them canoes quicker'n scat. Fly at it now. Load everything in a hurry."

Luckily the canoes were but partially unloaded. We piled in what had been taken out without waiting to stow, shoved out, and made for the opposite bank. Hugging it closely, we paddled upstream, but we could not have gone more than five hundred yards when we heard a shout and a clamor of voices from the site of our camp.

We paddled on steadily for half an hour, and then held a council of war.

"Their canoes is below the rapids," said Toft, "and that's lucky. They won't be able to get 'em over the portage before mornin' likely. That gives us a chance to organize ourselves."

"Do you seriously think they'll try to take the furs by force?" Mr. Fothergill asked.

"If Ballou and them was with Nitche's bunch there ain't no doubt about it," Toft replied. "Nootka and Siwash George would be in any play like that, too. If you want to keep them furs you got to fight for them, that's my tumtum."

"It's a safe supposition, anyway," Dunleath agreed.

"Well," said Dinny, "all we can do is to keep on goin' till we find some place that looks good. We want to get something like a hill at our backs and clear ground in front. In this brush we wouldn't have no show."

If it has ever been your lot to paddle all day, and then at night turn around and buck a current with a heavily loaded canoe, you know that it is no joke. Always against your weary arms and shoulders there is the unwearied pressure of the current, no matter how cunningly you strive to take advantage of eddies and backwaters. The moment you relax your efforts the dark banks, which seem to be passing you so slowly, stand still; and if there are other canoes these draw away from you, and you must fight back your lost distance at the cost of extra exertion.

The first gray of dawn found me swinging my paddle doggedly, but mechanically, with the snap and drive of the effective stroke all gone. There were cold cramps between my shoulders, and I was dog tired to my very bones.

But dawn revealed also a broken country. Along the river bank it was still heavily bushed, but back from that, perhaps a quarter of a mile, rose a steep hill with outcroppings of bare rock. Toft and Pack landed to investigate, and shortly returned with a favorable report.

"Good as we can hope for," said the former. "Anyway, we got to get off this river. By swampin' out a trail a little ways we can pack in the whole outfit, canoes and all. We'll have to do that. It's some job, but it's a case."

Toft and I swamped a trail while the others packed, and, when we were through, we helped them. I staggered in under the foot of the hill with my first load, and saw the place which Toft had chosen.

It was at the base of the rocky hill, which afforded positive protection from the rear. Boulders and huge fragments which had fallen would give shelter in front. There the ground was fairly open for several hundred yards. On the whole, we might have searched far for a better natural defensive position.

At last we finished the job, and I was glad of it. It seemed to me that I could not have carried another load. And Jim Dunleath and Dinny, who had worked like demons, apparently matching their strength and endurance, frankly lay down and panted.

"Of course they'll see the trail we swamped out," said Toft; "but they'd find us anyhow. They'll have a man or two on each side skinnin' the banks for sign, and the rest will come up in the canoes. There wouldn't be much get past them."

Dinny went back to the river to keep watch, and I went to sleep. I woke with the sound of his voice.

"They're comin' just about the way you said, Ike. Some of 'em must be ashore, for they ain't all in the canoes."

"Let 'em come," said Toft. "While we're waitin' we may's well pile up a few more rocks."

While I had slept they had been busy constructing a breastwork of stones, and it made an excellent shelter. I helped them add to it, and, while we were working, the half-breed appeared. For a moment he stood watching us, and then disappeared.

When he returned the whole crew came with him. They halted well in shelter, but Ballou walked straight toward us. He was unarmed, and as he came he held up his right hand, palm toward us.

"Peace sign," said Dinny. "How close is he to come?"

"All the way," said Dunleath. "If he wants to talk we may as well hear him."

Ballou came up, picking his way carefully among the rocks. He smiled grimly at our breastwork.

"You look sorter organized," he commented.

"That's exactly the idea," Jim Dunleath told him.

"All right," he returned. "Now let's get right down to case cards. I want to make you a proposition about them furs."

"No use," said Dunleath.

"Don't get stiff-legged in such a hurry," Ballou reproved him. "Let's talk things over sensible. I'm willin' to go through them furs now, sort and grade 'em with you, and give you folks a third of 'em and call it square. How does that strike you?"

"Seeing that the furs are ours," said Dunleath, "it strikes me as a pretty nerry proposition."

"Never heard of such gall in my life!" Mr. Fothergill exploded wrathfully. "We know you for the infernal rascal that you are, Ballou. We know that you were with Nitche McNab. You can't fool us any longer."

"So Bob heard that, did he?" said Ballou, with a cold glance at me. "Well, I *was* with Nitche, and so was Hayes and Louis, and I guess you know that, too. We went through a hard racket, and in the end we lost the furs by Nitche liftin' the cache. All the same we consider 'em ours. You've got no right to 'em at all, but you had the luck to find the letter, and for that we'll give you a third, like I said."

"Generous of you!" Dunleath commented. "Why didn't you make that proposition back on the lakes?"

"I only make it now to save trouble," Ballou admitted brazenly. "That's what I've been tryin' to do all along. If I'd listened to Hayes you'd have been held up at the lakes to start with. But I thought it would be better to get you out of the country quiet and easy. Then, when you come back and spoiled

that play, some of the boys was for bushwhackin' you along the river. I wouldn't let 'em do that. I don't want to hurt nobody now, and nobody would have been hurt last night. We'd just have taken the furs, that's all."

The old raider spoke quietly, in the most matter-of-fact way. It was as if we had done him an injury, for which he forgave but reproved us.

"I'm tellin' you these things," he went on, "so's you'll savvy how the land lies. From first to last I've tried to steer clear of trouble. I've seen too much of that. But all the same I want to make it clear that we're goin' to have them furs. I've made you a fair proposition. I make it again. If you turn it down we'll just take what we want any way we can get it. There'll be somebody killed, like as not. I don't want that, and I don't suppose you do."

"You can't kill anybody nowadays and get away with it," said Mr. Fothergill. "You can't bluff us a little bit."

Ballou shook his head at him, as if he had been reproving a foolish child.

"About gettin' away with a killin'," he said, "it don't help them that's killed whether we do or not. That's a chance we take. But if you think I'm bluffin' I've just wasted my time. I hope you don't think that—the rest of you that has more sense than him—because if you do you're awful wrong."

If the matter had not been so serious I would have laughed at Mr. Fothergill's face. But as it was, Ballou's quiet words carried conviction far better than any bluster.

"Whether you're bluffing or not," said Dunleath, "we turn your proposition down cold. We're going to keep the furs, and you can do what you like about it."

"You're making a mistake," Ballou told him. "A third of them furs ain't a bad stake."

"The whole is that much better," Dunleath replied.

"Oh, well," Ballou returned, "if that's the way you look at it I'm just wastin' time. I'm sorry we can't deal, but it ain't my fault. So long."

He turned and walked slowly away. At thirty yards he paused to light his pipe, and, I think, to give Dunleath an opportunity to call him back. He rejoined his outfit, and we lost sight of them.

"I wouldn't show myself too much," said Toft. "Things is liable to happen any time."

Five minutes after, a bullet bit against the rock behind us, and the report of the rifle racketed back and forth between hill and river timber. Ballou had delivered his ultimatum. This was his declaration of war.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE NIGHT ATTACK.

Mr. Fothergill picked up the flattened lead and dropped it with an exclamation.

"Didn't you know it was hot?" Dinny Pack grinned. "The twist of the riflin' does it. Keep your head down." For Mr. Fothergill had raised it dangerously.

"Don't be in no hurry to shoot," Toft advised. "Nothin' worries the other feller more than to act like his shootin' didn't bother you. By and by he gets careless or nervous, and gives you a chance."

"You talk as if you'd been there before," said Jim.

"Me?" Toft replied mildly. "Oh, well, I've talked with men that ought to know."

"You could get some pretty fair pointers just talkin' to yourself," said Dinny. "Now look: There's some feller down by that big rock in the middle of them saskatoons."

"I don't see nothing," said Toft.

"The bushes moved," Dinny asserted.

"Somebody's there, all right. I've a notion to stir him up."

"Save your ca'tridge till you get a good chance," Toft advised.

For a long time after that first shot nothing happened. We saw nobody, but we heard the sound of a distant ax.

"Makin' a camp of it," said Toft. "That shows they ain't in no hurry."

"Bluffin'!" said Mr. Fothergill, with conviction. "Pretty soon that old rascal, Ballou, will come along with a new proposition."

"He wants to have a bullet-proof proposition when he does come," Dinny commented grimly.

"Oh, he ain't bluffing," said Toft. "There ain't no bluff about them. Only thing is, they ain't made up their minds yet how to play the hand. They may wait till dark."

"And then rush us?"

"More'n likely. But they may shoot us up a little before that."

The latter prediction came true. Presently we could see half a dozen of them in the distance. And then they vanished. Not a man was visible. The front seemed absolutely clear; but we knew that they were worming their way into range, taking advantage of tree and rock and bush, after the manner of the old Indian fighters.

A bullet spatted on a rock and glanced, leaving a gray streak of lead. As if this had been a signal, half a dozen rifles opened on us. Here and there, in front and to right and left rose white smoke puffs; but so carefully did the marksmen keep under cover that we could see nobody.

"Lay low," Toft advised. "This don't cut no ice. They can keep this up all day and not hit no one except by accident."

It is astonishing how readily one becomes accustomed to being shot at. At first I was nervous, not needing Toft's injunction to lie low. But in a few minutes I listened to the popping of the

rifles and the sing and rap of lead with comparative indifference. Only I earnestly desired to do some shooting myself.

"That sport over there in them bushes," said Dinny, "is too durn reg'lar in his habits. Also he's got too good an eye. He's hit the chink between these here rocks twice. Next time he shoots let's all take a chance about two foot under his smoke. Somebody might catch him."

I wiggled around on my stomach and trained my sights upon the distant clump of saskatoons. I stared and stared just above the sights until my eyes blurred, while my heart pounded hard in my ears. A white puff, like so much wool, rose among the bushes. I caught it fair with the bead, dropped my muzzle a fraction of an inch, and pulled. The report of my rifle blended with Dinny's, and on the heels of it came others. Leaves and twigs flew in the distant bushes as the lead swept them. I thought I could see a movement, and fired again, but whether I had hit anything or not I could not tell.

"Do you think we got him?" I asked, fervently hoping that we had; for, while human life is theoretically sacred, it is quite a different matter when the gentleman whom it animates is trying his best to deprive you of yours.

"I sure hope so," Dinny replied. "Anyway, I'll bet he's a durn sight more careful."

There was no more shooting from that particular clump of bushes, but a few moments afterward a shot came from the right of it, where there was an old, uprooted windfall. But from there the hawk-eyed marksman, whoever he was, had lost his pet target, the chink between the rocks.

Soon the firing ceased altogether. The afternoon passed, and night came.

"If they come swarmin' in on us," said Toft, "a little light would be handy. There's kerosene for that lantern of

yourn. I'll just keep it handy to douse onto a sack rolled around a rock. Touch that off and fire it out in front, and they'd be in the light and we wouldn't."

Among other plunder which I considered quite superfluous Mr. Fothergill had brought a lantern and a big can of oil. Now it seemed likely to come in handy. Dunleath and Pack had the first watch, and after that Toft and Fothergill. They told me to sleep, and I was quite ready to do so. I rolled up in a blanket, curled down in the lee of a rock, and knew no more till I was shaken hard. I started up.

"Quiet, Bob!" said Toft's voice. "I guess they're comin'. Keep down low, and shoot low when you have to."

I made sure that my magazine was full, and found myself crouching beside Jim Dunleath.

"How are the nerves, Bob?" he asked, in a whisper.

"Pretty jumpy," I confessed. "But I'll be all right when she starts."

"Of course you will. I'm shaky myself. Always was before anything big. It's good to be a little high strung. You can go farther on your nerve if you can get it working. But this is a new game to me. Bob"—he hesitated for a moment—"Bob, if anything happens to me, I'd want Peggy to know about how I felt toward her—you understand?"

"That you wanted to marry her, you mean? Sure. I'll tell her—if I get through myself and you don't."

"That's the idea. Only not just that alone. Tell her that I loved her—a lot—and used to talk to you about her and make plans for the future."

"When did we do that?" I asked densely.

"We didn't. But that sort of thing helps a woman at times. And take good care of her. She's to have my share of the furs. I've told Fothergill."

"Quit talkin'!" hissed Dinny. "Listen!"

At first I could hear nothing but the

pound of the blood in my ears. But as I listened intently I could catch faint sounds—an occasional cracking of twigs or low grate of displaced stones.

"Get ready!" Toft whispered. "I won't touch off the flare till they rush."

What happened immediately after that has always been so confused that in all the intervening years I have never been able to sort it out clearly in my mind, in spite of the fact that my own part in it was exceedingly short.

Toft's rifle stabbed the darkness with a ten-foot lance of flame. Momentarily it lit up a narrow lane walled with black. At the farther end of it a man crouched, with stubby cheeks and working jaws and eyes fierce as a beast of prey's, and I knew him for Nootka Charlie. His rifle flamed in answer. The night was streaked by swift lines of fire, rent by shots and oaths; and through the din of the fight there came a sudden, high-pitched scream.

Of my brief part I can say but little. Forgetting caution, I was on my feet, emptying my rifle at those streaks of flame which momentarily outlined figures. A form, giantlike in the darkness, sprang up in front of me, and I jammed my rifle muzzle against it and pulled trigger, only to hear the hammer click with sickening emptiness. The next moment it was wrenched from my hands. And the next thing the world collided with the sun, or the other way about. At any rate, I lost my grip on things material and fell a long way through space into outer and utter darkness.

CHAPTER XX.

IN THE ENEMY'S CAMP.

I suppose I should thank Heaven for a thick head. I came back to the world of living men with a most infernal throbbing in it, pain in my eyes, and an evil taste in my mouth. In my ears there was a mumble of voices, and as

my head cleared I listened to a jangle of vivid blasphemy.

But the voices were not those of my friends; nor was I behind the rock barricade, but being carried, jolted along on somebody's shoulder as if I had been a sack of flour. The shoulder beneath me was vast, and when I heard a rumbled French execration I knew that Louis Beef was my bearer.

Behind us came two men with something between them which sagged toward the ground. Even in the darkness I could see that it was the body of a man, horribly inert, the arms trailing, the legs forked on either side of the leading bearer. Behind them were other men, stumbling and cursing in the darkness. And by their language, as my scattered wits gathered themselves, I knew that the attack had been a failure.

But in a few minutes we came to their camp, where Nootka's klootch was squatting by the fire, feeding it to a blaze. Louis dumped me down with little ceremony, and turned my face toward the light. But I kept my eyes closed. He ran his thick fingers around my throbbing head, and under them I felt for the first time a very big and long and sore lump.

"Ba gosh," said he, "I guess mebber I hit dat kid purty hard."

"Not half hard enough," Hayes snarled. "I wish you'd killed him. It was his snoopin' that botched everything."

"Take a look over here at Jordan," said Conover's voice. "He don't seem to be breathin'."

There was a short pause.

"I sh'd say he *wasn't* breathin'," said Hayes. "He's got his. He's dead."

"Dead!" ejaculated Conover, in tones of awe.

"Well, didn't you never see a dead man before?" sneered Hayes. "He's dead, that's all, same as I'll be some day, and you, and all the rest of us."

"Of course that's so," Conover replied, rather shakily. "Yes, that's so. Still it don't seem possible. Bill Jordan! I wisht we'd kept out of this."

"I wish you had, too," Hayes snarled. "You young fellers ain't got the nerve of fawns. You wish you'd kept out of it, do you? Well, you're in it now, up to your neck. I guess there's one dead man back there to play even for Jordan, and that means we've got to wipe out the whole bunch. We'd have done it and had it over by now if you fellers hadn't weakened."

"Is dat so?" rumbled Louis, with bitter irony. "What you do so moch yourself, hey? I don't see you on dat front row ce soir, Jackstraws. I guess, ba gosh, you take plentee care of your ol' hide, an' Siwash George, too."

"You're a liar!" snapped Siwash George. "I was right up with the rest of you."

"You were not!" McGregor contradicted him. "At the first shot you lay down."

"What!" roared the old squaw man, in a truly terrifying voice.

"You lay down like a yellow dog!" McGregor stated flatly.

"No man can talk to me like that!" the other blustered.

"And what," asked McGregor coldly, reverting, as he always did when angry, to the idiom and accent of his Gaelic forefathers—"and what will you pe toing apout it?"

It was evident that their nerves were raw, quivering with defeat and disappointment; and when I opened my eyes cautiously to peep at them, I saw that physical soreness was added to it.

McGregor had a dirty rag, stained with blood, around his head. Louis' black poll was matted with blood, and a dried trickle of it ran down his cheek. Ballou's left arm was bandaged. And Nootka Charlie stood stripped to the waist, his beautiful torso gleaming in the firelight, while his squaw washed a

red furrow along his ribs. Their reception had been warmer than they had anticipated, and luck had gone against them. And so they snarled at each other across the dead man; but, with the exception of Conover, none seemed to give him a second thought. Certainly none of the old-timers did. Being dead, he ceased; it was as if he had never been. But Ballou took a hand.

"You may as well quit damnin' each other," he said. "The main thing is that they made good. They stood us off. Nobody's to blame for it, special. When they throwed that flare, them bein' behind the rocks where we couldn't see them, there wouldn't have been two of us left if we hadn't taken cover. There was no use tryin' it again with them organized the way they were."

Nootka Charlie cursed his squaw for some twinge her fingers gave him. "What are we goin' to do about it?" he asked over his shoulder.

"We'll see to-morrow," Ballou replied. Suddenly his eye met mine. "Hello, Bob!" he said. "Foxing again, hey?"

"I can't help being here, can I?" I said.

"Well, no, I guess you can't," he admitted. He eyed me for a moment. "It looks to me like that kid is a hoodoo," he said heavily. "He's got as many lives as a black cat."

"Ba gosh, dat's right!" Louis agreed. "I dunno 'bout dat hoodoo, but for dose life—oui! I bust hees gun over hees head, an' she don' do not'ing but raise leetle lomp."

"And I missed him once back on them lakes," said Nootka, looking at me as one might scan a target, "and I was holdin' right between his shoulders. I'd have bet fifty dollars on the shot."

"I hadn't no better luck last night," Hayes complained. "He got through my smoke. Course that was guesswork, though."

"It was him," said Ballou, "that lifted our canoes. Fothergill told me."

Inwardly I cursed Fothergill. I felt that I was unpopular enough without that; and Hayes' next words confirmed it.

"What are we going to do with him?" he asked. "Are we goin' to pack him around with us? My tumtum is to tie him up and pitch him in the river."

"Mine, too," Nootka agreed, eying me evilly. "After to-night we got to clean up the whole bunch."

Ballou's cold eye rested on me, and in that moment I experienced the sensations of a man charged with a capital offense waiting for sentence.

"Bah!" said Louis. "He's only kid."

"He's as bad as any of 'em," Nootka maintained. "He can talk, can't he? Do you want to be run down by them police and hanged, or get life if you miss that?"

"We'll see," Ballou decided, "and it'll depend a good bit on himself."

They hobbled my feet and tied my hands. And then they gave me a blanket and let me roll myself up as best I could. In spite of my aching head, I slept heavily, not waking till the sunshine struck my face. And even then I was so tired and sore and disgusted that I was reluctant to face realities. But there was a muffled thumping and now and then a sharp clank of metal on stone, and I sat up to see what it was about.

They were burying Bill Jordan. The sounds I had heard were the digging of his grave. They rolled him up in his blanket and dropped him into the shallow excavation. For a moment they stood looking down. Conover's was the only face which expressed any emotion. Jordan had been his chum.

"Well," said Hayes, "fill her up."

They paid no attention to me beyond casting off my ties, but Nootka's klootch cooked my breakfast. The crack on the head had not destroyed my appetite, and

while I was eating, the whole crew, with the exception of Nootka, picked up their rifles and disappeared. Later, a couple of shots told me that my friends were still holding the fort.

Presently Nootka tied my elbows behind me and made me fast to a tree with a generous length of picket rope.

"I guess you'll stay put," he said. "I wish you'd try to get loose. I've told the klootch to crack you in the head with an ax if you try it."

"You're taking an awful chance!" I sneered.

"Not a chance," he told me. "You'd better remember your only show to live to grow whiskers is to be mighty careful of what you do from now on."

"You're a skookum-tumtum bunch—not!" I said rashly. "You'd better be careful yourself. Bill Jordan's planted, and some more of you will be. I wish I had a gun and was loose. I'll bet I'd make you hunt your hole."

"You would, hey?" he said, his lips lifting at the corners like a dog's.

"You bet I would!" I cried hotly, entirely forgetting prudence. "I never knew a squaw man that wasn't yellow."

In return for that injudicious jibe he hit me an open-handed swat that drove me reeling against the tree.

"Go ahead!" he invited. "Tell me some more!"

But, though I was nearly bursting with mad fury, I had sense enough to hold my tongue. And, after cursing me, he left me.

By and by I asked the klootch for a drink, and she brought it, holding the cup to my lips. I thanked her for the water.

"S'pose I mamook klatawa," I asked, to see if she would talk, "you stop me?"

She stared at me with her black eyes, and suddenly flashed her teeth in a smile.

"S-u-ure!" she drawled. "But you no klatawa."

"You speak English!" I exclaimed, in surprise.

"Me miss'on girl."

She meant that she had been to mission school.

"Where? What mission?"

But she only smiled and shook her head.

"Sia-ah," she replied, meaning that it was some far-off one.

"If you are a mission girl you wouldn't hit me with an ax, would you?"

"Su-u-re!" She nodded. "Challie, him tell me." That seemed to settle the matter in her mind. Anyway, I had no hope of loosening his knots.

"How long have you been married?" I asked, putting it that way out of politeness.

"Tenas ahnkuttie—little while," she replied.

"Any papoose stop?" I asked.

She smiled again, and shook her head.

"You mind your dam biz-ness," she said, but she was not at all offended.

"What is your name?"

"Miss'on name Lucille." She eyed me for a moment. "You kloshe tenas man," she announced, meaning that I was a good-looking boy.

I knew that I was a black, surly-looking young devil, but if she thought otherwise I was not going to contradict her.

"You're a pretty girl," I told her, on general principles, because it always pays to be polite, especially to savage ladies who have instructions to hand it to you with an ax. She smiled at me.

"Hyas kloshe!" she said, and patted my cheek, her face close to mine.

Just then, looking past her, I saw, or thought I saw, something or somebody move deep in the brush which surrounded the camp. I suppose my expression changed, for Lucille turned swiftly.

"What you see?" she demanded.

"Nothing," I answered, for I was

really not sure whether it was imagination or not.

But Lucille seemed disturbed. She kept eying me and the bush, as nervous as a doe when the wind blows tainted. My personal appearance ceased to interest her, and she would talk no more.

That day, so far as I could tell, there was no attack on my friends. Nootka and his partners and old Hayes came in; and I think Lucille told the former her trouble, whatever it was, for he laughed and shook his head and patted her on the shoulder. He turned me loose, and I was that much better off, but I knew better than to make a break. Nothing, I think, would have suited Hayes and Nootka better. I noticed that the latter kept his rifle within reach of his hand.

About sunset, the others returned. The breed's shoulder was ripped by a bullet, which seemed to have caught him lengthways as he was lying in cover—at least that was how it looked to me. They were all in bad humor, sore, impatient, snappy with each other. Evidently the siege was not turning out as they expected. After they had eaten, they smoked in surly silence, and finally Hayes said:

"Tom, we ain't goin' at this right. The way they're organized, they can stand us off. They won't waste their ca'tridge, and we're low on ammynition right now. We got to change our system."

"Maybe," Ballou admitted.

"We have," the older man insisted. "We ought to put the kid in play agin' them furs."

I stared at him, wondering what he meant.

"I don't like to do that," Ballou replied.

"Maybe you don't," Hayes came back, "but the rest of us have some say in it. And me and George and Nootka think it's the only thing to do."

"How do you mean—'put him in play'?" asked young Conover.

"There's different ways," the old rascal replied. "We can send 'em word that if they don't give up the furs the kid will have sorter a hard time."

"You couldn't bluff them like that. They wouldn't believe it."

"Who said it was a bluff?" Hayes demanded. "And about believin' it, they would if they found his ear or a couple of joints of a finger settin' in a split stick in front of 'em in the mornin'."

For a moment nobody spoke. The villainous suggestion made my flesh creep, and a cold fear laid hold of my stomach. I looked for a general horrified protest, but such as came was not nearly general enough, nor, except from Conover, was it emphatic.

"I ain't lak dat moch," said Louis. "Mebbe she don' work."

"I won't stand for it!" Conover declared.

"You got so much to say!" sneered Hayes.

"I've got as much as you," Conover retorted. "Mac won't, either, will you, Mac?"

"I would not want to cut off his ears," said McGregor; "but if——"

"We wouldn't need to do that," Hayes interrupted. "Nitche done the like once. But if we just sent 'em word and took a hot iron and started the kid to hollerin' where they could hear him, the play would win. Course, if he wanted to howl without bein' hurt it would be all the better for him. If they didn't give up the furs, they'd come out to rescue him, and that would give us a chance at them."

I saw it then, of course. If I would deceive my friends, well and good. If not, I might expect the hot iron. And then, if I could not stand the gaff, I knew that Hayes' forecast would come true.

"That sounds all right," said Ballou.

"That way it's up to Bob mostly. We might do that, hey, Louis?"

"Sure, dat's all right," Louis agreed. "If he's holler plentee, he don' get hurt; if he ain't holler, why den we mak' heem, dat's all. Oui! Bon! What you t'ink, Bob, hey?"

I suppose it would have been heroic to have defied them, but I did not feel heroic and I was learning wisdom in a hard school.

"I don't want to get hurt," I said sulkily, and Hayes grinned.

"Mighty few people do. What did I tell you?"

The klootch Lucille sat apart from the men, as usual. She had no theories of equality, no idea of obtruding herself. I do not think she understood all the conversation, but she got at least part of it. I caught her eye, and the glance seemed to carry some meaning. She moved her head slightly to one side. In a moment she did so again. I wondered what it could mean, if, indeed, it meant anything. Suddenly it flashed upon me that she wanted me to change my position. So I got up, moved a little farther from the fire, and sat down.

I watched the squaw. Presently she rose and came toward me. As she passed, she opened her hand. A small penknife lay in the palm. Her fingers closed again on it. She gathered an armful of wood somewhere behind me and came back with it. Close beside me she let half a dozen sticks fall, and stooped to pick them up. As she did so, something struck my moccasin.

"You mamook cut rope to-night," she whispered. "You klatawa!"

When she had recovered her wood, I got the little knife. The men were turning in. They set no guard on their own camp, but one of them—McGregor it was—went to watch ours, which served the purpose just as well. Nootka hobbled my feet, and, having permitted me to roll up in the blanket, tied my hands

in front of me and then took a turn of the rope around my body, which made it quite impossible for me to untie anything.

Having made me secure, as he thought, he went to his own blankets beside the klootch, a little distance away on the other side of the fire.

I had a long wait before everybody slept. One or another seemed restless, though I do not suppose conscience had anything to do with it. At last all was quiet, and I got the little knife from beneath me in the blankets, where I had dropped it before my hands were tied, and set to work. Though the little blade was edged like a razor, I had a hard job freeing my hands. But when that was done, I slashed through my hobbles in short order.

Being loose, I raised myself cautiously to look around and listen before making a break for freedom.

The fire was down to coals, but the night was clear and the stars bright. Everybody seemed asleep. In the stillness I could catch the different notes of breathing. I slid halfway out of my blanket, and then I paused.

Over near Nootka Charlie and Lucille was a black shape which I did not remember. I was sure that there was neither log, stump, nor bush there. As I looked, it moved soundlessly closer to the two sleepers. Something or somebody was crawling, belly down, like a mountain lion, upon them. But it could not be a lion or any other animal, for none—except, perhaps, an idiotic porky—would venture into camp; and the father of all porcupines was not as big as this dark intruder. Could it be Toft or Pack taking a long chance to see what had become of me? If so, I could not signal without the danger of waking somebody. I could only wait. I sank lower in my blanket.

But now the night prowler had reached the sleepers. It crouched beside them, hanging over them like a

spirit of evil omen, squat, minatory, sinister, bending low as if to catch the sound of their breathing.

At that moment the coals of the fire settled, and a brief flame shot up, casting a swift flare. By it I could see that the intruder was a man. A shadowy arm swung up, and the firelight gleamed on something in his hand. Then the arm swept down, and immediately the night silence of the sleeping camp was gone.

I could hear the deep, animal grunt of the man as he struck, the sodden chuck of the knife as it went home through the blanket, driven with all the power of that shadowy arm, and the screaming cry of the victim as the steel reft the fibers of him, plucking him momentarily from sleep but to hurl him into a deeper and longer one.

Grunt! Chuck! Death cry!

Again they came, as the murderer swung his arm and stabbed and stabbed, and with them mingled a woman's scream of terror, changing swiftly to a shriek of pain and despair.

CHAPTER XXI.

I MAKE MY GET-AWAY.

With the scream of the squaw mingled a whirl of oaths from the aroused sleepers. They fought their blankets wildly to get clear of them, grasping for weapons to repel they knew not what.

A dark form, still half crouching, made for the bush in swift, stealthy bounds which seemed to halt or limp a little, but were yet light as a bobcat's.

Bang! Hayes' gun barked, and Ballou and Siwash George shot into the darkness. But the shots had no effect, as far as I could see. The shadowy form vanished.

Old Siwash George rushed across to where his partner had bedded. He bent and straightened, with a very geyser of blasphemy spouting from his lips.

"Fetch a light!" were his first coherent words. "Somebody's got Charlie and the klotch! Knifed 'em! Who done it, Charlie?"

But Nootka Charlie would never speak again. Strange, horrible, whistling noises issued from his throat, and he writhed and his knees drew up and relaxed.

Siwash George spoke to the squaw in her tongue. Evidently she was asking the same question. But she shook her head and sagged against Louis' supporting arm.

"Ba gosh," said the latter, "dat klotch she's go mimoluse, too, for sure."

Old George cursed afresh.

"Shut up dat!" Louis told him. "She bring bad luck for swear where dere's dead people."

"Bad luck!" Conover echoed. "What else have we had? There's Charlie and his woman dead, and poor Billy Jordan, too. And what have we got? Not a thing. I'm sick of this! I'm through!"

"Through, are you?" Hayes snarled. "No one's through unless the bunch is. No quitters. Try to quit, and you'll trail up Nootka and Jordan, you hear me! George, who got Nootka? You ought to have some idee."

"Oh, I got an idee, all right," the old squaw man replied. "I s'pose it was her husband."

"Had a husband, had she?" said Ballou.

"Sure. I told Charlie he'd better let her alone, but he seemed stuck on her. I had a notion he killed the buck, but I guess he didn't. Now he's got his. And I ain't sure that the buck ain't out for me, too."

"I wouldn't wonder a durn bit," Hayes agreed. "I'd be plumb careful, if I was you." Siwash George swore. "What's the name of this buck?"

"Ignace Stone—calls himself Ignace

Mountain. He belongs over on the Smokey."

"He'll be bad, hey?" Louis queried.

"Bad?" echoed Siwash George. "Oh, no, he ain't bad. This don't look like it, does it? He's plumb gentle—like a crazy wolf! Look at poor old Charlie. He socks that knife to him up to the haft every crack!"

So that was the mission of the lame Indian, ostensibly looking for trapping ground! For months, probably—it was hard to say how long—he had been on the trail of Nootka Charlie and his faithless wife.

Well, he had found them, partly, I reflected, through my agency. But then he would have done so sooner or later, anyway.

"I can tell you one thing," old Siwash George was saying: "I dunno if that buck's out to get me or not, but I'm sure out to get him. I'll play even for Charlie, and feel a lot safer besides."

I had watched and listened, fascinated, forgetting for the moment that I should have seized the opportunity to make my own get-away. But it was not yet too late. They were paying no attention to me, clustered around the dead, their light being the stump of a candle. And so I slid cautiously out of my blankets, got a tree between us in a few seconds, and stole into the gloom.

From the racket I heard before I had gone a hundred yards, I knew that my escape had been discovered. I stayed where I was so as to give no clew to my whereabouts; and presently I heard two or more go by in the general direction I had intended to go. Plainly their intention was to cut me off from my outfit if I had not already rejoined it. With daylight they would hunt for me, a beautiful prospect, considering that I had no weapons. However, I had good legs and eyes and ears. I made up my mind that I would not go far, and await an opportunity to get through. But until I got my bearings

with some degree of certainty, it would be folly to attempt to run the blockade which I was quite sure was now established against me. And so I put a half mile between me and the camp I had quitted, and curled up in a hollow and shivered like a dog to keep warm.

At last dawn came, dim, gray, so gradual that it was impossible to say when night merged into day.

A squirrel on a limb just above my head suddenly exploded in a chattering frenzy, abusing me frightfully in his own tongue, his whole body and stiffly upright brush jerking violently with each vocal spasm. Another, a hundred yards away, seemed to take his remarks as personal, and replied. A flicker began to tap, and a few little, black-headed juncos and an occasional modest-coated wren hopped in the bushes. Crows passed noisily overhead. With faint, underfoot rustlings, an old cock grouse appeared from nowhere a few feet away, and, suddenly glimpsing me, stood like a statue for some minutes before, with stealthy steps, he got a bush between him and danger and vanished thankfully about his business.

With the daylight, I started on a reconnoissance, and at last I got to a place from which I could see the rocks which protected my friends. Of the latter I could see nothing. But there was smoke, so that I knew all was well with them, and I longed for a share of the breakfast which they were no doubt eating.

At first I could see nothing of the besiegers, but I was not to be fooled by that. And presently I located one of them in a tangle of bushes in front of me. That settled it. It would be impossible to run the gantlet by day. Therefore there was no use lingering there.

I went back in the direction from which I had come, to seek some place where I could lie up safely. If possible, I wished to find some spot like the butte

on which Ignace Mountain and I had lain on that afternoon back at the lakes, from which I could see without being seen. I wondered if the Indian's vengeance was complete, or if he was after Siwash George also. The latter had declared himself after the Indian, but I did not see how he was going about it, and regarded it as a bluff.

And then suddenly I saw the old squaw man himself, through the brush, less than two hundred yards away. He was moving very slowly, very quietly, on a course converging with my own. He had a rifle tucked under his arm, and was plainly still-hunting for somebody. If he had glanced my way, he must have seen me as plainly as I saw him, but he was looking principally at the ground, as though it gave him information.

Twenty feet away lay a huge spruce, snapped off near the root by some gale, and this afforded concealment if I could make it. With my eyes on the old squaw man, I backed toward it swiftly, put my hand on it, and vaulted for cover. But, instead of alighting on the ground, I came down on a living body.

My first thought was that I had jumped on a bear; but the next instant I knew it was a man. My instinctive, startled yell was shut off in my throat by a grip that made my mouth open and my eyes bulge; an arm like a wire hawser wrapped itself around the small of my back with a jerking constriction that seemed to yank the stiffening clean out of my spine; I was whirled over on my back, the binding arm released me, and I looked up helplessly past the blade of a nine-inch buffalo knife into the fierce, twisted face and blazing eyes of Ignace Mountain.

I just shut my own eyes after that first glance and waited, absolutely sure that the next instant would bring me what Nootka Charlie had got. I expected to feel that big, raw-gray blade driving through my breast, and uncon-

sciously I stiffened to meet the shock of it.

But it did not come, and I opened my eyes. The Indian was peering over the top of the log, and then he ducked his head down and the pressure on my windpipe relaxed.

"Halo noise!" he whispered, and the knife menaced me. "S'pose you mamook holla you go mimoluse!"

Since noise, or to "holler," was the last thing I wanted, even without the knife argument, I lay very still. And presently, after a long look over the log, he lowered the knife, though he still knelt astride me.

"What you mamook?" he demanded.

"Nika ipsoot—I was trying to hide," I explained.

"Him nanitch for you?" he asked, nodding after Siwash George.

"For you, maybe. I guess he'd shoot either of us."

The Indian smiled grimly and got off my body.

"S'pose him no find, no shoot," he said, and leaned back against the log with a sigh, as if he were glad to do it.

When I sat up, I saw that a blood-soaked cloth was tied around his left thigh. Evidently one bullet had found him. He had tied up the wound, tearing off his shirt sleeve for a bandage, but he must have lost a great deal of blood. Perhaps Siwash George had seen bloodstains on the ground and was looking for more, which would account for his not seeing me.

"You got hurt," I said, stating the obvious for want of a more original idea.

"Yas, little bit," he replied, and eyed me as if making up his mind whether to tell me more or not. "You savvy plenty," he decided, nodding at me. "Nootka Charlie, him go mimoluse. You savvy why me kill him?"

"Yes; they said the woman was your wife."

"My 'ooman," he said somberly.

"They kopswalla klatawa—run away together. So me kill um." He seemed to consider this explanation quite sufficient, and I suppose it was. Many white men have done the same thing.

"Siwash George is afraid you will kill him, too."

"Ah-hah!" he said noncommittally, and let it go at that.

Possibly I should have felt horror and repulsion in the presence of a double murderer. But as a matter of fact, I felt none at all. I knew the Indian code of reprisal which permits any way of playing even. Ignace had done merely what by the custom and tradition of his people he had a perfect right to do—what, in fact, it was his duty to do—and Nootka and the woman had been quite aware of that. I was sorry about the woman, but not about Nootka. Anyway, they were dead, and here was their slayer lying wounded like a stricken animal which crawls away to lick its hurts.

"Can you walk?" I asked.

"Some. Halo skookum now. Bimeby all right. What you do?"

I told him my intentions, learning his in return. His canoe was cached several miles downstream. When night came, he would go to it and get food. Until then he would rest. He accepted conditions quietly, adapting himself to them. Looking around, I could not see his rifle.

"No more rifle stop," he replied to my question. "Hiyu no good. Him mamook bust."

As it turned out, the mainspring had broken and he had nothing to make another. His sole weapon was his knife. This no doubt had delayed his vengeance. I marveled at the nerve which had made him stick to his errand in spite of this misfortune.

But suddenly he seemed to stiffen like a dog on a point, and made a warning gesture. He raised his head cau-

tiously above the fallen tree, and I followed his example.

Siwash George was coming back. This time he was much nearer to us. He walked bent-kneed, after the fashion of the old woodsman, stepping softly, his rifle loosely under his arm so that a twitch of the muscles would throw it into position, and his course would bring him almost upon us.

I did not know what to do. Against that old wolf with his rifle we seemed quite powerless. He would certainly shoot the Indian, and possibly me. If I had been alone, I would have made a run for it and trusted to dodging the lead that I knew would follow. The Indian seemed to interpret my thoughts.

"Halo run!" he whispered, shaking his head. "Him too good shot."

"He'll kill you sure," I returned.

He nodded, frowning. He accepted that fact, as he did others. But instead of panic his mind was concentrated on avoiding that outcome.

"Mebbe fool him," he said swiftly. "S'pose him see us, you stand up. You say me near dead, you savvy. You say you find me. You say me bleed bad. S'pose you get chance you catch him gun. You savvy?"

"Yes," I said.

He leaned against the log and let his head droop forward wearily. His mouth partially opened, his lower lip hung loose, and his eyes, half closed, lackluster, stared straight ahead. It was a consummate mimicry of utter exhaustion, helplessness, and despair. But the haft of the big knife lay in the palm of his right hand, and the blade was concealed behind his sinewy forearm.

"You look," he instructed. "S'pose him come anyway, you stand up and holla."

I peeped over the log. Siwash George was very near. As I looked, he hesitated, turned, and came directly toward the log. I stood up. As if my action

had found a reflex in his muscles, his rifle covered me instantly.

"Got ye!" he said. "Don't make a move, young feller, or I'll sure drill ye."

"I'm not making any," I replied. "I saw you coming, and I could have got away if I had wanted to. Come on! I've got the Indian here!"

"What!" he cried. "No monkey business, young feller!"

"He was shot making his get-away," I said. "He's been bleeding badly. I guess he's about all in."

He stepped forward cautiously, his rifle ready, and came around the end of the log. As he saw the Indian, he grinned in unholy satisfaction.

"I guess that's right. If he ain't all in, he will be."

"He's been bleeding like a stuck buck," I told him. "I guess the bullet cut an artery."

I stooped over the Indian, and he came close, but with his rifle still ready for business.

"So, you bloody Siwash," he said, "you'd knife Charlie in his blankets, would you! I got a notion to burn you alive. Oh, you can hear me, all right!" And he poured a swift flood of some tribal tongue at him.

Ignace's eyelids flickered, and the lax mouth quivered weakly. "Hyas sick!" he muttered, and his head dropped farther.

In a sudden, frightful gust of rage, old Siwash George forgot prudence. He stepped forward and kicked the Indian in the face.

"Sick, are ye?" he roared. "Kill my partner, would ye? You'll go to hell knowin' who sent ye!"

Just for an instant the rifle hung at the length of his right arm, his hand forward of the trigger. I flung myself at it like a starving wolf at a caribou's hamstrings. As my hands closed on barrel and stock with a desperate grip, Ignace Mountain came alive. His limp

body whipped forward with the quickness of a striking snake, and the big knife drove straight at Siwash George's stomach.

But the old squaw man jumped back just beyond the thrust, dragging me with him, wrenching furiously to break my hold on the weapon, to which I clung like a puppy to a root. He swung me between himself and the Indian. Ignace struck at him over my shoulder, but again he saved himself, though the blade ripped his shirt diagonally across his chest. In avoiding it, he let go with one hand. Before he could get a grip again, I worked the old stick-twisting trick on him, bearing down with one hand and levering up with the other with my shoulder beneath it, and as my arms crossed his hold broke. Somehow he must have touched the trigger, and of course the weapon was cocked. It exploded, muzzle to the sky, and the next instant the Indian was past me and at him with the knife.

Dinny Pack maintains still that the old squaw man was yellow at bottom; but I did not see any sign of it then. Of course he was fighting for his life, and even a mouse will do that. He had neither knife nor six-shooter, and he met the Indian with his bare fists. I don't think he would have lasted five seconds if Ignace had been himself, but the latter had lost much blood and his leg bothered him. Old George dodged and hit, and hit and dodged, trying to keep out of range of the big blade that licked out venomously for his life; and he might have succeeded if he had not partially tripped over a bush. As it was, he caught Ignace's knife hand, and then they locked and wrestled in a whirl of smashing bushes and flying leaves until they went down, with the white man on top.

Meantime I had levered a cartridge into the chamber of the rifle. But they were turning and twisting so fast that I could not shoot without a chance of

hitting the wrong man. Anyway, I had a natural disinclination to kill a man by shooting him in the back. And so, when they fell, and Siwash George came on top, I just cracked him back of the ear with the heavy, octagon barrel. I put plenty of power into the swing, and he toppled over like a sack of oats. Ignace raised himself on one arm and poised his knife for an instant.

"Hold on!" I cried. "Don't kill him!"

"Hiyu kill him!" he gasped. "Him try to kill me, mebbe kill you."

"No, no!" I insisted. "Don't! Maybe he's dead now. I hit him hard enough."

"Mamook make sure!" he replied grimly. "Kill Nootka Challie, kill him, make um job—mamook kopet—all same clean-up! S'pose him go mimoluse, then no more trouble stop."

But I got in between him and the unconscious man, and finally, grumbling that I was a fool, he put up his knife. I went through Siwash George and found only a dozen cartridges. But as I was congratulating myself on capturing his artillery, Ignace caught me by the arm.

"Look!" he said. "Tenas hiyu man come!"

I looked. As he had said, several men were coming. I could see them indistinctly through the screen of the brush. Then, as one of them showed more plainly for an instant, I recognized Hayes. Of course they had heard the shot, and were looking for the shooter. Likely they knew that old Siwash George was somewhere in the vicinity. Anyway, it was no place for us.

"We hyak klatawa," I said. "Get out of here quick, before they see us."

"Kill him first," he said.

"No, no; don't kill him! No time now."

"All right," he acquiesced reluctantly.

"Kill him some time. Now we klatawa."

Crouching low, taking advantage of every bit of cover, we retreated as

swiftly as we could; but, unfortunately, just as we were close to good concealment in the form of thick cottonwoods, we were seen. There was a yell behind us.

"Mamook run!" said Ignace.

We dived into the cottonwoods. Looking back, we could see three men, spreading out as they came after us. There was no opportunity to double or to throw them off. We had the choice of going straight ahead or facing the music. So we went ahead at our best speed, which, of course, was regulated by Ignace's wounded leg.

What surprised me was that our pursuers gained very little. Nor did they shoot at us, though they must have had opportunity. They chased us noisily, yelling to each other, to keep in touch, I supposed. I knew then about what a deer must feel when the wolves are after it in the deep of the winter snows.

At the end of half a mile, Ignace began to give out. His leg was bleeding again, his breath came in gasps, and he staggered a little.

"Halo skookum, me!" he panted. "You go—you hyak cooley!"

But I would not leave him like that. I helped him as well as I could. And suddenly the trees thinned out in front of us. There, in plain view, was the rocky hill where Jim Dunleath and the others should be holding the fort. If we could only make that! If only there was a run left in the Indian!

But as I hurried him along, with his weight growing heavier and heavier upon me, the shouts from behind were answered from in front. And then, and not till then, I realized that we had been driven very neatly into a trap.

CHAPTER XXII.

ROUNDED UP.

Ignace Mountain saw it as soon as I, but his practical mind worked faster than mine. Close at hand was an out-

crop of broken rock grown around with stunted fir saplings, low and bushy, and he turned for it without hesitation, with the instinct for cover of a hunted animal. We went into it like a brace of hard-run foxes going to earth. Ignace simply collapsed and lay panting. I was winded, too, not from running, for I could have kept going half a day at that gait, but from helping him. But as the low branches swished to behind me, I dropped down and peered back, and thanked the Lord for old Siwash George's 45-70.

It was Hayes, Conover, and the breed who had chased us. They had joined forces in the shelter of another patch of brush. And behind them, as I looked, came old Siwash George himself in a staggery jog trot, and I could imagine the language he was using.

Our sheltering thicket was not more than a hundred feet through in any direction, and was one of several, scattered irregularly like islands, a few hundred yards apart, the spaces between being patched with short growths of saskatoons, soap berry, and brier. I crept through to the farther side. As I had feared, there was the rest of the outfit—Ballou and Louis and McGregor. There was no running that gantlet. All we could do was to make a stand. And I cursed old Siwash George because he had not packed more cartridges.

Presently Ballou circumnavigated our position, giving it a very wide berth, and no doubt he joined Hayes, though I had lost sight of that gentleman. Shortly afterward, they began a general advance, picking cover carefully, working in under shelter of isolated clumps of trees. I wanted to blaze away at every bush that shook, but I knew I had no ammunition to waste. Beside me, Ignace Mountain lay quietly resting. Whatever he felt found no expression in his face, and he did not

suggest that I should let him handle the rifle.

"Something will happen in a minute," I said.

"Yas," he agreed. "S'pose him get close, begin to shoot. Mebbe so we go mimoluse this time."

I thought that very likely, and I certainly did not want to be shot.

"I'm scared," I admitted. "Halo skookum tumtum, me! How about you, Ignace?"

He shook his head, smiling.

"Don't care," he said. "One time me have hyas yutl tumtum—me hyas happy, me like to live. Long time ago. Now no more. Me kill Nootka Challie. Good! Now me go mimoluse. All right."

A bullet ripped just above our heads, bringing down a shower of fir needles; and another threw up a spatter of dirt. I could see the smoke, but not the marksman, and I waited, husbanding my precious cartridges. Then, for an instant, beside a stump among the bushes, I caught a glimpse of a man's body. It was hidden before I could draw a sight on it, but I covered the spot and waited. In a moment I saw it again. I caught the sight fair and touched the trigger. The old weapon bellowed, and my mark disappeared, but in a moment there it was again. Thinking I had perhaps overshot, not being familiar with the sights, I held lower and pulled more carefully. That time the bullet kicked dirt; and hastily, while I had the chance, I fired a third time, holding higher. The object moved quickly into the protection of the stump.

"You hit um?" Ignace queried.

"If I didn't, I don't know why. I was dead on him."

But as I spoke there was a shot from that very spot. I was disgusted, for with my own rifle I could have put five out of six bullets into a playing card at that distance. How in blazes was this old gas pipe sighted, anyway? Or was

the rifling worn so that it threw wild, or the ammunition bad? But the report was clean and hard, and there was a quick punch to the recoil, so that apparently the cartridges were all right and the twist still good.

As I peered out, lying very low, I saw my man's body again, but this time on the other side of the stump. I could see almost half his body. He was keeping his head in cover like an ostrich. I drew the sight just outside the line of the stump.

"Halo shoot!" Ignace exclaimed swiftly. "Him hang coat on bush, shove him out. No man stop inside coat."

The man behind the stump had worked a trick on me ancient as gunpowder itself. I had wasted three precious shells. Well, it could not be helped, and I was relieved to know that the fault was not with the rifle. Thereafter my foxy stump artist exposed his coat in vain, and I think his experience with it made him respect my shooting, for he did not show himself, either.

But now they began to shoot us up systematically. Bullets buzzed and spat and zipped. We lay flat, getting the best protection we could from the rock outcroppings, but it was more a matter of luck than anything else. They could not see us because of the screen of fir saplings, and that was our salvation.

Suddenly the firing ceased, and as I ventured to raise myself cautiously there was a sharp exclamation from the Indian. I turned. Through the farther side of the thicket came Ballou, Hayes, and Siwash George. While the hot fire had engaged our attention, they had crept up behind us within rushing distance. Now they came at us like three old wolves.

Hayes raised his six-shooter and fired. I do not know whether he meant to kill me or merely intimidate me, but the bullet burned my ear. I shot back without putting the rifle to my shoulder,

and I think Providence must have directed that bullet, for it got Hayes. I saw him leering evilly, triumphantly through the smoke of his gun as I pressed the trigger; and the next instant he was stumbling, pitching forward, the triumph in his face replaced by stupid amazement.

I threw the lever forward and yanked it back. To my horror, the action jammed. Later, when I came to investigate, I found the empty shell caught by the breechblock.

If it had not been for the rifle jamming, I would have got Ballou or he would have got me. As it was, I could not shoot, and for reasons of his own he did not. I suppose he wanted to take me prisoner, following out the plan which my escape had upset.

"Get the Injun, George!" he cried. "The kid's mine!"

He pounced at me like an old fox for a young rabbit, and I don't think he expected much more trouble than the fox. But that was where he was wrong. Those of us who are getting along in years are continually making the same mistake of underestimating youth. Many a cunning, leathery old invincible has discovered when too late that the youngster in the opposite corner has the wind and the punch and the legs which more than offset experience. Not that I could have done very much if he had once got hold of me; but as his great, sinewy old hand grabbed for me I ducked and dodged, and as I did so I shoved the barrel of the useless rifle between his legs, so that he plunged forward like a landslide. But the jerk tore the weapon from my hands. I came up unarmed behind him, facing Ignace Mountain and Siwash George; and, beyond them, in the clear, three hundred yards away, running toward us at top speed, came Jim Dunleath and Dinny Pack, with Fothergill and Toft trailing in the rear hopelessly outdistanced but straining to be in it, too.

The old squaw man was just cutting down on the Indian with a six-shooter which he must have borrowed from somebody, for he had none when we left him. He was standing, legs wide apart, flat-footed, taking his time, making a sure thing of it. Not a dozen feet separated them. The Indian was crouching, bent-kneed, like a wrestler circling for an opening, his left arm extended, his right drawn back and around behind him. In the palm of that hand lay the big knife, the blade in a line with the fingers. But Siwash George could not see it at all.

"Shootin's too good for you!" he gritted. "You copper-hided murderer, I've a good notion to——"

Then it happened. The Indian's right leg straightened like the snap of a spring, throwing his entire weight on his left foot. His right arm swept forward, stopping suddenly at the waistline, while the shoulder rose in a tremendous jerk. The eye could scarcely follow the knife as it flew. All I saw was a blurred streak, and then I heard a "sput" like the cut of the air beneath the wing of a frightened teal. And there stood Siwash George, wide-legged, flat-footed, gun in hand; but his head was back, and his mouth open for the air that would never be his to breathe, and the hilt of the buffalo knife was all that stood out from his throat.

Now this, which takes so long to tell, happened in no time at all, in fact before Ballou was on his feet again. He came up with a glare in his eyes like the old wolf that he was at heart. He saw Siwash George, and more than that Jim Dunleath and Pack coming, and he raised his rifle deliberately. For a moment the black ring covered me, and then shifted past me. I think he was going to get the Indian or perhaps Pack or Dunleath first. But just then there was the rush of feet and the crash of brush behind him, and Louis came through upon us. And Louis, instead

of being the first of the crew from that side, was quite alone. He caught Ballou by the arm.

"Come 'long, Tom!" he cried. "Ron! We got for mak' dat get-away!"

"Run! What for?" Ballou demanded.

"For because dere's two canoe land wit' police!" Louis returned.

"We can stand 'em off!" snapped Ballou.

"Stand off not'ing!" roared Louis. "Are you going crazee? De boys, she's halfway on dat camp now. Me, I tak' beeg chance for tol' you. Stay if you lak." And, so saying, he plowed through the sweeping branches and was gone.

Just for a moment Ballou hung in the wind. I think he would have liked to shoot it out. The old, fierce blood of his youth had mounted to his brain. He put me in mind of an old wolf hemmed by hounds, snarling and full of fight, despising them and yet knowing that they must pull him down. His eye met mine for an instant, and it cast the shadow of death. I know he was minded to kill me and the Indian and as many more as he could.

And then prudence got the upper hand. No doubt it was the name of the police which decided him, for from the boundary to the Arctic Sea there is no mercy for the man who raises his hand against them, and neither refuge nor rest for the man whose trail they take. And Ballou knew it well.

"I guess you get them furs, Bob, after all," he said, almost in his ordinary manner. "You won't see me on the Carcajou no more. Help yourself to what there is in the shack. So long!"

The fir boughs parted and swished shut as he went through them with the long, running stride of a moose, and that was the last I ever saw of him. I stood there looking after him stupidly, as Jim Dunleath and Dinny Pack tore in at the other side of the little bluff.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AND LAST.

"Police!" exclaimed Dinny Pack, as he eyed the four men who came toward us from the river. "Police nothin'! That big feller with the four-punch hat is Bill Rowan, and the short one is his partner, Joe Cass. It was them we was expectin' to find at the lakes. The other two is trappers—Bradley and White, their names is." And, stepping out, he hailed them.

Besides the four-punch hat, Rowan was wearing a ragged police tunic, his own coat, as we learned later, having been burned through carelessness in leaving it with a lighted pipe in the pocket. He had got the old police coat from an Indian, though how the latter had come by it was a mystery. Likely it was a discard which he had picked up. But this combination of hat and coat had been sufficient to stampede Ballou's outfit.

The four newcomers were hard and husky, and each carried a rifle. As soon as they heard our story, they declared themselves.

"That bunch needs cleanin' up," said little Joe Cass, "and we're the boys to do it, hey, Bill?"

"Sure," big Rowan agreed. "We'll round 'em up if they ain't flew the coop. Whereabouts is this camp of theirs?"

"Bob knows," said Dinny. "Come on, Bob; here's where we play even."

I led the way, and Ignace Mountain, in spite of his wounded leg, hobbled with us. But when we reached the site of the camp the fur thieves had gone in hasty flight in their canoes, whether up or down the stream it was impossible to say.

They had not buried Nootka Charlie and the squaw. They lay together, covered by a ragged blanket. Toft twitched back the blanket and shook his head.

"Injun work!" he said. "Nootka was due to get his through some woman.

It was comin' to him, I guess. But killin' the klootch, too, is pretty hard stuff."

"It's murder," said Mr. Fothergill, with a shudder. "I have no sympathy for the man. But a woman is a woman. It seems to me we should take this Indian and deliver him to justice."

"Well, an Injun looks at things his own way," said Toft, "and the woman was an Injun, too. When you live in this country for a while among 'em, you get to look at things diff'rent. Law that works out where there's courts and such ain't always the same as justice up here. She's a raw country, and the Nitches still settle things their own way. I dunno's the law improves things much when it does butt in. Let's see what he has to say."

He turned to Ignace Mountain, who stood quietly looking at the bodies.

"You killed this man and this woman?"

The Indian nodded.

"The woman was my wife. She ran away with the man."

"And so you killed her. That was not well, Ignace Mountain."

"She hyas mesachie klootchman," the Indian returned.

"Even if she was a bad woman," said Toft, "you should not have killed her. That is murder, and for murder men are hanged. It is in our minds to take you to be tried for it by the white man's law. What have you to say?"

Ignace Mountain looked from face to face, and read condemnation. He took a step forward and threw out his hand.

"She hyas mesachie klootchman," he repeated. "You no savvy. You listen: When me marry that 'ooman me good man—me skookum, me walk straight, me have face all same other man. Me good hunter, take hiyu fur, plenty grub stop, plenty clothes stop. Me give that 'ooman all she want, me hyas yutl tumtum then—hyas happy."

"Bimeby one time me wound bear

and fight him with this knife. Me kill him, but me hurt bad. My face like this, my leg no good." He touched face and limb, as he spoke, with sinewy, nervous fingers. "For long time me hiyu sick. No hunt. Then no more grub stop, no more clothes stop. That 'ooman she look at me no more. All time she see my face she turn away. Her heart is changed. She is hard to me—no laugh, no smile. In my own tepee me all some kamooks—all same dog!

"Bimeby come Nootka Challie. Him big, him skookum. She smile at him, she laugh. All time him come to my tepee. Me nanitch—me watch. Bimeby one night she try to run away with him, but me stop her. Me no beat her—me talk good to her, me talk kind. But her heart is bad to me and she say many hard things. So me take her and go away—we go si-a-a-h—and make a camp on the Wabatanisk. Then me go hunt.

"Bimeby one night her heart is good to me again. Once more she talk and smile, and give me good muckamuck. Me eat. Pretty soon me sick. Me have hiyu pain, me lie down and roll and twist all same poisoned wolf, and then me lie all same dead."

"Good Lord!" Dunleath exclaimed. "The woman gave him poison."

"Wolf bait, I guess," Toft agreed. "Was that it, Ignace?"

"Poison for wolf, yas," the Indian returned. "For long time me hiyu sick. Me lie like sick dog. Bimeby me mamook get up. That 'ooman gone; canoe gone; gun gone; blanket gone; grub gone. All gone. No fire stop, no match stop. Me klatawa, me eat berries and bark. Bimeby me find my people, bimeby get skookum again, bimeby get more canoe, get gun, get grub. And then me mamook nanitch for Nootka Challie and that 'ooman. When me find um, me kill um. Good! That 'ooman all same lejaub—all same devil!"

For a full minute after he had concluded, nobody spoke. He had told his story simply, in the small stock of English at his command, glossing nothing, stressing nothing; and so it was the more convincing and powerful.

I had been very sorry for the death of the Indian's wife; she must have had a fine streak in her, for she had saved me by giving me a penknife to cut my bonds. But, after listening to the Indian's dreadful story, I could not but sympathize with him.

It was a tragedy of the wilderness, of love and hate and revenge, simple, elemental; and the end of it was entirely logical, and justifiable according to Indian ideas. I do not think one of us who heard condemned him. Mr. Fothergill expressed our sentiments very aptly.

"By George!" he said. "That woman was not murdered; she was executed."

And so we buried Nootka and the klotch Lucille together, as seemed fitting, and made another grave for old Hayes and Siwash George. And we portaged the furs and canoes back to the river, and enjoyed a peaceful camp once more.

The next day we saw the last of Ignace Mountain. Murderer or executioner, whichever you like, we shook hands with him and staked him to an outfit; and I gave him the rifle which had been Siwash George's, to replace his own. He waited for us to embark before getting into his canoe. And when we looked back, as we rounded the first bend, he was still standing motionless, leaning on his paddle: a lonely figure, staring somberly at the river, seeing I know not what pictures of the past and future in its dark current.

Our homeward journey was entirely uneventful, and I was glad of that, for I had had my fill of adventure. Day after day, in the glorious weather of early fall, we swept southward along

the water highway of the North, until at last we turned into the slow, brown flood of the Carcajou, and one evening about sundown I saw the logs of my landing.

And there was Peggy, with the fresh wind whipping her skirts and blowing her hair about her temples, and her eyes warm with welcome in them and a light that was not for me; and old Nelse beside her, jumping up and down and barking himself hoarse; and my uncle and old McClintock, the factor, hurrying down to meet us.

That night we had quite a jollification, and McClintock made us an offer for the furs which seemed very fair, and which subsequently his company ratified and we accepted. It gave me more money than—at that time—I knew what to do with.

And with that, to my mind, the story of the finding of the cache of old Nitche McNab ends. I never saw or heard of Ballou or McGregor or Conover or the breed again. Perhaps they still live somewhere on the outposts of the great wilderness which is being pushed back year after year. But once I did see Louis Beef. He was cook in a logging camp, and his hair was still black and abundant. He did not know me, for the years had changed my looks; and after thinking it over I decided to let sleeping dogs lie, for, in spite of the undoubted fact that he was a scoundrel, I always liked him. Of Fothergill it may be said that he left us with his passion for adventure somewhat abated, and vowing that if he ever embarked on another quest for a cache he would be less certain of his judgment of men and more apt to accept the wisdom of others.

Now, having, as it seemed to me, written all there was to write, I submitted the result to Peggy—I mean the younger Peggy, who is my niece. And she turned up her pretty nose.

"That," said Peggy, "is no way to finish a story."

"But the story is finished," I pointed out. "There is nothing more to tell."

"You must always finish the story," said Peggy wisely, "with a love scene. They all do it. And you don't say what became of mother—I mean Peggy, the dear—and Jim Dunleath."

"Nothing became of them. They got married, of course, but any one would know that."

"Nonsense!" said Peggy. "You've left out the real, artistic ending. When old McClintock made that offer for the furs, Peggy and Jim weren't there, and you went to look for them to tell him

about it. And you found them down by the river, you told me, standing in the moonlight, and Jim's arm was around her."

"Both arms," I said. "And hers——"

"Very well. And when you told him of McClintock's offer what did he say?"

"He said," I replied, recalling his exact words through the years: "The devil take McClintock and the furs! And you get out of here! You ought to know you're a crowd!"

"That's it," said Peggy, with a soft laugh, and a dreamy light in her eyes. "That's the finish—the eternal, unavoidable, logical finish. That's just what father *would* say."

NEW KIND OF FUEL

AT a recent house party in London, a highly critical and censorious Englishwoman took it upon herself to point out the many defects in American life and institutions. Patiently, a Southern lady listened to the strictures until the daughter of Albion reached the race question. The atmosphere grew tense when the overseas critic, turning to the Alabaman, said, in triumphant accents:

"But you surely cannot deny that you actually burn niggers in the States?"

"Reports of that are greatly exaggerated," drawled the American lady. "The practice is only confined to those parts of the country where coal is too expensive to use."

Not long after, the Englishwoman found excuse to leave the scene.

TWO NOVELS YOU REMEMBER:

"Kings of the Mighty" and
"When Thieves Fall Out"

Both appeared in the POPULAR MAGAZINE. Both were by W. E. SCUTT

Get in on the third—a greater novel than either of the others. It will be printed complete in the next issue. On sale Nov. 7

The Singing Girl of Yuma

AN EPISODE IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF OVERLAND RED

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

Author of "Overland Red," "The Amazing Tenderfoot," Etc

WE were sitting on the veranda of the Moonstone ranch house. I had ridden up that day on business having to do with a small band of horses which I had purchased from the Moonstone. My friend "Overland Red" was acting as foreman in the absence of Brand Williams. I had heard much of, but had never met, the other members of that happy family, Louise Lacharme, niece of the patron of the Moonstone, Walter Stone, owner of the rancho, Collie, Overland's erstwhile "pal," and gentle Aunt Eleanor, Walter Stone's wife. Overland seemed anxious that I should receive full and complete recognition, despite the fact that I wore overalls, a cotton shirt, and high-heeled boots. He tilted his chair back and heaved a sigh. When Overland sighed it betokened that he was thinking. Presently he turned to Louise.

"He's been a puncher," he stated, signifying myself by a whole-souled gesture. Louise nodded and smiled. "And he writes po'try," he added. "He's writ some about *me*."

This seemed conclusive. It was to be gathered that having written verse about Overland was a passport to any society, from his standpoint.

Walter Stone smiled, and in his smile I read a premeditated intent to get Overland to talk. In the succeeding silence I also read a sincere appreciation of Overland's statement. Overland had "opened the pot" so to speak, and he undoubtedly considered that accord-

ing to the rules of the game it was up to me to ante; to come in, to make good. As I remained silent, he was literally forced to continue the game alone. He eyed me suspiciously, waved a comprehending hand, and coughed.

"Yes, Miss Louise, he writ po'try about me, and I got to get even with him somehow. I was thinkin' of suin' him for roy'lities, inflammation of character, and conduct unbecomin' a cow-puncher, but what's the use? He can't help it no more'n I can. A gent what writes po'try is incurable. He's a goner, and he needs friends. And because he needs 'em I reckon is the only reason they stick to him. And speakin' of friends; when is Brand comin' back?"

"To-morrow," said Walter Stone.

Overland heaved another sigh. "Funny—me and Brand was pals down in Sonora and afore that. Now when he's moseyin' 'round tendin' to business I never pay no 'tention to him. Jest nod 'How!' and tell him he's gettin' homelier every day. Then he jest cusses at me. That's all. But when he's gone off for a spell, seems I get to thinkin' of him and them old days, and what we done, and mebbly what we hadn't ought to done. I dunno. 'Absence makes the hair grow blonder,' as the pote says. But mine ain't changed any. It sure makes me eyes water every time I look in the glass. Ole Brand is gettin' as gray as a mule. Onct his hair was as black and as slick as a mink, jest like Collie's, there."

Collie, being young, flushed and

scowled at Overland, who grinned. Louise settled herself in her chair with a little anticipatory shrug. Walter Stone lighted a cigar. Overland, true American, slung one leg over the veranda rail and crossed the other over it. "Yes, Brand was as lively a buckaroo as ever made a mistake," continued Overland. "And he made lots, like any man what is worth what he eats, But Brand was a sufferin' angel, alongside of me. Mistakes? Say, ladies and—and folks, I made so many mistakes in me life that the whole State of Arizona wouldn't hold half of 'em. And speakin' of Arizona and Brand sets me thinkin'."

He paused. Walter Stone puffed placidly at his cigar. Then he nodded to Collie, who tiptoed into the house and returned with a tray, a siphon of seltzer, glasses, and the inevitable. Overland continued to gaze out across the cañon above which twinkled an early star. Collie stood at Overland's elbow. The genial one turned quickly.

"Oh, well, seein' it's you. But it ain't necessary. 'Course it'll help some. Hum! Tastes like a town in Arizona what I was thinkin' about."

So it was that Overland the irrepressible, having quenched his own mild thirst, whetted the appetite of his listeners with deliberate and artistic pauses. As a raconteur there were few who could equal him. He had a large sense of his own fundamental worth, yet he was all in all innately modest. But one had to know him well to realize it. His modesty was evident in his actions rather than in his speech. And his broad sense of humor saved him from being an egotist.

The stage was set. Star after star appeared above the cañon wall. Belated quail called plaintively through the darkness. The summer night was mild and infused with the faint fragrance of sun-warmed sage. The red flare of a match blinded us for an instant. Then

redoubled darkness and the rich, resonant voice of Overland as he drew us from that California night to another land; a land of raw, red buttes, illimitable mesas, and rough romance of a by-gone day.

"'Brand,' says I, 'what do you say to a little pasear to Yuma?'"

"Brand was foreman of the 'Gila' them days. I was assistin' him, mostly though, to keep him from workin' too hard. He was always a serious kind of a cuss—er—gent, and it took somebody like me to keep him jest human. I reckon I was the only one what ever made him laugh. You know ole Brand don't laugh. Can't work his face up to it, somehow. Well, he laughed onct. It was like this.

"We took that little pasear into Yuma. We was young, ridin' good hosses, and heeled for anything from faro to a funeral. And them two goes together, like they was married. 'Fun, faro, and funerals' in them days was cinnamum, as the pote says. We started with fun. It was a good start. And ladies, seein' as present comp'ny is always exceptional, they was a gal—Chola gal what played and sung them Spanish songs over to a place what oughta be called, polite, a concert hall. But that wasn't what we called it. Anyhow, we was standin' at the bar thinkin' 'bout what we was goin' to drink, when some one thrun a rose, and it lit on Brand's hat. He whirls round, thinkin' somebody was kiddin' him. Then he sees that leetle Chola girl a-smilin' and a-pickin' lazy at the strings of her guitar. He takes the posy and was goin' to throw it away when I stops him. 'Brand, ole hoss,' say I, 'ain't you got no feelin's? Mebby you don't jest love that leetle singin' gal, but they's no use scowlin' your hat off 'cause she thrun you a posy. If you don't want it, give it to me. I'll show you how a gent ought to treat a lady.'

"So Brand he hands the posy to me.

I sticks it in the band of me Stetson. A couple of Mexican punchers commences to jabber, and I sabe that they is jealous, which suits me. It was a good start. I had a hunch they would be fun first, then mebbly faro later. We wasn't thinkin' of funerals, then. But we ought to been."

Overland paused to roll and light a cigarette. Then he coughed apologetically.

"Course this here is a man's story. They mostly is when they's about wimmen—er—like her." And he turned toward Louise and Aunt Eleanor, who said quietly: "We feel quite safe in your hands, Overland."

The genial one threw out his chest. "Ladies always is," he said grandiloquently, "and wimmen, too."

With this modest assurance, he resumed his story: "Jest about when the singing commenced again, in comes a bunch of punchers from acrost the river; all Cholas and all out for a time. It was early in the evenin', but I seen Brand slip his hand down and loosen his gun, gentlelike, just in case. We was the only white men in the joint. But that was, speakin' in general, part of the fun. I packed a couple of forty-fives them days, and wasn't worryin' any. Most of 'em knowed me. So I says to myself that that there rose was goin' to stay where she was jest as long as I could see to shoot. Bein' young makes a guy feel foolish like that sometimes.

"But Brand *he* wasn't foolish. And it was a good thing, at that. One fool seein' the town has got a chanct. But two on the same trail is like to meet up with trouble. Anyhow, they was singin' and drinkin', and everybody smokin' and talkin' to onct, and that leetle Chola gal a-makin' looks at me and Brand, but mostly me, I reckon. You see, I had the posy. Purty soon she says in Mex: 'What would the Señor Red

Jack'—which was me—"like it that I should sing?"

"I straightens up and bows politelike and says, so most everybody could hear: 'Lady, if you will kindly sing that there song about the gringo lover what rode into town and stood off a saloonful of dark-complected gents jest to hear his gal sing, you will be conferrin' a everlasting favor on me—and Brand here.'"

"Brand he gives me a look, but I was young them days, and them kind of looks jest slid off and hit the floor. So the Chola gal, with a rose in her hair and purty as a summer night on the desert, nods to her pal who was playin' the other guitar. He lays down his cigarette and hits them strings, *blim, lim, lim*, and she sings. Mebbly you heard it. It is called 'La Onda,' which is 'The Wave,' in American. And she sure waved.

"Fust thing I knowed one of them Chola boys was crowdin' me clost on one side and Brand was pokin' me on the other. 'You're a dum' fool, Red!' whispers Brand.

"'Jest what this here Chola thinks,' says I. 'Only he's mistook.'

"Then Brand he calls for another drink. While we was drinkin' he says slow: 'Take that there rose out of your hat and act decent.' Or somethin' like that, only stronger.

"'Not on your happy life!' says I. 'I'm goin' to persent this here posy to Bonita there when she gets through singin' my song.'

"'You're loco!' says Brand. 'You want to get shot up?'

"'Not so as it would hurt any,' says I. 'You gettin' cold feet?'

"'No. But I'm goin' out to see if our hosses is all right,' he says. And out he goes.

"Jest then the song come to a stop. Seems one of them Cholas what we first seen said somethin' to the leetle singin' gal. She looked scared. Bein' young and enterprisin' them days, I did a fool

thing. I loads in another drink and walks over to the platform where they was settin'—her and the fella what played the other guitar. 'Lady,' says I, in me best Mex, 'allow me to persent you with this here rose what somebody thrun at me a spell back. With the compliments of Jack Summers, and thanks for that song.'

"I seen she was kind of scared to take it, and I seen she was wishful to take it, likewise. I smiles kind of polite. She takes the posy. Jest then Brand he steps in—and it was 'bout time he did."

Again Overland sighed and turned to Louise. "Miss Louise, I been kind of hobblin' my talk 'count of you ladies. If I'm goin' to finish this here story I kind of got to take off them hobbles."

"Don't mind us," said Louise.

"But I do," said Overland, "or I'd 'a' turned loose at the start. But seein' as you stood it so far—well, you can charge it up to me friend here what write the po'try about me. It's his fault. Anyhow, one of them Cholas was that singin' gal's beau. I might 'a' knowed it. I reckon I *did* know it. He had about all he could stand of licker and jealous, and them two together is bad, but in a Chola they's plumb wicked. Now I was only havin' a leetle fun. Brand couldn't see it that way, but then Brand never could see nothin' 'ceptin' stock and work. And the funny thing about it was that ole Brand started the fireworks. That's why me and Brand hang together. Mebby we oughta been long ago, but as the pote says, 'The wind sure tempts the shorn lamb.' And we was nothin' more'n lambs them days, or mebby goats, but young.

"Was you ever settin' under a tree and the clouds crowdin' round and grumblin' when all of a sudden 'Pom!' goes a streak of lightnin' and hits about six feet from where you're settin'? Mebby you never done that, but I have. Mebby it don't scare a fella, but any-

how, it is like to shake up his nerves some. Anyhow, I was backin' away from that there leetle Chola gal when 'Pom!' goes a gun back of me, and she screams. I could feel somethin' warm tricklin' down the side of me neck. I didn't stop to say me prayers. I was jest thinkin' of how to get to that there door without turnin' my back on too many folks. I whirls round and sets both guns agoin'. The Chola what tried to get me was on the floor, noddin' and actin' sick. Brand was standin' in the door, his gun jest comin' down for another pigeon. I was scared of hittin' him, we was all so clost. I seen the other Chola what was with the gent who tried for me start to pull his gun, but he didn't. He jest slid along the bar and took to gazin' at the floor on his hands and knees. I reckon I got him jest about in the belt, which is sure a good place to stop a man.

"Then what do you think? That there Chola gal she thrun her arms round me neck from behind and was callin' out to them other Cholas to quit shootin'. Says I to meself, 'I'm sure in bad.' So I swings and grabs the leetle Bonita and hists her up in me arm. Then I backs down the room, with one gun itchin' to warm up.

"Do you think them Cholas quit? Not what you'd notice! They was started. Brand he hollers to drop her and fan it for the hosses. But she was huggin' me tight, and I was seein' red. Then fust thing I knowed a gun smoked in me face, and I felt that leetle gal wilt. Her head it dropped back. She sighs and kind of come to jest long enough to reach up and kiss me. Me! What had started the doin's, only not intendin' jest them kind of doin's.

"I guess I forgot me name for a spell, then. I seen she was hit bad, so I backs into the corner by the door and lays her down. Brand was standin' over me, his gun talkin' quick and fast. Then I got my other arm loose. I don't

recollec' much after that. I knowed I was hit again, but I took to laughin' and threw lead jest as fast as I could see somethin' to throw it at. Reckon I'd be there yet if the room hadn't filled up with smoke, and Brand pullin' at me arm.

"Outside, he runs for his cayuse, and me after. Then I thinks of that there posy. Me guns was empty. I throws out the shells and slips in about twelve more funerals and says to Brand, 'I'm goin' back to get that there rose.'

"He looks at me a spell. 'Come on, you dum' fool. Ain't you got enough?'

"'Not quite,' says I. 'I want that posy.'

"I guess Brand was nervous. Anyhow, he started to laugh, and believe me, ladies and—and folks, I never want to hear laughin' like that again!

"'Laugh, you coyote!' says I, and I makes a break for the door again. I meets up with a fella comin' out fast. I jest handed him the butt of one of me guns and chloroformed him. Then I gets down low and crawls to the leetle gal. She had passed over. I takes the posy from her hair. The smoke was clearin' off some. I sticks the posy in me hat. Some Cholas was jest crawlin' out from behind things. And some was so they wouldn't do no crawlin' again. 'Is there any gent here what has objections to me wearin' this here posy?' says I, mighty slow.

"Seems like nobody had. So I backs out again. We crawled our broncs and lit out for the rancho. Course we had to leave that part of the country, and we left, pronto."

Overland rolled another cigarette and slowly lighted it. "Bein' no hand to say as a lady ever done wrong," he resumed, "I ain't sayin'. She thrun the posy. Brand he shot up the Chola what

tried to get me, and I kind of come in on the chorus. Course that was a long time ago. I can talk about it kind of easier now. But I ain't forgettin' leetle Bonita. I went to see where she was buried last time I was in Yuma. I told you jest like it was, which ain't sayin' much for me."

From out the shadows came the soft *plut, plut* of a pony's feet. Overland straightened up. "It's Brand," he said, sinking back. "Reckon he's ahead of time."

"It is apt to be Brand," said Walter Stone. "But how can you tell, Overland?"

"By them spurs of hisn. Listen to 'em. You see, the rowels is wore. He's had 'em quite a spell. If he rides up afore he turns in, jest ask him *where* he got 'em."

Brand Williams the taciturn appeared astride his horse. Walter Stone called to him, and the foreman reined up just below the veranda steps. "Heard you coming, Brand," said Stone. "We could hear your spurs as you came up the trail."

Williams nodded.

"By the way, Brand, they're Mexican spurs, aren't they? Where did you purchase them?"

"Down to Yuma," said Williams. "When I was foreman for the Gila outfit. Why? Has Red been tellin' yarns?" And the foreman muttered "good night" and passed again to the shadows.

"That's ole Brand all over," said Overland. "Sharper than lightnin', quieter than a turtle, and solider than a rock. And he thinks that that leetle Chola girl thrun the rose at *him*, yet. I dunno. I'd sure feel better if I thought she did."

More of Knibbs' short stories are coming, and he is now at work on another novel for us.

A Little Knowledge

By H. C. Witwer

Author of "The Accommodating Diamond," "In This Corner," Etc.

In a recent "Chat" we quoted Huxley: "The great end of life is not knowledge but action." Here is a prize fighter who believed first in knowledge, then in action. If a book illustrated a punch and declared this was the proper kind of punch, then him for that punch!

BOOKS is all right for them that needs 'em, and Carnegie may have the right idea, at that, but the only kind of book a box fighter ought to have is the kind got out by the old First National Bank. I'd just as soon catch a fighter of mine in a cabaret as I would in a library!

Sounds funny, eh? Well, wait till I give you the reason, before you put me down for a boob. Along about the time you thought bein' a sure-enough reporter on a newspaper was about as small a job as being President of the United States, I come near managin' a champion, and Johnny Dorland come near bein' the champ. If Carnegie had played the ponies with his roll instead of buildin' libraries with it—he *would* have been!

When I took Johnny Dorland under my protectin' wing, he didn't know any more about books than I do about this here triple-intent thing—he figured a dime novel had Shakespeare beaten forty ways. But, son, he could stop guys with his little finger that these hams performin' now couldn't beat with a club! And nerve! Why, he'd go in a den of wild cats and bring 'em all out by the tails, if I'd have asked him!

But like all good men, he went

wrong. With some guys it's the old redeye, with others the fair sex—with Dorland it was *books!*

You'd think it pretty funny if some mornin' the missis would rig herself up in an old sweater, short skirt, and a cap, jog five miles along the road before breakfast, and then come back and go ten rounds with the cook, wouldn't you? Well, that ain't a bit more out of the way than a fighter spending his spare time hangin' out in a library, because what a fighter has to learn to amount to somethin' at *his* trade he'll never get out of no book—I don't care who wrote it!

I picked up Dorland at— Well, it don't make no difference now, but I ain't sayin' where. He didn't know much about himself, and what little he did he wasn't braggin' about, but that didn't bother me because I didn't care a thing about his pedigree after I seen him work. I was standin' at the corner of Main Street and Lincoln Avenue one day, when one of them near-autos comes scootin' by on three wheels. The other wheel missed me and hits a guy who's just steppin' up on the curb. He was no fashion plate *before* the collision, but afterward he looked like a model for the "What is it?" at the cir-

cus. The guy that was steerin' the auto—a big, husky lad—stops it, turns around in the seat, and makes a loud and slightin' remark regardin' the other guy's early life, then he reaches down to start the man-killer again. He was out of luck, though, that afternoon. The guy he run over was with him in a hop and two jumps, and when he got there he reaches inside and pulls the other guy clean out of the seat.

It was pretty while it lasted, but a traffic cop stopped it just before the auto fiend became another victim to the sport. This other guy hit him with everything but the car, and what made him solid with me, he never said a word while he was doin' it—just went after his man with snappy left hooks and the most beautiful right cross I ever seen. The other guy sent a few back for a while, but he had no chance—he wasn't built for that game outside or in, and he was in such bad shape that he couldn't tell the cop what it was all about, so I had to do it—and when I went away, the winner went with me. That's how I met Johnny Dorland.

I took him out to the fight camp, where I had half a dozen good boys trainin', and he made good the first day. He stopped two of them, and the others laid off him. Son, in three months he had fought his way up to where only the champion stood between him and the title.

Now, everybody does a little somethin' out of the way as soon as they begin to make big money. You take a guy that for many a year has thought a five-dollar bill was as high as they made 'em, and give him a thousand dollars—what does he do? He'll either try to drink the brew faster than they can put it in bottles, or start to buyin' self-windin' autos for the third girl from the left in the front row—some of 'em do both.

Well, Dorland wasn't no different from them kind of guys, which means

the kind that live this side of heaven, and as soon as he got to where his bit for a fight was anywhere from five hundred dollars up, he picks out *his* way of blowin' it in. He goes absolutely nutty over *books!*

It started through him goin' into one of these here libraries one day, to look up the town he figured he was born in, in a geography. I walked to the door of the place with him, and left him there, tellin' him I'd meet him outside in fifteen minutes—I had to run over to see a man about some fights at his club. I got tied up longer than I figured on, and when I saw it was over an hour since I left Dorland, I beat it right back to the camp, figurin', of course, that he had got tired waitin' for me, and had gone back there.

But there was no sign of this bird at the gym, and nobody had seen him, either, so I sent a couple of handlers out in different directions, lookin' for him, while I goes back to the library. I went through the place twice before I dug him up. He was sittin' away up in a little gallery they had there, with his back turned to me. There was a long table in front of him, and it was covered from one end to the other with books. There was big ones and little ones and medium-size ones—and they covered everything from the life of Washington to Roosevelt's love letters to Taft. This Dorland guy had his head buried in one when I come up on him. I looked at the cover and saw it was called, "Eighty-six Ways to Cook Bacon and Eggs"—it was got out by some dame's high school.

To look at this guy, you'd think he was readin' a French novel—he was takin' this stuff so hard I had to pat him on the shoulder before he knew I was in the same room. Then he folds over the page to mark it, and looks up.

"Howdy!" he says. "Say, this is some joint, ain't it?"

"Oh, great!" I says. "Fine! And a

great place to train in, too! I hear it's got the Bethany Sunday School beat eighty ways! Why don't you go downstairs and read five or six shelves of that stuff down there—or have you been there, and worked your way up?"

"I wish I'd known about this here place before," he says, as if he was talkin' to himself. "Beat it over to the camp. I'll be there a little after five."

"After *five!*" I says, thinkin' he'd gone nutty.

"Sure!" he goes on. "That's when they close up here—I just asked the dame at the desk downstairs." He closed up the "Bacon-and-eggs" novel. "Reach down and gimme that book called 'Married, but No Wife,' will you?" he says. "That ought to be pretty good, eh?"

Well, that was the start—and, will you believe it, I couldn't drag that guy out of there until they pulled the shades down! All I could get out of him on the way back to the camp was—*books!*

Then he starts *buyin'* 'em! In a couple of weeks there was hardly room at the camp for the handlers. Every day, as soon as his work-out was over, Dorland would beat it in to town, and when he'd get back at night he'd have a set of "Johnson's Universal Educator," or "The Life of Julius Cæsar," under his arm. He was a mark for the book agents, and after they got the tip-off they were out at the camp every day, three deep—it kept me busy all the time tryin' to flag 'em, but this guy demanded to see 'em all. He said if he didn't he might miss one of these here de-looks editions, and he didn't want J. P. Morgan or any of them guys to have anything on him. It didn't make no difference to Dorland what the book was about, as long as it was a book. He played no favorites, and "How to be a Mesmerizer" looked as good to him as "Night Life in Paris," or somethin' like that. If there was any book Dorland didn't get that summer—well, it

wasn't printed, that's all! I'll bet he had 'em workin' day and night to keep up to his longin' for readin' matter.

He not only read this stuff, but he *believed* it, and it stayed with him. Once this guy read somethin' in a book, there wasn't nobody could tell him it wasn't right! It was no use—somebody would make a crack about somethin', and Dorland would butt right in and head 'em off.

"Where d'ye get that stuff?" he'd say, lookin' like he was a college professor among a lot of stupid boobs. "Where d'ye get that stuff? Why, only last night I was readin' where they do so and so at such a place!"

And then he'd cut loose with a line of talk that he'd grabbed out of the last set of special editions he'd dug up. He'd stop talkin' when there was nobody with him to listen—but not a minute before.

Well, everything might have been all right, at that—he went along knockin' out everybody he met, and was makin' a lot of dough for both of us. He wasn't so educated that he lost his taste for money—there's very few of 'em get *that* bad; but, anyhow, I comes across him one day in the little room he's fixed up for a library in the gym. As usual, he was bent over one of these here books, but his face was so white I thought he had painted it that way, and his eyes were all but jumpin' out of his head. He was followin' this stuff along he was readin' like it was an account of an Indian massacre, written by a cub reporter—his lips was movin' with every word he read. All at once, he jumps up, and lets out a long, deep sigh—then he sees me.

"It's a wonder to me," he says, shakin' his head, "I ain't been killed long ago!"

Say, you should have seen this guy when he said that—he looked like he'd just missed bein' shoved over Niagara Falls!

"What's the trouble?" I asked him. "Have the squirrels been chasin' you again?"

"This here is no joke!" he tells me, very serious. "It just goes to show you how lucky I've been—but I'm goin' to be careful now, believe me!"

"I don't get you," I says; "but I sure wish you'd lay off them books for a while and mess the bag and these handlers around a little. Do you forget that you got a fight on to-morrow night?"

"What gets me," he goes on, like I wasn't there—"what gets me is how I have missed dyin' for *so long!*"

He stood there shakin' his head like it was more than he could figure out—whatever it was.

"Well, let's have it, will you?" I says, getin' sore. "Stop kiddin' me, and tell me who wrote you the letter, or doped up the tea, or whatever it is—who's after you?"

"Perry cardium!" he says.

"I never heard of that guy," I tells him; "but don't worry; if he starts anything around here he'll wish he was in the trenches on the other side——"

"You're certainly a fine boob!" says Dorland. "You don't know anything at all—if you'd get you a few books, instead of blowin' your dough on them bum cigarettes and stuff like that, you'd be better off. Perry cardium ain't no guy!"

He walks over and picks up the book.

"Anybody that hits me in the perry cardium from now on," he says, "will have to travel some!"

"Hits you where?" I says—I thought he'd gone nutty from readin' so much.

"In the perry cardium," he answers. "Of course *you* probably don't know what that is."

"Do you?" I says.

"Sure!" he tells me. "I just found out about it now."

"Well," I says, "if anybody hits you in this here perry-cardium thing, the

State boxin' commission will attend to him—all them foul wallops has been barred since the first of the year, and so——"

"I can see," Dorland butts in, "that you're just a poor, ignorant simp, like the rest of them. You ain't got no more idea of what the perry cardium is than that there punchin' bag hangin' in the corner. If it wasn't for these here books, which you're all the time kiddin' me about, *I* wouldn't know what the perry cardium is, either."

"Well, shoot!" I says. "What is the perry cardium? I'll fall!"

He opens up the books and hunts for a page, and when he finds it he spreads the book out in front of me.

"Accordin' to this here Universal Unabridged Dictionary of the Human Anatomy," he says, "for which same I paid eighty-five bucks, the perry cardium is located over the heart. I'll just read you what it says about it."

I tried to head him off, but he goes right on, without payin' no attention to me. Once that guy got a book in his hand, he couldn't see nobody.

"The perry cardium," he reads, as near as I can remember now, "is the heart sac. A violent blow in this spot has been known to cause instant death. It is not unusual for pugilists to meet death as the result of a hard punch in this region."

Dorland closes up the book.

"There you are!" he says. "Ain't it a good thing I blew my dough on these here books instead of wine or some-thin'?"

"No!" I said. "*It ain't!* You probably have been hit on the perry cardium a hundred times without knowin' anything about it. That's a lot of bunk! You'll probably be hit there a hundred times again, and——"

"Don't kid yourself!" Dorland breaks in. "If I'd ever been hit on the perry cardium *once*, I'd 'a' been killed! I suppose you think *you* know more than

this here book, eh? The whole thing is, they probably didn't hit me right on the perry—might only have been the cardium, see? That's the way I've got it figured out. But if I hadn't read this here, some of these guys might have landed right on the *combination*—and then it would have been good night!"

"Well," I says, "the only thing for you to do then is to go to a hospital and have them take that perry cardium out. You'd have it on these other guys then."

"That ain't a bad idea, at that!" he answers, without crackin' a smile. "I'll think it over."

"All right, then," I tells him. "Forget about the perry cardium for the time bein', and get in a little work this mornin'—you got a tough fight before you, so get busy!"

The minute this guy starts in sparrin' I see the effects of that medical book on him—on the level, it had slowed him up a mile! He lets a couple of hick handlers bounce him around and make a monkey of him, and they hit him anywhere they wanted to, except one place—that was over the heart, where this here perry cardium was supposed to hang out! He went stumblin' around the gym, all bent over, and with both hands over his chest. He wouldn't straighten up, even when one of his sparrin' partners shot one over on his chin that sent his head back. He just stalled around, all doubled up like a guy that's got the rheumatism—and got it bad! I tried kiddin' him, coaxin' him, and cussin' him, but all I could get out of him was that nobody was goin' to hit him on the perry cardium if he could help it. When I told him he was yellow, he just laughed at me, and says:

"Go 'way! I'll hit you in the perry cardium!"

I never seen such a change come over a guy in my life.

Well, I did all I could, and then I let him alone. By the time his fight with

Young Salzman came along, a month later, he had forgotten all he ever knew—except how to protect his perry cardium—and he sure knew *that*, take it from me! His fightin' pose looked more like one of these here old guys you see in the movies, than anything else. He was about as fast, too!

He fought Young Salzman in Kansas City, on Election Night, and the club was packed to the ceiling. This Salzman guy was a big, local favorite, and a pretty tough kid. You know how the gang is in a place like that—the least they want to happen to the other guy is sudden death. It meant a whole lot to Dorland to win this fight by a knock-out, because just *shadin'* Salzman wouldn't do—the papers would all give it to the local boy—you know, the old stuff.

While Dorland was sittin' in his corner waitin' for the bell, I begged him to forget this perry-cardium thing, and go right after his man from the start.

"This will be soft!" he says. "I'll only let him stay about two rounds!"

Son, it was *some* fight—I can remember it as if it was yesterday, because I had to sit there for five rounds and watch this Salzman guy beat the education and everything else out of Dorland! And here's the funny part, if the boy had really been yellow he had a million chances to quit, because Salzman gave him the beatin' of his life! They'd stop a fight like that in this town, that's how bad it was! But Dorland wouldn't quit, only he absolutely refused to take his arms away from his perry cardium. But Salzman hit him a few times everywhere else!

When he came to his corner after the sixth round, he looked like he'd just come from the trenches—he never could have proved he was Dorland by his face, and I had to help him sit down. I grabbed him by the shoulders while the handlers was workin' over him, and whispers in his ear:

"If you don't lose this perry-cardium stuff and bounce this guy, you're through! You'll never get no chance to fight Edwards for the title."

"If this guy hits me on the perry cardium," he says, "I'll never get no chance at *anything*—I'll be dead! Let me fight this guy my own way, will you—I know what I'm doin'."

"Well, why don't you stop some of them wallops, then, you boob!" I yells at him.

"Stop 'em!" he says. "You don't see any of 'em gettin' past me, do you?"

And, on the level, he points at his bum eye and laughs!

It was just before the eighth round that the idea come to me—I'd doped out about sixty ways to save this guy, but none of them looked half as good as this. While the crowd is pleadin' with Young Salzman to knock my boy out, I slips around the ring to Salzman's corner. Dicky Green was his manager then, and we had once been as close as the ocean is to the beach, but a little somethin' had come up since that time, and now we were about as friendly as a pair of strange dogs. But Green was a guy that would get in a scheme to wreck the orphan asylum, if he thought there was somethin' in it for him, so I figured he'd fall.

He gives me a nasty look when I eased over among his handlers, but I paid no attention to it—instead, I bends down under the ring, as near the floor as I could, and motions for him to do the same. He did.

"What's the idea?" he wants to know.

"Ssh!" I says, pullin' his ear over where I could talk in it, "I'm off this Dorland guy from now on. I thought I could do somethin' with him, but he's a tramp, I——"

"What's this got to do with *me*, eh?" he butts in.

"You tell Salzman to wallop this guy just *one* time over the heart, and he'll

quit cold! He's wrong in that place, and he can't take anything there—don't you see how he's holdin' it?"

"What are you tryin' to slip over on me?" asks Green.

"This is absolutely on the level, Dicky," I says. "I want this guy to find out for himself that he won't do. Salzman is beatin' him up, but you don't notice him knockin' him out, do you? And if he don't stop him, you know what the papers will say in the mornin', don't you?"

Just then the bell rang, and they went to their corners—I beat it back to Dorland, prayin' that Green would follow my tip.

The idea? I wanted Dorland to get one wallop on the perry cardium—just one! I knew it wouldn't hurt him, but it would show him that this stuff he read in the medical book was the bunk. Then he'd go in and tear this Salzman guy to pieces.

It was a long chance, but it was also the only one I had, so I took it!

Right at the start of the ninth round, I saw that Dicky Green had fallen for my stuff. Salzman went after Dorland like a tiger, pullin' everything he knew to make Dorland raise his guard. He beat him all over the ring, but Dorland wouldn't straighten up, and it looked as if I was goin' to lose out, when another idea hits me. It come to me quick, and I let it go quicker. They were in a clinch in Dorland's corner, and I jumps up alongside the ropes and yells:

"Break quick! The cops are comin' to stop it! The club's raided!"

Both of them dropped their arms—Dorland looked around at me as I figured he would, and then—Salzman shot his left over right on Dorland's perry cardium!

Then I stopped breathin' for about four minutes—*because Dorland went down as if he had been hit with an ax!*

Well, the bell saved him from bein' counted out, but it was awful close,

and I had to carry him to his corner and hold him up in the chair. We worked over him and brought him around to where he knew close relatives, but that's all. He told me afterward what run through his mind while he was sittin' there. He said he knew he was goin' to die because he had been hit on the perry cardium. All he was bothered about was how long he had to live. He could see the cops climbin' in the ring, and me and everybody else gettin' pinched for havin' him murdered. Young Salzman bein' sentenced to jail for life, and a lot of stuff like that. Then he says he saw his funeral—all the flowers around with "From a True Friend," and stuff like that on 'em, and people cryin', and sayin' he was a good guy when he had it, and Salzman ought to be lynched. He said it all looked so sad he felt the tears comin' to his eyes.

And then, all of a sudden, he looks across the ring, and there's Salzman, the guy that killed him, grinnin' over at him. Here *he* was, he says, with one foot in the grave, and this guy laughin'! The more he looked the worse he felt, and then he decided that with his last dyin' chance he'd wallop this guy in the perry cardium, and they'd die together!

When the bell rang for the next round, I stepped over to the referee to tell him it was all over—that my boy couldn't leave his chair. I got about one step away when something grabs me by the shoulder and throws me back against the ropes. A human cyclone met Young Salzman, who stood in the middle of the ring, still grinnin'. He threw up his hands—but, son, could you stop the war with a kind word? That's about the chance Salzman had! A left swing caught him over the right eye and sent him back on his heels, and then Dorland's right cross landed—exactly where the book said his perry cardium was!

There was no need for a count—I hear they had to bring Salzman around with this here oxygen stuff. You should have heard that crowd for the next ten minutes! I'll bet they'll tell their grandchildren about that fight.

Dorland grabbed me by the coat before I could get him to his corner.

"I ain't dead, I ain't dead!" he yells. He jumps up and down like he'd gone nutty. The handlers thought he had.

"Hey, nix on that!" I tells him. "The newspaper guys will think you're full of dope or somethin'. Certainly you ain't dead—I told you a month ago that perry-cardium stuff was the bunk!"

He stops and shakes his head.

"I passed out eighty-five bucks for that book, too!" he says finally. "I'd sure like to get that there agent!"

While we're gettin' off his gloves, Young Salzman comes back to life over in the other corner, and Dorland sees him gettin' up.

"I'm sure glad I didn't kill that guy!" he says, with a deep sigh. "But he certainly went down when I hit him in the perry cardium, didn't he?"

"Down is right!" I says. "If you'd have gone after him before, we'd 'a' been away from here long ago."

He didn't say nothin'—he was lookin' down at the floor and scratchin' his head, like he's doin' some heavy thinkin'.

"I got it!" he shouts all of a sudden, jumpin' up off the chair.

"Got what?" I says.

"I know how Salzman found out about my perry cardium all at once and tried to wallop me there—didn't you notice that?"

"Yes," I says, turnin' my face away, "I noticed it."

"Well," he says, "I been tryin' to figure how that guy knew about my perry cardium, and it just come to me!"

He looks like he's just discovered how to make gold out of hay—but I

thought he had seen me in Salzman's corner, so I got ready for the worst.

"How did he know it?" I says. I never could stand waitin'.

"The agent that took me for eighty-five bucks for that there medical dope told me there was only two sets like that in the world. *That Salzman guy must have got the other set!*"

Do you think that cured Dorland? Say, you fellows don't know them birds! He kept right on protecting that perry cardium of his, refusin' absolutely to take a chance and trade wal-

lops with anybody. Pretty soon they wouldn't let him in the fight clubs with a ticket, and I turned him loose.

I run across him about a year ago—he was all dolled up like a chorus man, and he had a suit case in each hand. After we had talked over old times for a minute, I laughs and says:

"How's your perry cardium now?"

"Great!" he says. "I'm takin' care of it these days."

"What are you doin' for a livin'?" I asks him, just before we parts.

"*Sellin' books!*" he says. "That was my game, and I didn't know it!"

THOUGHT IT WAS BELGIUM

JIMMY JOHNSTON, New York's best-known fight promoter, tells this one on a friend of his who took a brief plunge into the boxing game in Manhattan. Johnston's colleague invested a respectable sum in outfitting a "club," spent a lot in advertising, and put on an attractive card for the opening night.

New York fight fans are, for some reason, notoriously late in arriving at affairs of this kind. The majority of them spurn the preliminary bouts, and come drifting in usually a few minutes before the star bout is put on. Johnston's friend did not know this, and as he stood nervously in the box office on the first night and noted the sparse attendance—a large amount of which had come in on newspaper passes, he worriedly mopped his brow and went outside to stand on the gate, determined that no more deadheads would be admitted. He had hardly taken his stand at the door when a man came along carrying a small satchel and attempted to brush past him.

"Where's your ticket?" demanded the promoter, halting the other.

"That's all right!" was the ready response. "I'm a doctor—I have to examine the fighters."

He was admitted.

In a few minutes another individual came along, and was halfway in the door, when he, too, was nabbed by the promoter. Indignantly he explained that he was a physician, sent to examine the fighters. He passed in. Then some one loomed up in the doorway, accompanied by two women. He was edging his way in when the harassed promoter grabbed his arm. The following dialogue ensued, according to the mendacious Johnston:

"Got a ticket?"

"Don't need any—I'm a doctor—come to examine the fighters!"

The promoter glared at him for a moment in silence.

"How about these here women?" he asked sarcastically. "They doctors, too, eh?"

"Nope, nurses!" was the answer.

This was too much for Johnston's friend.

"Hey," he yelled, "who do you think's goin' to fight here to-night? Germany and the Allies?"

Up the Street

A STORY OF COLLEGE FOOTBALL

By Holworthy Hall

Author of "The Pepper McHenry Stories," Etc.

Look where the crimson banners fly;
Hark to the sound of marching feet;
There is a host approaching nigh—
Harvard is marching up the street.

THERE once lived in Olympus, Ohio, a gentleman whose hobby was archaeology. Given a college education and a less energetic set of ancestors, this gentleman might have worn the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor in his buttonhole, and addressed learned societies on matters of paramount unimportance; but, lacking the education, and goaded relentlessly by his heritage of Yankee blood, he merely accumulated a substantial fortune in the manufacture of perforated union suits, and eventually donated to the local public library a few hundred volumes of which no one in town save the Unitarian clergyman understood so much as the meaning of the titles.

Toward the zenith of his life this Olympian gentleman married slowly and wisely, as all his friends had expected, and took his bride on a trip around the world. It was his first opportunity to view the land he loved, and he made the most of it. An unheralded revision of the tariff summoned him back to Olympus from the plain of ancient Troy, where he was reveling in antiquity and corrupting the natives with

double tips; and although he promptly forgot his disappointment, and busied himself with the vital problem of finding a cheap substitute for sea-island cotton, yet he retained enough of the Old World impression to name his only child from sentiment. It was to have been either Hector or Helen, and Hector seemed more appropriate to the sex.

From the very moment when Hector Blanding spoke his first authentic syllable—which his mother didn't live to hear—his father took up the task of making a scholar of him, whether he liked it or not. At the mature age of ten, Hector was constantly subject to the mental suggestion that a college professor is the noblest work of man; and that the Blanding trade-mark, which now adorned the backs of a million or two good American citizens, was in future to embellish their intellects. The arbiter of his son's destiny succeeded in getting him into Harvard, and the optician's at about the same time; and lived just long enough to see him take his A. B. with highest honors, and to observe with less interest a further degree which the newspapers printed L. H. B. It stood for left half back,

and meant that Hector was worthy of his name. While his father had developed his brain, nature had looked after his muscles; so that he was possessed of a vast body as well as a vast mind, and when he exercised them simultaneously, he helped create some contemporary history, and taught the smaller New England colleges the virtue of playing eight or nine men on the rush line.

At the news of his father's sudden death, which came at the end of his third year of graduate work, Hector went back to Olympus by the limited, and found that he was heir to some two hundred thousand dollars, and a sacred trust. The last words of Blanding, senior, were simple, and to the point.

"Tell him," he had whispered to the Unitarian clergyman, who would understand, "tell him I don't care a darn how rich he is—I want him to be *famous!* Celebrated! Tell him I couldn't be. He's *got* to be. Not in underwear—academic! I want his name a household word!"

Hector, perceiving that his duty obviously lay in the field of archæology, and considering the two hundred thousand dollars as a sort of conditional bequest, hung his varsity sweater in the hall closet of the Blanding home, and, as soon as he deemed proper, began to play tennis at the country club every morning to keep himself healthy while he wrote a book. He wrote it in Olympus partly because the necessary references were at hand, and partly because he wanted to be quiet. The book was dedicated to Cyrus H. P. Blanding, and the title was "The History of Carthage from Mummius to Herodes Atticus."

And that stumped even the clergyman.

II.

It so happened that the chairman of the history section of the Woman's

Club of Olympus cherished just the faintest atom of aversion for Miss Eleanor Redway. To a man, the thing was wholly incomprehensible, for Eleanor was not only the very sweetest of our Olympian girls, but also one of the prettiest and most womanly. Very young, too—and that may possibly have been the seat of the trouble, for Miss Jenks was a maiden lady, with all the recognized social requisites but youth. At any rate, the chairman had opposed Eleanor's admission, ostensibly on the ground of age; and after the election she was astonished and somewhat abashed to discover that Eleanor was perfectly capable of holding her own with her elders in the tortuous paths of French art, medieval literature, and dramatic reading. After the first two or three meetings there was even some talk of decorating her with the historical chairmanship for the next term; so that the present incumbent, who had been interested—platonically—in a State senator, borrowed a leaf from the tome of politics, and bestowed upon her twenty-year-old rival the highest honor in her keeping. Naturally it was an honor with a rider attached to it. It was the distinction of the longest paper of the year; the subject, announced in the *Reporter* one day before Eleanor was notified by mail, was "A Critical Analysis of the Frankpledge System." The chairman got it out of a dictionary, and felt rather clever over it.

Eleanor, walking downtown on a shopping excursion for a spool of thread at the Five and Ten, and a chocolate sundae at the Sign of the Green Teapot, ran full tilt into Hector Blanding, who was also thinking too diligently to watch his step.

"Oh, I didn't see you!" said Eleanor, settling her hat. "You're awfully—solid, Hector!"

"I didn't see you, either," declared Hector. "I hope I didn't damage you."

"Not a bit." A sudden inspiration

illuminated her already expressive eyes. "Hector! Don't you want to do a favor for a lady?"

"Certainly—if you're the lady."

"I am," she admitted. "Tell me—do you by any chance know anything about the Frankpledge System?"

"Do I?"

"Well," she told him, "then you're the man I need. I don't even know what it means. For a minute I thought it had something to do with loan sharks. The library hasn't a single thing about it—but, of course, I knew *that* before I looked."

"Not that I grasp the logic, but——"

"It's absurdly simple," she explained. "It's a paper for the Woman's Club two weeks from next Friday. That's also the date of the annual election of officers. I don't see how anything could be much more logical."

Hector shook his head.

"I don't see the point, Eleanor, but if I can help you with your paper, say the word."

"The word is 'Thank you.'"

"If you could drop in this afternoon or to-morrow, I'll start you on a course of reading—or, better yet, I'll give you an old notebook of mine. After you've been over it once or twice, you can write your essay with a pair of scissors. Will you come?"

"Three o'clock?"

"That's convenient for me if it is for you. I'll try to inveigle my housekeeper into letting us have some tea."

"You're an angel!" said Eleanor fervently. "I'll be there at three, Hector. Who says a college education isn't worth while?"

III.

Hector's housekeeper, who disappeared only of dust, cigar ashes, and girls, ushered the visitor into his study at fifty-nine minutes past two. They found him scribbling squares and circles on the blank pages at the back of

a loose-leaf notebook labeled "History 8a."

"Why, Hector!" exclaimed the searcher after wisdom. "I didn't suppose that silly system had to do with mathematics!"

"This isn't mathematics. Sit down, won't you?"

"It looks like geometry," declared Eleanor, taking the only chair not pre-empted by calfskin bindings. "It surely isn't history—unless it's one of those war maps full of hollow squares and things."

Hector laughed, and pushed the notebook across the desk.

"When I came to run over the notes," he said, "I found a diagram of a trick play from regular formation, so I was working it out. Like everything else on paper—from trick plays to high finance—I don't see how you can stop it."

"I never could understand you at all," she conceded frankly. "When you have those tortoise-rimmed glasses on, you look as though you thought in Sanskrit, and didn't know a football from an ostrich egg—and when you take them off, you look like a composite photograph of all the college posters from the year one. You're a regular trust, aren't you? How *did* you ever manage to do it?"

"It certainly isn't altogether my fault," he owned. "I can't explain how I did it. It came as natural to play football as it did to study history. Do you follow football? You see, in this play the quarter back stands as close to center as he can get——"

"The quarter back? That duck's egg thing?"

Hector nodded.

"I can't draw a free-hand circle and get it round—can you? Yes, the quarter back's the duck's egg. Now, each of these men follows the dotted line. Right half back smashes into the line as a blind—it looks like a simple delayed

pass. Left half goes out here, very wide. Full back is outside him, and a little behind. Now, if the end was pulled in by the fake line plunge, left half has a clear field. As a matter of fact, the end won't be pulled in, probably. He'll hesitate, and when he sees the half back carrying the ball, apparently without interference, he'll dive for him. Well—the half back simply passes the ball to the full back, who's still farther out in the field; puts the end out of the play himself, and there you are!"

Eleanor stared dumbly at the extremely lucid diagram.

"What a tremendous waste of time!" she commented. "I don't mean to criticize you, Hector, but if men want to play football, why don't they just go out and play it, without planning beforehand? I should think you'd take all the spontaneity out of it!"

"Let's see—you've never seen a big game, have you?"

"I saw all the high-school games until two years ago."

"I mean a really big game?"

"No," said Eleanor, turning to the first page of the historical notes. "I have a cousin in New Haven, but somehow I never went. What funny handwriting, Hector—it doesn't look like yours at all."

"The lecturer talked too fast," said Hector, sighing a little. "And he used all short words, too. If you'll let me tear out those pages in the back—there! now you can keep the book. Perhaps I'd better explain the first few lectures to you."

At a quarter past three the pupil looked her young instructor squarely in the eyes, and interrupted him in the middle of a sentence.

"Hector!" she said. "I didn't suppose you or anybody else could talk like that! Why, I haven't understood a single word you've said!"

Hector, somewhat disconcerted at the indifferent compliment, stammered.

"You—you looked so intelligent—I thought you were following very nicely."

"Following! I hadn't even started! Miss Jenks was cleverer than I thought. You don't honestly *like* this sort of thing, do you?"

"Like it? Why, I don't know that I ever considered liking it. I had to specialize in something, and this was it."

"Is—is your book like this?"

"More so."

"If you *had* to do it—if you were going into teaching," she said thoughtfully, "I could—how you can keep at it for fun is beyond me!"

The heir to the sacred trust gazed calmly over his tortoise-rimmed spectacles.

"To tell the truth, I wouldn't keep at it ten minutes longer if it weren't for father."

Eleanor asked the question tacitly.

"Fame," said Hector dryly. "It's my only chance. It's all I know. It's rather an odd trick, too—to get anywhere in archaeology you've got to live the other man's life; you've got to project your personality into his. You've got to think with him, work with him, be with him. You've got to know instinctively how a mason at Tiryns felt when he cemented a wall, and what sensations a Carthaginian had when he was pounding clamshells for dye. It's almost a detective instinct—and—and self-hypnosis. You remember the man who lost a cow, and found her by hunting in the places he thought he'd have gone to if *he'd* been a cow? Well, I can put myself absolutely in the place of the people I'm studying, and that's why I can do research work. That's all I know—that trick. Now, it was father's dream to have our name associated with something besides mesh underwear. This book is a beastly bore—it may take several years even for the rough draft, and then I'll be elected to the Academy,

and wear whiskers. That's a certain kind of fame, you know—father didn't specify the kind he wanted. He told me once that he'd be happy if no intelligent man could see the name of Blanding without knowing instantly who he was and what he'd done. So—I'm sticking to archæology."

"But if that was all he wanted, you've got it already. Blanding underwear——"

"You forget," he prompted, "that it isn't Blanding underwear except in Olympus. The trade-mark is Olympic underwear."

"Change the trade-mark."

"It's too valuable, and, besides——"

"Oh, all right—I admire you, Hector, and I'm almost afraid of you—but I think you could do a lot better for yourself if you'd only look around a bit. I'd like to see you in something more human—like teaching, or traveling for your health. Now, let's begin over again."

"As many times as you like," promised Hector, regarding her with a queer inward sensation of pleasurable discomfort. She reminded him of apt quotations from Horace, Heine, Goethe, Tennyson, and Eugene Field, but he thought it best not to distract her attention by quoting them to her. "Turn back to 'Introductory Remarks,'" said Hector patiently.

IV.

From the annual meeting of the Woman's Club, Eleanor hurried homeward with unusually flushed cheeks. It had been a triumph, complete and undiluted. Beginning with a seven-page prelude which served the double purpose of hypnotizing her audience and encouraging herself, she had tacked into deep water so surely and so swiftly that only Miss Jenks, who shared the platform with her, kept up the subterfuge of trying to look absorbed and appreciative.

At page twenty-six some one gasped pitifully—it was the lady whose paper on "Motherhood, Its Problems," was next on the program. At page thirty-five this lady, becoming suddenly and obtrusively indisposed, sent her manuscript to the chair to read and went out to fresher air. At page fifty, where the original research began to come in polysyllables, Olympus capitulated; and at the last of the typewritten pages the club burst into violent handclapping and the Chautauqua salute, with fully as much relief as admiration. Then, partly to recognize the erudition of their youngest member, and partly to prevent a repetition of the performance, they unanimously chose Eleanor general vice president—for the general vice president was absolved from platform work—and reelected Miss Jenks to the chairmanship of the history division.

Eleanor, flushed with the pride of conquest, hesitated at the corner of Myrtle Avenue, turned abruptly into it, and went up the brick walk of the Blanding homestead. She found Hector translating hieroglyphics on the veranda.

"Congratulate me!" she cried joyously. "I've done it, Hector!"

The young man rose to welcome her.

"I congratulate you," he returned promptly. "What is it you've done?"

"Vice president—but I wonder if they elected you or me."

"Not me," he deprecated, filling a big wicker chair with cushions designed for comfort rather than beauty. "I only gave you a good start."

Eleanor, radiant with success, laughed up at him. Hector caught his breath.

"It was *splendid* of you!" she said. "Why, you took days and days away from your own work to help me. You'd have thought it was worth the trouble, though, if you could have seen their faces! And they made *me* vice president! I can't begin to thank you, Hector!"

The archæologist had not resumed his seat; he was leaning against a pillar of the shaded veranda, watching her closely.

"It wasn't anything—I wish it might have been something important."

"Why, it *was*!"

"Oh, no—it was incidental. The only important part of it was the time we spent together going over those notes."

"Oh!" said Eleanor faintly.

The young man sat down without removing his eyes from their magnet.

"I'm not a very lively young person," he admitted. "I don't do any of these slithy dances, and I'm not much on society stuff—you know that. I'm—I can't promise you a lot of fun, Eleanor, but if you can be satisfied with the kind of life I've got to lead, I do wish you'd marry me!"

It was so startling that her expression didn't even remotely approximate the finer tenets of romance. She shrank a little among the cushions, and stared. Hector said no more—he evidently considered that his share of the dialogue was over, and that it was her turn to say something. This was in the air. At length she sensed it.

"I'm—I'm so astonished!" she faltered. "You never let me know—I hadn't even suspected it!"

"Neither had I," said the young man. "That is, not until day before yesterday. It was about half past five. After we finished the peroration, and you went home, this was the loneliest, stupidest veranda in all the world. And yet there was something homelike about those tea things that made me wonder—and after I'd thought about it, I knew what I'm missing."

"You aren't confusing it—with something else, are you? It isn't just that you want a home? Men feel that way often—when they're lonely."

"Not that—no." He fumbled in his pockets. "Here's an itinerary I mapped out for us."

"What!"

"Yes," said Hector, raising his eyebrows. "I thought father would like to have us take a sentimental journey. We'll follow the same route they took—New York to Liverpool and London, a month in the north country——"

"Hector!"

"Certainly," he insisted. "I want to take you around the world, Eleanor. Now, from England we go to France, then we——"

"But your book!"

"Drat the book!" said Hector violently. "I want to marry you!"

There was a dynamic silence while Eleanor examined the pattern of the grass-cloth rug with scrupulous attention to the weave. When she raised her eyes they were very soft, and a little brighter than usual.

"Hector," she began, "I don't believe you'll understand this—I'm afraid you won't. Please try, anyway. I'm awfully fond of you—I never realized how much until—just now. During these weeks I've thought a lot about you, and what a wonderful work you're doing for your father's sake. I'm not as clever as those club women think I am—I'm bored stiff by serious things like history—but there's a pathetic side to your studying that sort of—catches my heart. Your father wanted you to be a famous man—and if you were married now, and spent a long time traveling, you'd never have the same interests again. You couldn't. And I'd always feel as though your father knew how I'd spoiled his dreams for you—so—you can't marry any one until you've made good."

"My dear child!"

"Please don't look at me like that!"

"But do you know what you're saying?"

"P-perfectly."

He passed a hand through his hair, and scowled.

"Eleanor, it's absurd! I'm only

twenty-five—the book can wait. And I *need* travel to broaden me——”

“Do you truly think you could study archæology on your wedding trip?”

Hector pondered briefly.

“You’re right—I couldn’t. But there isn’t any desperate hurry about this, you know.”

“We’re terribly young,” said Eleanor sententiously. “I can’t begin to tell you how truly and deeply anxious I am to have you make a name for yourself—and I can’t spoil it for you, Hector—I just can’t!”

“Fame!” said Hector. “What is it, anyway? How can we tell whether I’m wasting time or not? Tell me—would you marry me now if it weren’t for that idiotic book?”

“Yes,” said Eleanor simply. “I would.”

“And you can actually sit there and tell me that you won’t do it because I haven’t made myself famous? I ask you to marry me, and you can say ‘Go out and get a reputation?’”

“Y-yes.”

“And you *will* marry me as soon as I’ve made it?”

“If you—still want me.”

Hector breathed deeply.

“What’s your present conception of fame?”

Eleanor resumed her study of the rug.

“Why not take your father’s definition—when the average well-read man can’t see your name in print without knowing who you are, and what you’ve done.”

“As for example,” said Hector bitterly, “they know all about Richard Hildreth and Jean Victor Duruy and Wolfgang Menzel—historians a thousand times greater than I’ll ever be! As for example, Eleanor—you’re educated—who was Goldwin Smith?”

“I—I don’t know.”

“Only the greatest genius Canada ever produced. There’s fame for you!”

“Oh!” she cried, scenting a loophole. “We were talking about Americans!”

“It’s a pretty tough standard—I hope you’re not serious, Eleanor. I’m twenty-five—it may be fifty years before I ‘make good’—and travel isn’t so much fun after you’re seventy-five.”

Eleanor came to him swiftly, and laid her hands on his massive shoulders.

“Hector,” she said, “it may be because I’m so stupid myself. I’m like most girls nowadays—I don’t really know very much. I want—as much as your father wanted you—to be a success. I don’t care whether it’s books, or what it is—I don’t think *he* did. And I don’t want to wait forever. But I won’t marry you until you’ve started well on the road—for his sake. I *can’t* let myself hinder you, Hector.”

“I’ll bet dad would have told you to marry me.”

“But not yet. Can’t you work for me—too?”

“Yes, I can!” He stooped and kissed her cheek. “And now,” said the extraordinary young man, “we’d better pretend we aren’t engaged.”

“But we’re *not*!”

“We’d better pretend we aren’t,” he gravely corrected, “because engaged girls miss a lot of fun in Olympus. *I’ve* seen ‘em.”

“You’ll work *hard*—won’t you?”

“Do you doubt it?”

“I’ll have to hurry along,” said Eleanor hastily. “I ought to have been home ages ago. Where’s my handkerchief?”

She stood uncertainly at the top of the steps.

“What’s the matter?” inquired Hector.

Eleanor returned daintily, hesitantly to the vine-shaded portion of the veranda, where she paused, and looked down.

“We’re *not* engaged—but I should think you’d want to *pretend* we are—just this once!”

An hour nearer sunset Miss Redway bethought herself of the handkerchief she hadn't found. The telephone was near at hand.

"Oh, Mrs. Jones," she said. "This is Miss Redway. Can I speak to Mr. Blanding a moment?"

"No, ma'am," retorted Hector's housekeeper. "He's a-workin' on his book, and he told me he can't be disturbed for nothin' nor nobody. Thanks!"

V.

In Cambridge, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, on the evening of the fifth of November, a little group of men sat at the operating table of the Varsity Club's consulting room. Upon their faces sat deeply graven consternation and doubt. At the eastern window an aggressive man of middle age stood peering out at the scattered lights of Linden Street, and the shadowy façade of the Union. Some one at the table stirred restlessly, and at the sound the man near the window faced sharply about.

"If it weren't for the line," he said savagely, "they'd have beaten us a *hundred* to nothing! What good is a defense like a brick wall if there isn't a man in the backfield who doesn't shut his eyes when he hits the line? Two lickings in succession—and we rushed the ball less than fifty yards altogether! Unless something's done about it *now*, we've as much chance at New Haven as a snowball will have by and by. If we couldn't beat 'em when we had Bull Blanding to take the ball, what chance have we got with that dainty, delicate bunch of backs this year? What? Well—what's the answer?"

The older coaches looked at each other, saying nothing. It had all been said after the last two games. The youngest coach smiled seriously, and kept counsel.

"If we could only get some pep into

'em!" jawed the aggressive man. "Come, who's got an idea? I'm dry."

"Wire Blanding," said the youngest coach.

"I wrote him two weeks ago—he said he's too busy."

"Wire him."

"He won't come. He's the only man I know who could fill the bill, but he wouldn't come last year, and he won't come now. He's working on some hare-brained literary rot he thinks is important. Piffle!"

"He'll come," contradicted the youngest coach. "He'll come if you get him right."

"I'll be interested to know," said the head coach stiffly, "why he'll come for you if he won't for me."

"Write out a telegram," suggested the junior, "and then I'll tell you."

The head coach stared aggressively for a moment.

"Oh, all right," he said shortly, and took to scratching with a fountain pen. The younger man also wrote.

"Here," said the head coach. "What's the matter with this?"

"HECTOR BLANDING, Olympus, Ohio: We greatly need you to assist in coaching the backs. Loyalty to the university demands your presence, if possible. W. H. PRINCE."

"That's pretty punk, Prince! *This* is what we'll send. Listen:

"Harvard 0, Amherst 10. Backfield averages 151 pounds, and gained 24 yards by rushing. Odds now 3 to 1 on Yale. When do you arrive?"

"That," said its author complacently, "isn't so blamed dignified, but it'll bring Blanding in two jumps."

"Somebody ring for a boy," commanded Prince. "Well, then, if we have Hector Blanding to coach the backs——"

VI.

Out in Olympus, where early rising is considered one of the cardinal virtues of the young, Eleanor Redway was

rarely late for seven o'clock breakfast. On this glorious November morning, however, it was more than virtuously early when she was rudely awakened by a sound outside her window. Struggling against the interruption to her sleep, she rubbed her eyes, and picked out a smooth section of the pillow—and then a small missile bounded off the mosquito netting, and fell into the roof gutter with a pleasant tinkle. Eleanor sat upright; a third pebble rattled on the roof. Quickly she infolded herself in a flaming kimono, and ran to the window. On the lawn below, Hector Blanding was aiming another pebble. His suit case was beside him on the grass.

"Why, Hector!"

"Hello!" he called guardedly. "I pretty nearly missed you, sleepyhead! I've been throwing rocks for ten minutes."

"What's the matter?"

"I'm taking the six-fifteen—I'll connect with the Lake Shore express at Dimityville. I'm going to Cambridge."

"Cambridge!" she echoed, shivering. "Is anything wrong?"

"I should say there is! Here's the telegram—I'll pin it on the front door—so! It didn't come until nearly midnight. I don't know when I'll be back."

"Tell me—what is it?"

"Football—they need me."

Eleanor sat down on the window ledge.

"Do you mean to tell me you waked me—you're going to take that old milk train simply to save an hour or two getting to Cambridge? Why couldn't you be sensible and wait for the ten-forty-five?" She yawned healthily. "When are you coming back?"

"Not until after the game—a month at least."

"A month! Are you perfectly crazy? You can't afford to waste a month on a silly trip like this!"

"Well, I'm going," he said. "I

couldn't go without saying good-by. The boys are all at sea—I had to take the first train. I'll get there in time for afternoon practice to-morrow, you see. Take care of yourself, dear."

"But—Hector!"

"Yes?"

"It's so—sudden!"

Casting about him for a moment, he observed that the lattice of the side porch ran within a few feet of her window.

"I'm coming up, Eleanor."

"Oh—you musn't!"

He tested the lattice with his full weight, and, finding that it held, scrambled nimbly to the top, whence he could touch his lady's hand, if not her lips. She watched him fearfully—and stretched down her hand. Accepting the alternative, he kissed it thoroughly.

"Not a soul in sight," he whispered. "Good-by, Eleanor."

"I didn't think it of you," she whispered ecstatically. "I didn't know you were so—romantic, Hector!"

"This isn't romance—it's reality. I'm going away."

"I think you're perfectly silly—but good luck to you!"

"Thank you," he said, dropping to the ground. "I'll write as soon as I get there."

"And your book?"

"Oh, drat the book!" he said, for the second time. "I've got to run! Good-by!"

At the corner he turned and waved his hand—then he was out of sight. To Eleanor came, as from a great distance, his clear tenor whistle. The words of the tune she hadn't heard; if she had been wiser, she would have known them by heart.

"Look where the crimson banners fly,
Hark to the sound of marching feet;
There is a host approaching nigh—
Harvard is marching up the street."

"Oh," said Eleanor, creeping back to bed. "One of those foolish football

songs. I thought for a minute it had some significance." She tucked herself in warmly, and yawned again. "Like—like—'The Girl I Left Behind Me,' for instance."

VII.

When the new subway brought him to Harvard Square, Hector, adroitly avoiding an old professor who was always relocating Attic puns, hired a taxicab to the Stadium. It gave him a thrill of pleasure to note that the chauffeur took him for a freshman, and tried to overcharge him. The day was consecrated to secret practice, but the ground-keeper recognized Hector with a toothless grin, and passed him through the grilled gates.

"O Lord!" yelled Billy Gordon, coaching the ends. "Oh, I'm glad to see you, Bull! Say—look at that gang of candidates, will you? Isn't that a gallant brigade—especially *him*?"

"Him" was a six-foot neophyte weighing a hundred and fifty-five.

"Go to it!" said Gordon, slapping his old friend on the back. "He's your star man, Bull. He knows more ways to drop a ball than the next worst seven on the squad—he's kept on because he's the only one who can keep his feet. There's Prince—have you seen him yet?" He turned to his baker's dozen of ends with an attempt at heartiness. "Come on! On your toes! Everybody down under this one—kick 'em higher there, will you?"

Hector, very scholarly and dignified in tortoise-rimmed glasses, threaded his way across the field among small, personally conducted squads of linemen driven aimlessly about by officious fourth and fifth-string quarter backs. He found the head coach berating a substitute tackle for having been born top-heavy.

"Hello, Prince!" said Blanding.

Prince turned in a flash.

"Bull! Gad, I'm glad to see you,

man! When can you start in? To-day? That's great! You can have the backs—I don't care how much murder and sudden death you hand 'em!" He came close to Hector's side, and spoke into his ear. "They're hideous!" he said distinctly. "Honest, Bull, I don't know what's going to happen to us. You ought to have seen 'em against Amherst—the line punched holes big enough for a ten-ton truck, and they fell over their own feet! They missed tackles—they dropped kicks. For the love of Mike, Bull, *can* you put any ginger into a half-baked, half-witted crowd of dubs?"

Hector drew off his coat and waistcoat; folded his spectacles into a silver case, and shoved them into a pocket.

"Got a cigar?" he inquired. Then, more incisively: "Where's my squad?"

"Down in the bowl," said Prince. "And say, Bull—we sent for you as a last resort—you're in full charge."

"I knew that before I started," said Blanding.

The backfield candidates, apathetically passing balls around the lower end of the Stadium, saw the heroic figure of the Olympian break away from the little group at midfield, and come toward them. They saw what Eleanor had never seen—a shirt-sleeved young cynic, with a cigar in his mouth; a man whose eyes were bright and piercing; whose gait was a cross between an amble and a swagger; whose nostrils quivered as in the presence of a noisome pestilence. He beckoned; the squad of twenty closed around him.

"Boys," he said softly, "who was it—the G. A. R. or the Old Ladies' Home?"

No one answered; in the background an overgrown full back coughed loudly.

"I came up to show you fellows how to play football," said Hector around his cigar. "And mind you, I don't know the first thing about marbles or pinochle. Understand? Football! You've got a few weeks—how many of you are

there. Twenty? Maybe I'll have to kill off about a dozen—that'll leave two sets of backs. Anybody want to quit? No? I hear you can't tackle unless the man's standing still. Come over here and show me how you hit the dummy. Hold on! Don't anybody make *that* mistake so early! When I say 'Come on,' I mean *jump*. Do you get it? Come on!"

Twenty minutes later, the first and second teams lined up. Blanding, collarless now, and damp with perspiration, trailed the varsity step by step.

"Come on, come on! Get in there *fast*, man! Oh, kiss him on the brow and be done with it! Think he'll get out of the way if you *look* at him? Right half—what's your name? Holden? Come here, Holden—*hump*? Look here, boy, that's rotten! Your job is to put your man out of the play. Next time, *put* him out! Come on—hurry up, hurry up!"

The varsity, after a mighty advance of four yards in four downs, paused, panting, and prepared for the defensive. Hector, flinging his cigar to the ground, went to Prince.

"Oh, Prince! I want the varsity to keep the ball."

"Take the whole shooting match if you want it."

"Varsity keeps the ball!" snapped Blanding, trotting back to his position. "Come over here, quarter—hurry up. Come here, Holden. Quarter, I want you to give this man Holden the ball until he makes a touchdown, or I take him out. See? Give 'em all the variety you can, but I want to see Holden lose his breath just once. All right. Hurry up!"

The half back Holden glanced dubiously at the goal line, sixty yards away. Quarter bent over the heaving line of dripping figures. Pandemonium broke out behind them from the coaches, led by Prince and Blanding.

"Keep your feet, Holden! Hold your feet!"

"Low—lower than that!"

"Put him *down*—block your man out there!"

"You gained two yards," said Hector icily, dragging Holden to his feet. "Remember this, young man—four times two yards isn't a first down. You've got to make three yards or more every time you start. Signal! Hurry up."

Again the luckless Holden flung his inefficient weight at center.

"Rotten—oh, *rotten*!"

"What are you doing, King—dreaming?"

"I told you to *charge*—didn't you get it?"

"I told you *low*!"

"Afraid of hurting yourself, Holden?"

The rush line bent low. Holden, taking the pass, stumbled, fell, and dropped the ball. A scrub guard instantly recovered it. Hector spread his hands in token of great wonder, and averted his face.

"All through, Holden," he said. "Go in."

"What?"

"Back to the locker building. Who's first sub here?"

The new man gained a yard, lost three, gained a yard and a half. The scrub line, diagnosing the attack, broke through and threw him for a ten-yard loss on the fourth play.

"Get up!" shouted Hector. "Hurry up! What's the next play? Speed it up! What's this—a funeral procession? D'you write your signals on a piece of paper, or learn 'em by heart? Next play—*fast*!"

The new half back fumbled the ball. Hector jerked his thumb toward the locker building.

"Go in," he ordered. "Next man—Prichard."

Prichard, leisurely removing the

sweater from his shoulders, stepped forward.

"Stay out! Get off the field! Next man!"

"Nothing left but third-string men," said Prince, behind him. "Want to see 'em in action?"

"I don't care if they're tenth-string men—what I want is one man who can hang onto a football. Is there anybody here who can? Oh, *you* can, can you? What's *your* name—Grant? You play right half. Signal! *Hard*, Grant! That's better. Yell it out, quarter—no secrets needed!"

When it was too dark to see the newest and yellowest of pigskins, the head coach sent his charges on a dispirited jog around the track, and looked for Hector. He found his man under the goal post jotting notes on the back of an old envelope.

"Well," said Prince, "what's your opinion, Bull?"

"Wait a second—all right. What is it?"

"What do you think?"

"Of the backs? Not bad."

"Not bad," said Prince, aghast. "Why—*not bad!* You don't know how bad they are. You haven't seen them under fire."

"I don't need to. Your best bet is Jordan, Grant, and Prichard."

"Jordan—why, you're all wrong! You're——"

"No," corrected Hector. "You've got a raw lot, Prince. I never saw such a raw lot so late in the season. I know you've had a hard job this year—you inherited a lot of fellows taught to play the old-fashioned game. I don't believe you can teach 'em the new one. What you need is men who can learn the most in three weeks. Jordan, Grant, and Prichard. They can't learn the game you tried to teach 'em, but they can learn Blanding."

"Learn what?"

"Oh!" He produced a little bundle of

ruled sheets from his pocket, and offered them to his friend. "You see," said Hector, "I'm also the author of some plays that ought to fit this new game. Those plays need fast, brainy, middleweight men. Your backs were strong, slow-witted battering-rams, or else slow thinkers, fast on their feet. Now I can teach at least three men of the squad to play my game—the three I've mentioned will learn faster, because they don't know much now. I picked 'em from—well, psychology. Grant's got to be flattered, and praised—if you can persuade him he's a wonder, he'll play like one. Prichard's sensitive as a girl—did you see his expression when I sent him off? And Jordan——"

"Come up to my room after the meeting, will you? I've got to have words with you. Why, Bull, you're all wrong!"

Hector blushed.

"I'm sorry," he said uncomfortably, "I'll have to duck the meeting to-night." He put on his spectacles and his coat. "I'll come to your room, though. Look over those plays beforehand, if you have time. And, Prince—if you hear any talk about a book I'm writing, just leap on it, will you? These boys mightn't take my coaching so well if——"

"What's the name of the book?" asked Prince.

"The—The History of Carthage from Mummius to Herodes Atticus," said Hector faintly.

"Good Lord!" gasped Prince. "Good heavens—*good night!*"

"So long," said Hector happily.

VIII.

On Yale Field the shadows of a sullen afternoon had long since crept across the matted grass from the west stand to the east. For three torturing periods the Harvard attack had spent itself in futile hammering of the line; time and

time again a sterling defense, exalted to the supreme effort by sheer consciousness of the Yale game, had delayed a fifth successive victory for Yale; but now, at last, when muscles lagged and brains dulled under the strain, when the result hung on the final spark of courage, the final coördination of savage strength and calculating energy, the big blue eleven drove smoothly play by play across the chalk lines, on and through and around their ancient rivals, irresistibly to the goal. It was the beginning of the last period, and the big score board still showed the score, Harvard 0, Yale 0; but when the Yale cohorts rose massed against the somber stands, and chanted the sonorous cadence of "Boola," it was because they knew that the end was near.

Over on the Harvard side, Hector Blanding, wrapped in a fur overcoat, paced moodily up and down. For three weeks he had poured every atom of his vitality into the training of three young men, only to see them discarded at the last moment in favor of the original backfield, which was sure to play the best Prince had taught it, and never fully understood how wretchedly it played. And it was Prince—Prince, who had summoned Hector from Olympus to Cambridge for just one purpose, and seen the papers turn from disconsolate reports of disaster to hopeful news of Blanding's men and Blanding's methods—it was Prince who had wavered, steeled himself to confidence in his original plan, and made his own choice of backs.

"I'm sorry—sorrrier than I can tell you," he had said at the last, nerve-racking conference. "If they only had experience, Bull—if they weren't so hysterical. I can't doubt your nerve, old man, but oh! how I do doubt your judgment. I'm sorry."

The whistle shrilled. The Yale center, burly, but agile, bent over the ball. The Yale cheering section swung

triumphantly into the maddening dirge of the "undertaker" song, and the blue team, answering the call of the clan, surged through a mass of crimson jerseys for seven long yards. It was the same old story—a Harvard eleven fighting to creditable defeat against an opponent bound to glorious victory. In the west stand men said so as they turned coat collars against the gathering chill—said so as they watched Yale plow through right wing for six yards and a first down. First down on the seventeen-yard line, and fourteen minutes to play. Well, at least they could lose like gentlemen.

Hector, finding himself shoulder to shoulder with Head Coach Prince, stared at him bitterly.

"Well," he challenged.

"Well?"

"Foster's about used up. Who'll go in?"

"Sanborn. Great Scott! We held 'em that time!"

"Prince," implored Hector, as they hurried after the play, "this is the last ditch! For gad's sake, listen to reason, can't you? Look at your team! It's licked—it's put up a good fight, but it's cracked now. They'll score that touchdown in five plays, or less. You'll have to send in two or three men before it's over—take Grant—and Jordan. I'll *guarantee* those men, Prince!"

"No." He turned to the bench. "Sanborn—where is he?"

"Prince! Look at the face of him! Look at Grant—can't you *see* what I've done to him, Prince?"

The head coach carried his eyes down the long line of red-blanketed figures in the straw. Somewhere near the middle he saw Sanborn, black, heavy, stolid—one of the old régime. Farther along was Grant, a hundred and sixty pounds of acutely nervous energy. His face was drawn and pale; he leaned forward on his arms, every nerve riveted to the tragedy that confronted him.

Hector laughed shortly.

"And you pretend to be a judge of men!"

The head coach nodded slowly. It had been a losing campaign since the first—and Yale had knifed the line once more. It was all over; Yale was bound to score, and after that it was a matter of playing through intervening minutes until the merciful call of time. These lighter men might possibly avert defeat for a few seconds—there was always a chance, and, besides, he owed something to Blanding. Prince wet his lips.

"Let's put in Grant——"

A tremendous roar drowned his words. Directly before the goal posts both teams clawed and pummeled in a desperate mêlée. Some one shrieked agonizedly: "*Ball, ball!*" Unexpectedly a ball of new leather bobbed out of the press, and rolled to one side, and a Harvard end, scrambling toward it, gathered it in just as it crossed the line. The whistle blew warningly.

"Time! Time out for Harvard!"

"Harvard's ball!"

"It's Foster! Foster's hurt!"

"Long cheer for Foster!"

Three white-faced youngsters struggled out of blanket and sweater, and leaped to Blanding's gesture. Watching them, he grinned. There had ended the first lesson he had taught them.

"You three," said Hector, "you're going in now. You're going against a good team—not a wonderful team, but good—don't forget that! Prichard, use your head on those forward passes! Grant, you're going to get the jump on 'em and run 'em off their feet. I've seen you—you can do it. Two yards won't do, three won't do—you're out there to make five—and ten. Now—over in the Yale gym they walked past Frank Hinkley's picture before the game—you know what that means. Out here they haven't any picture, and *you've got Blanding!* Get in there and take your heart with you!"

The Harvard forwards, worn and battered, and desperately grateful for the respite, lined up ten blessed yards from the goal, and waited for the punt that would once more prolong the catastrophe. The quarter back, glancing from Grant to Prichard to Jordan, clapped his hands smartly.

"Signal! Twenty-two—two—twenty-two—four!"

It wasn't a kick—it wasn't the conservative defensive play that Prince was forever teaching—it was Grant's signal, and his stomach seemed to drop out of his body, and his tongue turn to ashes in his mouth. In utter defiance of training, common sense, orders, he allowed his eyes to stray to the side lines, where Blanding stood. The words rang in his ears: "Out here they haven't any picture, and *you've got Blanding!*" And Blanding was the only man in the world who knew how Eddie Grant could play football! Grant stiffened.

"Twenty-two — two — twenty-two—four! Twenty-two—two——"

Grant huddled the ball close in to his chest, and struck the line with every ounce of energy in back and shoulders and legs. A solid wall of flesh met him, a wall that crumbled ludicrously to let him through, and then he crashed impotently to ground under a powerful Yale tackle.

"Good work, Bill!" bawled a hoarse voice above him.

"Up quick, there! Lively!"

"First down for Harvard—move those lines!"

"Signal! Signal!"

The man Jordan, slight, but dynamically nervous, edged a step nearer. Over on the Yale bench an old player pointed excitedly.

"Look! Look there! Isn't that right half a pocket edition of Bull Blanding? Ever see anything like it? Look at his back! Look at how he swings his arms! And——"

The eulogy was cut short by a siren

scream from across the way. The young man Jordan, whose plastic imagination had been kneaded and fed and coached for three solid weeks into a half-serious, half-childish belief that he actually was a pocket edition of Bull Blanding, sprinted around left end in the manner of a small cyclone, squirmed away from one tackle, repelled another with a straight-arm jab, and was driven out of bounds, fighting every step of the way, on the thirty-five-yard line.

Harvard hearts went out to Jordan in a vast roar. Down on the side lines Hector pounded the head coach in the ribs.

"Blanding!" he yelled, above the din. "Man, I've given you *three Blandings!*"

Prichard, sighting a perilous opening between guard and tackle, disregarded the signal for another end run, and sped through to midfield.

"*Three Blandings*—am I right? Am I?"

Yale's captain, still calm and confident, rallied his men. He was a veteran; in many games he had seen the last effort of a maimed and beaten team.

"Stop 'em, Yale! Stop this play! Hold 'em!"

A red-headed guard broke through and spilled Grant before he had fairly started. A great, joyful cry went up on the left—Yale was cheering.

"That's the way—hold 'em, Yale!"

"Stop this one now!"

"Get on side, there!"

It was Grant's ball again. A compelling power forced his eyes from their duty; and far across the storm-swept area he saw Hector Blanding, who believed he couldn't be stopped.

"Bull!" he said to himself. "Bull—Blanding! Bull—*Grant!*"

The half back met the rush of bodies as a swimmer rises against a mighty wave. He fought with the utter certainty of strength—one short, mad struggle, and he was over and beyond Yale's giant center trio, running clear.

The secondary defense shook him with the savageness of the tackle, but he rose, laughing.

"You won't get me next time, old boy!"

"Try it," snapped the Yale captain.

"Signal! Wake up, there!"

Grant's eyes narrowed at the serial number. Jordan dropped back almost imperceptibly. Prichard held his ground.

"Steady, you bull moose!" said Grant evenly. "Get it over!"

"Signal!" said Prichard sharply.

His own word was the signal. As the ball came low and hard to Jordan, Prichard smashed into the line, the defense piling around him. Yale's star end, drawn in on the play, checked himself in the nick of time, and dove at Jordan, who carried the ball. He was a fraction of a second too late, for Grant, sweeping wide, took a short pass from Jordan, and headed down the field, running alone. The stands rose, gasping; Yale's captain, playing back, came up watchfully, measured his distance accurately, and rolled his man over and over with a wolfish tackle.

"Get up, get up!"

"Watch your end this time!"

"Look out for another trick—look out!"

"Don't let 'em cross the forty-yard line, Yale!"

It was Jordan, with the image of Hector Blanding in his brain, and Blanding's sarcasm in his ear; and Jordan drew in his head like a turtle, and made two yards.

"That's the way, Yale!"

"Signal!" bellowed a Yale warrior in the old schoolboy stratagem.

"Right through *you!*" said Jordan fiercely. Blanding had once said that in a Princeton game, and made five yards—Jordan made ten, and remembered them all his life. The unholy joy of combat was in him at last, and as he

rioted through the line, he cursed picturesquely, and used his shoulders.

A little of the confidence had oozed from the big blue team as they felt the new power behind the Harvard attack, and respected it. They crouched lower, leg to leg.

"Don't let 'em make another first down, fellows!"

"On your toes, everybody!"

"Bull!" said Grant to himself. "Bull—Grant!" He could hear Hector's cutting tones in practice: "Very ladylike, Grant"—then, with a sudden change of manner: "Take your *heart* with you, boy!"

The world went black and vivid, flashing crimson—there was cold water on his face, and he was snorting and choking. Grim, terrible creatures, streaked with dirt, surrounded him—they dragged him to his feet, which were strangely useless.

"Feel better, old man?"

"All right now?"

"Bully!" said Grant. He shook his hips, and tried a tentative jogging step or two. "Let me go! I'm all right. Signal! Hurry up, will you? Hurry up!"

That time it was Prichard, who was supposed to lack nerve. In his haste, he fumbled—and a brawny guard was bearing threateningly down on him. Instinct said to fall on the ball, to take the loss of distance and play safe; but an icy reflex at the back of his head warned him with startling distinctness to use his wits. He jumped aside, avoiding the guard by inches; he had the ball, and he sent it in a long overhand spiral to an end waiting on Yale's twenty-yard line.

The west stand was a crazy, reeling mob, drunk with the ecstasy of a victory five doleful years in the making; and on the east, the bleachers rose, uncovered, and began the hymn that Yale men hold in reserve for the very last.

The quarter back, acting captain now, danced along the line, hysterically hammering his men with his open hand.

"Put it over, everybody into it—it's a cinch!"

"Touchdown! Get the jump!"

"This is the big one!"

"Everybody hold hard—all together!"

"Smash it!"

Jordan, darting a glance to the side lines, saw Blanding.

"Shut up!" he screamed. "What d'you think this is—a sewing circle? Play ball! Signal!"

With the whole team raging behind him, Grant—Bull Grant—jammed through for two yards. Jordan followed with three. Grant slid past tackle for three more. They had come into their own, and they knew it. They saw nothing, heard nothing, sensed nothing but the white mark which they must cross—which they were inevitably sure to cross.

"Hurry up! Hurry up!"

"Hold that line, Harvard!"

The signal was Grant's.

"Two yards isn't enough," his memory told him, as he bored his way through the weakening resistance. "Two yards isn't enough!" He ripped away from the Yale quarter back, and fell struggling under the feet of a dozen men. Canvas rasped his face—he shoved it away, and laughed scornfully.

"A yard to go," said the little referee, bounding backward from the scrimmage.

Pale-lipped, with teeth bared beast-like, the blue team braced once more.

"Fight 'em, Yale!"

"They can't put it over—they never could!"

"You'll stop 'em now, you blue bulldogs!"

"Signal!"

"No!" shouted Grant. "Change signals!"

The men stood up, wondering. Grant,

bringing the four heads together, spoke in the tense monotone of Blanding.

"Give it to Prichard—Prichard's the man! Here's where we need nerve! Prichard right through that red-headed lad—he's all in! Hurry up! We'll make it this time!"

The quarter back dashed the perspiration from his forehead. His acting captaincy was gone before Blanding's men, just as Prince's leadership had fallen before Blanding. He obeyed mechanically.

"Twelve—twenty-five—five! Twelve—twenty-five—"

The college senior who was playing his first and last game for Harvard dug his cleats into the turf, and plunged forward. At a single stride he was prisoned by sweating forms—he was dragged down, and trampled on—he wrenched and tugged blindly, saying in his soul: "I failed—I failed—they've held us!"

Then a great load was lifted from him, and Grant was hauling him by the heels.

"Touchdown, you fool! Quit your kicking—you're five yards to the good now!"

There were still four minutes to play, and Jordan, catching the kick-off, dodged fifty yards through the open field in a more spectacular run than Blanding ever conceived. Prichard, with Blanding in his heart, skirted the flank on a trick of Blanding's devising for twenty yards more; and Jordan, coached day by day in spite of Prince's remonstrances, kicked a neat field goal.

That made it ten to nothing, and when the whistle blew, the insane horde that poured out of the Harvard stands made first for the three backs, and for a man who, on account of his tortoise-rimmed glasses, looked more like a professor of archæology than a trainer of men. And as they whirled him under the goal posts in the dizzy maze of the snake dance, the band somehow got to the head of the line, and the words of the march

came up to Eleanor Redway with new significance:

"Look where the crimson banners fly,
Hark to the sound of marching feet;
There is a host approaching nigh—
Harvard is marching up the street."

IX.

Eleanor, passing the week-end with her New Haven cousins, crept stealthily downstairs at a piously early hour on Sunday morning—considering that it had taken her all night to go to sleep—to get the newspapers on the veranda. On the first page the figure of the young sage of Olympus stood out in a conventional border of great simplicity and effectiveness—it was laurel. Eleanor gathered her kimono about her, and dashed up to her bedroom to gloat in comfort.

There was little doubt in her mind that any intelligent man who read the Sunday papers would know Blanding's name, and what he had done. He had three-inch scareheads on the front page, and a biographical sketch on the second. An analysis of his system of coaching spilled over among the editorials; and the make-up man had been compelled to omit half the household department in order to include Hector's own story. And then there was a column by a Harvard expert to explain why Blanding's theory had been perfect; and six or seven columns by Yale experts to show how that theory could easily have been exploded if it could have been anticipated. Finally, in a casual paragraph tucked away among the sporting oddities of the day, was this statement: "In his spare moments, Coach Blanding also writes."

Eleanor hugged her knees, shivering, sighed luxuriously, and devoured every word. The rest of the family had to sound the tattoo on her door to obtain so much as the advertising sections.

It was late in the afternoon before he came to her. The distant cousin, who

was a married reader of English romances, obligingly overstated a headache, and declined to appear, although she didn't hesitate to peer over the banisters while Hector was hanging up his hat.

"Well," said the smiling young man, "it wasn't so bad, after all, was it?"

"Bad! Oh, Hector! It was wonderful! My heart never went home until midnight! And when I remembered that once you were down there, playing like that—and I never saw you—I was so mad I just blubbered!"

"But we lost all four years I played."

"I wouldn't have cared—if I could only have seen you!"

"Not a lot to see," said Hector modestly.

"Have you read the papers?"

"I surely have."

"I'm *proud* of you, Hector! The only thing that bothers me is how you did it!"

"It's sort of curious," said Hector reminiscently. "I shouldn't wonder if it's the only time archæology ever won a football game. You see, sometimes a college education pays!"

"I *don't* see."

"Well, when I went up to Cambridge, there wasn't the ghost of a chance. The men were playing the old-fashioned game—they couldn't learn the new one. So I just naturally picked fellows with the right build and the right disposition, and taught them all I knew."

"But Mr.—Prince, isn't it?—he hadn't taught them."

"Tell me—when you were little, didn't you ever pretend you were somebody else—somebody you admired tremendously—and try very hard to do something just as that person did it? Copy-cat?"

"Why, yes, I did. If this is what you mean—I thought I told you once—I learned to swim that way."

"You didn't tell me. Tell me now."

Eleanor laughed excitedly.

"You remember Ethel Scott? Well, when I was twelve, and she was about eighteen, I thought she was the grandest girl in the world. I copied the way she walked and the way she did her hair—only mother caught me at it—and—and everything. And one day out at the lake she was swimming—she swam very well, you know—and she called me a baby because I couldn't. So I just pretended to myself that I was a big, beautiful girl, too, and I could ride and swim and talk just like Ethel Scott. And I tried to swim. Well, when I was trying to act like Ethel, she came ever so kindly, and showed me what to do, and I did it! I was too proud not to do it. And I was perfectly confident of myself because I wasn't me—I was Ethel, and Ethel could swim. Then I swam."

"That's it," said Hector. "Yesterday there were three sensitive boys on the field pretending in a very big, strong way that they were all Hector Blanding. You'll recollect what I told you about archæology—how it taught me to put myself in the place of the people I'm studying. I did it with those boys. I found out exactly what would influence them most, and got to work on their imaginations. Then we reversed it. They got to thinking they could do any old thing I could—and they did."

"But that isn't archæology—that's just wonderful, wonderful teaching!"

"Call it what you like," said Hector generously. "The point is that the score was ten to nothing. And—of course this isn't definite yet, but it's pretty certain—there seems to be a general impression that I'd better be head coach next year."

"Hector!"

"And I'd have to be in Cambridge from spring practice in April until after the game in November, so——"

"Yes?"

"So I want you to marry me before Christmas. Will you, dear?"

Her eyes were filled with tears, and they were not altogether tears of happiness.

"Oh, Hector," she said miserably. "Your book!"

"I'd thought of that—but the book can wait. The world isn't exactly moaning for it, you know. And isn't it more important, anyway, to teach live men than to write about dead ones? Isn't it?"

"But—what would your father say?"

Hector got up and walked about the room. He took a vase from the table, examined it carefully, and set it down again. When he faced her, he was very grave, but the corners of his lips moved suspiciously.

"All dad wanted," he said, "was for me to be famous—or at least well known—in some line outside the underwear business. Don't you think I may be in time?"

"But this is different!"

"And, furthermore, you promised to marry me as soon as I seemed reasonably certain of success. Isn't ten to

nothing—at New Haven, mind you—pretty reasonable?"

"If I could only think so!"

"But," he pleaded, "I'll write that long-winded book some time out of respect to father—you know I will. Don't you think I'm entitled to a little vacation out of respect to my wife? Besides, there's a smaller book I really *must* write first."

"But, Hector——"

The young man, suddenly remembering that his favorite character in fiction was a hero who understood women, calmly gathered her into his arms and kissed her. His assumption of the character was dazzlingly successful.

"Oh!" she whispered. "I didn't know—I could want you so much! If it only weren't for your father—and I did so want you to be famous—with a book!"

The man from Olympus laughed.

"Why, my dear," he told her, between kisses, "I'll be famous inside of six months! It's a positive cinch! I've just promised to edit the next football guide!"

THE ERIE COUPLER

RAILROAD managements have been charged with waste and extravagance ever since railroads were invented. The troubles of the New Haven and the Rock Island can easily find their counterparts in the earlier days of American railroad history.

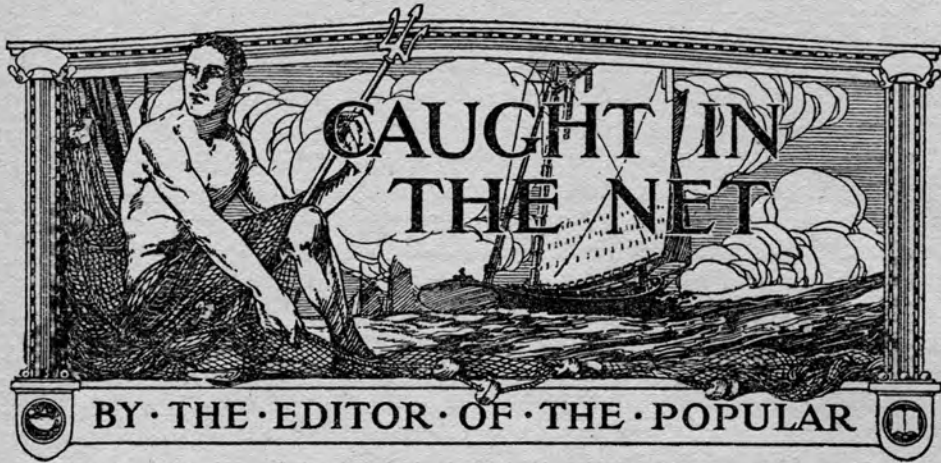
In such eventualities, the pleasant game of "passing the buck" is resorted to. The old story of the Erie coupler is one of the most popular among railroad men.

Commodore Vanderbilt was riding one day on the rear end of a New York Central train. The train came to the Erie Canal, where a brakeman began to uncouple one of the cars, while the commodore watched him.

The brakeman had some trouble, and angrily threw the coupler over into the canal.

"Hey, what are you doing?" cried Vanderbilt, whose ideas of economy were outraged at this deliberate waste. "Don't you know whose property that is?"

The brakeman looked up and at once recognized the owner of the New York Central lines, and incidentally the owner of the coupler. He preserved his quick-wittedness, however. He knew that there was no love lost between the Central and the Erie at that time. "Yes, sir," he replied promptly. "I know who owns it. That was an Erie coupler."



THE MAN FROM HOME

SINCE the outbreak of the great war, American consuls in Europe have been living at speed. The writer of this paragraph has been watching them at work for seven months, and he gives here a composite picture of what they look like, and how they act. The American consul talks Indiana slang to an office full of escaping German civilians, strapped Belgians, courteous French, troubled Russians—all the nationalities of the map except born Americans. He leans against the wall of his office, six feet of him, his hands in his pockets, his very white teeth revealed by his jolly laugh, forty years old, a boy for fun, and he smashes out solutions for his worried clients for six, eight, sometimes twelve hours of the day. He signs bills of lading on blue slips, writes out "permission to leave" for anxious families, wires news of separated relatives, and then he has to step out from the pin pricks and initiate policy for a large district. His total assistance is one local lady, who knows a few English phrases. All the headwork, all the drive, all the weary routine, has to be shoved through on his own momentum. A beefsteak at the café at noon, and a cup of coffee at five p. m., is the fuel on which he generates speed enough to run a trust, move a circus, and direct a political convention. He hasn't time to dig up precedents at the Archæological Museum. He has to guess right, while the second hand is ticking.

Troops march up to the doorstep of his town and threaten its destruction. They drop bombs down into its lovely streets from their monoplanes, German officers motor through its main thoroughfares, Belgian troops have come and gone, from one to five thousand persons stand in front of its railway station all day long, feeding on rumor. Its peace-loving citizens, members of the Red Cross, cultured, kindly people, have lived in daily dread of seeing their age-hallowed buildings shelled to pieces. In this city of gently flowing rivers stand a cathedral, churches, a belfry with its chime of bells, the splendid Gothic Hotel de Ville, charming old houses. Here are housed statuary of Rodin and painting of the Van Eycks.

The suburbs are burned to ruins, one hundred houses in ashes. Every few days, in a drive or walk, your ear pricks the booming of field guns in skirmishes to the east and south, cattle are killed, fields trampled, houses burned, civilians shot, work destroyed, kindly useful activities suspended.

Such is the city, and such its troubled fate where The Man from Home deals out advice to the bewildered. "Save my husband!" an American woman comes in and pleads. The husband is a German who believes in peace. He remained in Paris, and handed himself over to the authorities when war broke out. He did not care to join the German arms. But he had not lived long enough in Paris to win the recognition of the authorities. So he lay languishing in prison, under international red tape. There is the sort of case they thrust at him, one hundred or two hundred persons a day. Many of them are Belgians, a few Germans, French, naturalized Americans, several each day of different races under heaven.

Once it was his duty to dash down when a German café was wrecked, to calm the crowd, save the proprietor from rough handling, and do it all without angering his Belgian townspeople against himself. His usefulness ceases when he loses the confidence of the citizens. But, at the same time, as consul of a neutral nation, he is protecting the Germans in a hostile country. It is a ticklish balance. But he holds it, with all the nonchalance and jovial good-fellowship of South Bend, Indiana, and Marshalltown, Iowa, where he spent the first years of life. His dealing with the German officers, encamped at the gates of the city, aided the burgomaster in signing terms which left the beautiful medieval city undemolished by siege guns.

He has the gifts of popularity, mixing with all classes, picking up friendships at the docks, at the Voorhuit—the Workingmen's Socialist Organization—in the cafés, around town. He acts with a bold promptitude, chopping red tape into fine bits. He prefers solving the situation to trailing after precedent.

The consul stands between many persons and acute suffering. His action guides perhaps a thousand lives away from folly and panic.

SALARIES IN JAPAN

JAPAN may have attractions, but not for the railroad man. In the United States there are many locomotive engineers who get more pay than any transportation official in the Chrysanthemum Empire below the rank of president of the imperial railways.

There are a dozen railroad presidents in America who get \$50,000 a year, several who get \$75,000, one or two who get \$100,000, and there is a record of one who got \$400,000 for less than one year's work.

On the 5,985 miles of railroad in Japan there are 109,983 employees. Their total compensation is \$12,562,000 a year. That is an average of about \$114 per annum, or approximately thirty-one cents a day. There are locomotive engineers in America who make \$200 or more a month, and the average daily compensation of American engineers is in excess of \$5.20 a day.

Slason Thompson, director of the bureau of railway news and statistics, is authority for the statement that the most comprehensive railroad reports that come to his office are those from Japan. The only country that approaches Japan in thoroughness and in detail in this respect is Denmark.

Apparently Japan, in absorbing the virtues of the railroad systems of various countries, also took heartily to some of their vices. For wild financing Japan can give points to some persons who have achieved a certain kind of prominence in Wall Street. The railroads of Japan are narrow gauge. The railroads of America are standard gauge. It costs much less to build a narrow-gauge than a standard-gauge road. Despite this fact, Japan has her railroads

capitalized at more than \$89,000 a mile. There is a lot of water in American railroad shares, yet the capitalization is less than \$64,000 a mile. Eight years ago the capitalization of the Japanese railroads was only \$47,759 a mile.

The yearly gross receipts of the Japanese railways are about twelve per cent of the capitalization of the companies. There are various large systems in America, the net receipts of which amount to that percentage or more.

Wages are advancing slowly in Japan, and socialism is beginning to take root. One of these fine days the whole railroad structure of Japan will have to be reorganized financially on a basis as radical as that of our Wabash or Rock Island systems.

SPEED

THE spirit of the times shall teach me speed," says Shakespeare's King John.

The other day, eight huge engines, installed fifteen years ago in one of the great power houses of the Interborough Rapid Transit Company, in New York City, were relegated to the scrap heap, or for occasional use as helpers—like aged veterans given sinecures to enable them to keep their self-respect. When they were built, these reciprocating engines were the last word in design—marvels of power and speed. They were in as good physical condition when they were retired—but they were too slow. Even the big boilers that drove them were dismantled to make way for still more efficient steaming devices—the last word of to-day in forced firing and superheating.

The secret of it all is speed. The high speed of the turbine, which has displaced the reciprocating engines; the high velocity of air and fuel through the furnaces; the more rapid circulation of water in the new boilers, and the high steam speed in the pipes. All this enables the multitude to be moved more economically. On the subway lines alone the traffic averages more than a million passengers a day.

The striving for increased speed is one of the dominant features of modern industry. There never has been such a demand for high-speed steel, for instance. This steel is used in metal-cutting and boring tools. Alloys such as tungsten harden the steel so it will stand an incredible number of degrees of frictional heat without losing its edge. This enables machine tools to be run at from five to ten times the speed possible with ordinary steel, with a proportionate increase in the output.

BANKS AND LIBRARIES

WHAT may develop into one of the most important adjuncts to the spread of knowledge of agriculture in America has been inaugurated in the town of Coleridge, Nebraska. Charles D. Young is cashier of the First National Bank of Coleridge. He has a love of the soil. Patrons of the bank, knowing he had read nearly everything written about wheat and corn and barley and oats and such crops, used to go to him for advice now and then. To supplement the information he gave, he loaned one of his books on agriculture to the inquirer. Gradually, as more and more persons went to him for advice, he got to keeping his books at the bank instead of at home. To-day there is no small town in America, perhaps, that has so fine an agricultural library as Coleridge. There are scores of works on intensive farming, on cattle breeding, on sheep raising, on soil nourishment, on the management of poultry, the cultivation of flowers, on drainage, and every other thing connected with farm life.

Mr. Young has amplified his library by making drafts on the national government and all the State agricultural universities of the United States.

The cashier's library became so useful and grew so popular, that patrons were drawn to the First National of Coleridge who never did business with that institution before. Its deposits increased handsomely.

Reports of what the cashier of the Coleridge bank had done spread to other banks. Now, throughout the West, the banks are taking it up.

The government has spent millions of dollars in the spread of agricultural literature, partly, if not largely, for political purposes. Other millions have been spent by the various States. Nation and States send demonstrators through the country to illustrate practically some of the things that are new in farm culture. With all this effort, and with the multitude of farming publications, it has been recognized that the needs of the farmers were not being met.

There are scores of banks in Kansas, Iowa, and Nebraska that have patterned or improved on the Coleridge plan. They report most favorably both from a banking viewpoint and an educational. Those who have knowledge of the facts say the circulating farm libraries are destined to find a place in thousands of American banks, and that they will play a powerful part in the improvement of the farm and the increase of farm wealth.

THE OPPORTUNITIES THEY OFFER

WHEN you speak of a section of the country which offers opportunities, every community in America is ready to come forward and prove that it is that section.

This is significant. It shows that every town and township is not only willing to receive the new man, but eagerly welcomes him.

However, the opportunity, and indeed the degree of welcome, depends upon the man seeking it. Every community is eagerly hoping for some man with creative ability to come among them; some man who can take their latent possibilities and make more out of them; some man who can start a new business, can make a failing one succeed, or even make more prosperous an already going concern. Every community wants the man of brains and force, whether he has money or not. Some man, who, in their own vernacular, will "start something."

Of course, capital is also in demand. No community but welcomes new capital. They all want men with money to spend. And yet the man who will do things, who will discover possibilities in unused waterfalls, opportunities in waste land, profits in clay banks, shipping stations for new products and will start any activity that will give employment is most welcome of all.

Men of resourcefulness and energy will find, of course, some communities better adapted to their special activities than others; and yet they will also find America fairly strewn with opportunities for them.

But it is to be noted the opportunities these communities offer newcomers are seldom ready-made opportunities. It is merely a field, often an undeveloped field, for grit and creative brain stuff. It is a chance for the man who thinks to set the wheels of industry and profit spinning by his thoughts.

Ready-made opportunities that stand out visibly are very scarce. They really always were. The man who is looking for a location where the community has put up the capital and done the thinking and is merely waiting to turn over the profits to him will walk a long way, or ride the freight trains many a moon before he lights.

The Spider's Web

By Clarence L. Cullen

Author of "War: Personally Conducted," "The Blight," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF FIRST PART

"Sowing his wild oats" had never included anything desperate in Lindon, junior's, career until, when suffering from alcoholism, his cousin, Doctor Forsyth, gave him a jolt of morphine. That settled young Lindon—he contracted the habit. Lindon, senior, a big steel manufacturer, learning of his son's addiction, furnishes him with money to take a "cure." Back of Lindon, junior, stands his stanch and loyal friend, Buck Whiting. Wishing to get a foothold in the steel business, and usurp the son's place, Doctor Forsyth devotes himself to the elder Lindon. After a hard fight against the fiendish drug, Lindon, junior, returns home looking a physical wreck but clear-eyed. Catching him asleep, Forsyth commits the dastardly crime of hypodermically injecting into the young fellow's leg a dose of morphine. When he wakes, Lindon, junior, feels ecstatic, and all the world is rosy again. False strength courses his frame. As in a dream, he rises, goes to the village and drinks whisky; under the double effect of booze and drugs he buys a morphinist's outfit and goes to New York. His father, hearing of his son's defection and shame, casts him off. Forsyth is given the position and power he craves. From bad to worse Lindon, junior, falls, until he sinks low enough to consort with the scum of the underworld. Out of money and now a morphine fiend, he even consents to peddle drugs illicitly for Jimmy the Cokie, who, in return, promises to furnish young Lindon with all the dope he wants.

(In Two Parts—Part Two)

CHAPTER VI—(Continued).

JIMMY THE COKIE, advancing Lindon enough money for his needs, besides supplying him with morphia, spent a part of his busy hours during the next few days and nights in taking Lindon along the drug-peddling route which had been the beat of the now sequestered Burky the Brute—a route which took in the back rooms of a large number of saloons on the "Main Line," which, of course, is Broadway, and a number of squares of Seventh Avenue above where the latter thoroughfare crosses Broadway.

The addicts were always waiting in the back rooms of the saloons in mid-afternoon when Jimmy the Cokie and Lindon visited the places, and Jimmy showed Lindon his own adroit methods of "slipping" the drugs to the purchasers and of getting their money in return, a game involving dexterous sleight of

hand for both operations. In addition, Lindon was taught the "signals" and how to "spot" them.

Caches for the peddler's "decks"—little paper parcels containing various-priced quantities of the drugs—and tubes and bottles were revealed to Lindon by Jimmy. These plants for the drugs, provided so that the peddler would never have to actually carry any of "the stuff" on his person, were usually placed ingeniously in the lavatories of the saloons, with the knowledge and connivance usually of the keeper of the saloon or the head bartender, who got a "rake-off" for extending this "planting" privilege to the peddlers.

So David Lindon, junior, son of David Lindon, senior, the former the only son, and the exceedingly well-educated son, of the proprietor of the great Lindon Steel Mills, started out, after a

week or so of instruction from his employer, Jimmy the Cokie, an ex-convict—as a drug peddler.

He did pretty well at it from the start. It was of advantage to him in one respect that he had taken up this work, in that he was forced to give up drinking, except when his peddling was finished for the day and at night—for he started in at three o'clock in the afternoon, the hour when most of the addicts, just out of bed, made their appearance, and kept steadily up and down his beat until nearly three in the morning.

Jimmy was highly pleased with Lindon's ability as a peddler. One night, about a month after Lindon had started, Jimmy came to him with a new proposition—a "promotion."

"Say, Senator, I want ya t' git all dolled up," was Jimmy's way of expressing it. "I'll fix ya out wit' duds—t'ree or four day suits an' a suit o' tha soup an' fish"—by which latter Jimmy meant a suit of evening clothes. "I gotta new route f'r you—tha wingiest one on my list. Ya know Frank the Dude? Well, he died las' night, sudden, at his flat—I guess he done th' Dutch; I heard him say often he was goin' t' kill hisself. Frank had been a swell gink like you. Well, Frank was doin' tha cabarets for me—peddlin' tha stuff t' tha dolls, you know. It's big graft, savvy? Ya sit right down at th' tables wit' 'em when you git th' signal, an' you can charge 'em what ya like for a deck o' 'stuff'—tha stiff that's wit' th' wimmen has to pay f'r it, anyhow, an' so they don't care. So you order th' duds t'-day, see, and nex' week you'll have Frank the Dude's job peddlin' t' th' wimmen. I'll tend t' th' beat myself till you're ready."

Lindon heard him out. Then he shook his head.

"No," he said, "I can't take that route."

Jimmy stared at him, open-mouthed.

"Can't take it!" he exclaimed. "W'y, ya boob, it's th' niftiest, moneyest—"

Now there were two reasons why Lindon could not and would not accept this "promotion" at the hands of his employer. The first and weightiest one was that Lindon had taken a vow that he would never peddle drugs to women, come what might. The second reason was that it would be impossible for him to peddle in the cabarets without coming upon many of his former friends at those places. He was resolved that he would take no chances upon such encounters. Lindon by this time had his path blocked out. He intended never to reveal himself again to anybody who had known him in his better time.

Lindon gave his reasons to Jimmy for declining the "promotion." He mentioned first his distaste for peddling drugs to women.

"But, ya boob, they're all hooked tight already on tha stuff!" exclaimed Jimmy. "There's thousands of 'em, day an' night, in tha cabarets, just graftin' f'r tha stuff—all hooked as tight as we are."

That made no difference to Lindon, he replied quietly. He had a conviction on the subject of selling drugs to women that he couldn't override. Jimmy would have become angry then and there to the splitting point with Lindon had not the latter mentioned his second reason. That calmed Jimmy down.

"Oh, I git ya now," he said musingly. He still had the highest opinion of Lindon's "class." "Well"—rubbing his chin—"that stalls me, o' course. A guy don't wanta meet th' buddies he knowed before he got hooked. But I'm sorry. You're just tha gink I wanted f'r that cabaret route."

A few minutes later, separating from Jimmy after having received the offer of this glorious "promotion," Lindon walked into one of the saloon rear

rooms along his regular route. He received the signal from two of his regular patrons, and went to the cache to get the drugs called for by the signals. As he was bending over the cache, which hitherto he had considered perfectly secure, a heavy hand was dropped on his shoulder. Peering over the shoulder, Lindon looked into the barrel of a pistol. Above the pistol was the face of a detective of the dope squad whose face he knew perfectly well.

"Got you this trip, eh, pal?" said the detective, and he darted out his loose hand and seized the little drawerful of drugs which Lindon had just opened. "Come on over to the station and tell the cap all about it, eh?"

Ten minutes later, Lindon was giving a fictitious name to the desk sergeant at the police station, and "drug peddler" was being written opposite his name on the blotter. Then he found himself in a very small, chilly, and cheerless cell. He thought more frenziedly of the next morning without morphia than of the prison sentence that was ahead of him. He knew there would be no use in sending for Jimmy the Cokie. All of the latter's peddlers worked for him on the express terms that when "pinched" they were to fight their own way. Jimmy could not come out into the open and help him. He himself was in the constant shadow of too great danger to help his arrested employees.

Lindon took half an hour to think it over in his cell. Then he claimed and was given his privilege of telephoning. He called up Buck Whiting, and told him where he was and why he was there. It was not the confinement itself that made him show the white feather. It was the strangling fear of being deprived of morphia.

"My car's in front of the door, old man," was Buck's instant reply. "Cheer up! I know the captain down there.

Be down in ten minutes and get you out."

Lindon, back in his cell, waited miserably. But within less than ten minutes Buck, in evening clothes, was led to the cell door by the doorman. The doorman unlocked the cell door and let Buck in.

"Hello, old hound!" exclaimed Buck, in his usual boisterous manner, shaking both of Lindon's hands violently. The light from over the cell door was shining on Lindon's worn face, but Whiting pretended not to see the ravages. "I was never so glad to hear from a buddy in all my life! D'you think you could wait here a few minutes till I go and see the captain? He's at his home, the lieutenant tells me. I know him well."

Lindon smiled feebly at the question—could he wait there!

Buck shook both of his hands again, told him to "chirk up," and went out. He was back half an hour later, with the doorman.

"Come on, Dave!" said Buck, the doorman unlocking the cell door. "We're going to have a little peek at the doings in the night court."

By special dispensation, instead of going in "the wagon," Lindon was allowed to go to the night court in Whiting's automobile, the policeman sitting beside him.

"Don't bother," whispered Whiting, when they separated at the door where the prisoners were taken in for trial. "I'll be up front in the congregation."

The night court was in session, and Lindon was thrust in with more than a dozen arrested ones whose cases were ahead of his own on the magistrate's list. But his name was called almost as soon as he arrived in the "pen," and he was led before the magistrate. The magistrate was a young man of wealth and social standing who had entered municipal politics a few years before for the pure fun of the thing and as a

means of disposing of some of his time.

"You are charged with having been intoxicated on the street," said the magistrate mildly to Lindon. "What have you to say for yourself?"

He waited the merest fraction of a second before adding:

"Your first offense? Well, watch yourself, my man! Watch yourself! Don't you let me see you here again on this charge! Discharged!"

Lindon was led out of the court, the policeman who had accompanied him in the automobile from the station grinning widely. A moment later, Lindon was seated beside Buck in the latter's automobile, and the chauffeur was starting the car.

"The charge they made against me, and wrote on the blotter, was for selling drugs, Buck," said Lindon wearily, as the car plunged ahead.

"Uh-huh!" replied Buck. "But it's 'intoxication' on the blotter now. The captain of that precinct is a good fellow. If it had remained 'peddling drugs' on the blotter, I'd have had to give bail for you, and you'd have had to jump your bail in order to get cured again. Oh, yes, you're going to get cured again! Surest thing you know!" He paused and grinned. "Not a bad fellow, that magistrate, either, eh, Dave? I play tennis with him Saturday afternoons. Played with him today. And I had a little telephone talk with him a while ago—after I saw the captain. Quick little worker on the bench, that magistrate, what?"

The car pulled up at the curb in front of Buck's apartment building, and they went up to his apartment.

CHAPTER VII.

Buck Whiting was a Samaritan with tact plus considerateness. For several days he said no word to Lindon about the latter's condition or affairs. Nor would he permit Lindon to say much

about himself. Lindon told him briefly about his return home, drug-cleansed, after his treatment, and of how Doctor Forsyth had deliberately started him on his renewed addiction. Buck gnawed hard on his cigar when he heard that, but held up a staying hand.

"We'll work all that out later," he said. "There's a lot of bridges to cross before we come to Forsyth—but we'll cross 'em. For the present, just browse around this apartment, understand—just browse. The best way for a fellow to get hold of himself is to think about nothing at all. When you get ready, and I'm ready, we'll talk things over. By the way, where are your duds and things?"

Lindon shamefacedly tried to parry that question, but it was useless. Whiting took possession of his bunch of pawn tickets, and that evening his pawned clothing came from the presser's, followed soon after by his trunk, which Buck had got from the dingy downtown hotel. On the morning after his arrival at Whiting's apartment, Lindon, awakening from a nightmare of cells and club-wielding, arm-twisting policemen, found a number of tubes of morphia on the table beside his bed. Buck had gone out and got the drug on the night before, after Lindon had turned in. When Lindon tried to thank him, Buck cut him off with:

"Forget it, old horse. Let's play for a while, anyhow, that there's no such thing as dope in the world."

"I wish to God there were not," broke out Lindon.

"There won't be, for you, after a bit," said Buck quietly. "But you've got to rest up and take a look at yourself from the outside, as if you were merely a part of the perspective, before we begin reducing that mountain to a molehill. Browse, man!"

So, for a number of days, Lindon "browsed" about the luxurious apartment, not going out at all. Buck spent

most of the time at his office and clubs. Lindon saw him two or three times during the day or evening, but at these meetings they talked about everything in the world except about the events that had culminated in Whiting finding his friend in a police-station cell.

One cold, brilliantly clear morning, the fifth after Lindon's rescue from the cell, Buck appeared at the breakfast table in a lounging robe, instead of his office clothes. Lindon, who had not slept, was at the table ahead of him, meticulously avoiding the excellent food, as the morphinist usually does, but taking some coffee. Lindon glanced inquiringly at the lounging robe. Buck grinned.

"You'd like to have me work my head off every day in the year, I presume?" he said to Lindon. "Have you any sort of an idea what day this is?"

Lindon looked blank.

"Why, merry Christmas, you old cuttlefish!" broke out Buck.

Lindon gave him back the greeting in a low tone. He had lost track of days and weeks and months.

Buck went out about noon, and when he came back he said:

"You don't mind my sisters and their kids dropping in for half an hour or so this afternoon, do you, Dave? I told 'em you were with me, and they want to say howdy."

Lindon often had visited Whiting's home, in their college days and once or twice afterward, before any of Buck's sisters had married, and had been on terms of chumship with them. But he recoiled slightly from the suggestion of meeting them now.

"They understand that you're a sick man—sick, understand—nothing else," put in Buck, "and so they won't stick around long. Merely want to say hello, Santa Claus! and then go their way. Catherine, my unmarried sister—you remember her, don't you?—is coming, too, and she's going to bring her

cello. She's the greatest cellist in the world, in my impartial brotherly opinion, and I hear her play just once a year. She always comes to my place and plays a little for me on Christmas Day. If you don't mind, old man? But if you think it'll hit your nerves a belt, why——"

Lindon waved off the rest of it.

Many times during the day the telephone bell rang. The callers were friends of Buck's who wanted to give him the day's greetings. Buck had his manservant answer all the calls.

"Some of the fellows might want to drop in," he explained to Lindon, "and if I answered the phone they wouldn't believe I was in Montauk Point, where my man is telling them I've gone for the day."

Lindon understood. Whiting was shooing off his friends on Christmas Day to save Lindon from the embarrassment of meeting them.

Late in the afternoon, Whiting's two married sisters, handsome, brilliant women, came with their broods of pretty children. Lindon had not spoken with ladies for more than a year. But these old friends promptly put him on his old terms with them. "It was a hard moment for him when the children came running to him and placed their childish gifts for him in his hands.

Soon after they left, Catherine came, followed by the motor footman, who carried her cello. She was a tall, lovely girl, with Buck's kindling brown eyes. Lindon remembered her as a slightly freckled girl of thirteen with her hair in a plait. In the old years he had romped with her at the Whitings' summer place in the Berkshires. Now the mere touch of her slender, accomplished fingers, when she held out her hand to him, made him reflect upon what an impassable barrier had grown out between them because of what he himself had become since he had last seen her.

Buck, a clever pianist, accompanied

her when she played. Lindon listened from another room, staring at the flickering gas logs which gave out the only light in the room.

The dreaming, droning cello furnished an obligato to reflections both bitter and hopeful in Lindon's mind. The bitterness, of course, embraced all that he had lost—which was everything. In Buck's home he had had a chance to pull up and inspect himself and cast an eye backward at the path he had been traversing, and environment is the great wonder worker in human lives.

Here was Buck Whiting, a man who had started with no better chance than David Lindon, if as good—thus meditated the listener to the cello music—here was Whiting, who had chosen reason instead of folly as his navigating star, living the decent life of a clean man, himself clean and strong and wholesome in mind and body; happy, his friends eager to talk to him, to see him, to shake his hearty hand.

And himself? Even in the warm room, Lindon felt himself growing chilled in the marrow of him at the thought of that. Here was he, virtually a vagrant, lounging miserably about another man's home on a Christmas Day, a physical wreck, a dope fiend!

Why was all this? Did it all have to be? Was there any chance for him?

The leaven that had been working in his mind for days, and now most particularly the exalted, aspiring, beautiful cello music coming from the other room, stirred vague promptings of hope in the man's bruised heart and drug-deadened mind.

Buck, a close observer, saw a different light in Lindon's eye when, the music over, he and Catherine entered the room where Lindon now stood; and Buck noticed, too, that Lindon was holding his still wide but thin shoulders

a little more erect than he had seen them for years.

"Your music has made me almost a well man, Catherine," Lindon said to the girl.

She flushed. "If it can make you entirely well, I wish you'd have Buck let me come and play for you every day," she replied.

"Consider yourself not only asked but commanded, sis," promptly put in Buck. She kissed her brother, held out a hand to Lindon, and was gone.

Buck, lighting a cigar, sat down in front of the gas logs alongside Lindon. The two men remained silent for a while. Then—

"Buck," said Lindon, "have you still got that lodge up in the Adirondacks?"

"Sure thing!" said Buck. "I was up there last month and got a deer. Why?"

"Because I want to go up there, old man."

"What do you mean—alone?" Buck stared.

"No, not alone," answered Lindon. "With a couple of companions—men." He paused. "Well, not exactly companions—helpers, guards, suppose I call them."

Whiting began to catch Lindon's meaning. He rose a little excitedly from his chair.

"When d'ye want to go, Dave?" he asked huskily.

"In a few days."

"What—in the dead of winter?"

"Yes."

Whiting hurled his still fresh cigar at the gas logs and grabbed Lindon by both of his forearms in a viselike clutch—a characteristic action of Buck's with his intimates when he was excited.

"Old hawss," he broke out in a hoarsely happy tone, "I've been waiting for this! Dad-bing your old thoroughbred shoe leather, I've been waiting for this! I wanted you to do it yourself, see? I knew you'd do it. I was willing to give you all the time on earth to make

up your mind to it. But, say, I'm glad—why, confound it, man, I'm brutally happy—that you've got to it so soon—and on a Christmas Day—a day of luck!"

He released his clutch on Lindon's arm, and paced the room swiftly.

"Why, of course, my lodge is the place for the trick!" he broke out. "Here, where's my coat and hat? I'll go right away and engage one of those dope-treating doctors from that institution you went to before. I'll make the beggar promise to be here the first thing in the morning to go right up there to the lodge with you——"

Lindon, the little voice of hope singing away in his heart as it had not for many long months, smiled at Buck's impetuosity.

"Sit down, Buck," he said. "No need to go after any doctor. I'm not going to take any treatment. I'm going to get off the drug myself—or cash in in the attempt."

"But can it be done?" asked Buck wonderingly, sitting down again. "Is it ever done? Are you up to it?"

Lindon explained the reduction method to Whiting in detail, as he himself had heard it explained. Gradually reduced amounts of the drug would be administered each day, the process being very slow. When, from his present addiction of twenty grains a day, the amount had been lowered to so small a quantity as, say, a quarter or an eighth of a grain a day, then Lindon would "go off the stuff" altogether.

Even then it would be a fight—oh, yes, a fight! But from the small amount, after the gradual reduction, and with the gradual elimination of the accumulated poison from his system—well, he could and would give that proposition a battle! Other men had done it—not many, but a few. And Buck's lodge would be the place for the trial. It was eighteen miles from a railroad for one thing—so that when

he came to the last of the morphia on his reduction scale, there'd be nobody around to give him morphia stealthily and get him "hooked" again—and if he himself, Lindon, in agony for the need of it, were to be tempted to elude his companions, the eighteen miles to the railroad from the lodge would give him plenty of chance to think the temptation over, even if he were able to walk one mile of the distance in such a condition.

"Great, great plan, buddy!" enthusiastically exclaimed Buck. "But about these companions or guards or helpers that you mentioned—where do they come in? Of course I'm going to see that you have all the blamed helpers and guards and companions and things that you everlastingly want, but——"

"There's not a man in the world 'hooked' by a drug like morphia who could get off the stuff himself without help by that reduction method," put in Lindon. "The man trying to do it that way would be bound to cheat himself. Thousands of men have tried it by themselves, only to fail. The stuff is above all will, all character. So the man getting down and off by the reduction plan must have nothing to do with the handling of the drug. That's where the two men that I want to have with me come in. They're to serve it out to me. And they've got to be huskies, in case huskiness is needed. Occasionally a man getting off that way has to be manhandled along toward the finish of the ordeal."

"But the roughnecks wouldn't bang and bruise you up, would they?" inquired Buck, a fighting gleam in his eye.

"Nothing like that," replied Lindon. "They merely use their huskiness for restraining purposes—not that I'd be a very formidable proposition to restrain in such a weakened condition. But, anyhow, I want a couple of strong, trustworthy men with me for the or-

deal, and I've got one of them picked already."

"Who is he?" inquired Buck interestedly.

"He's a man I've known all my life, by the name of Bull Malloy," said Lindon. "He's been a foreman in the structural steel plant of the Lindon mills for twenty years, and he's been a thick-and-thin friend of mine ever since I wore knee pants. I'm going to write to Bull to-night. He is absolutely trustworthy—he'd go on the rack before he would betray a friend. I am going to tell him exactly what I want him to do for me. I'll need him for six months—I am going to take two months up at the lodge to build up before starting the reduction, two months to reduce down to the quitting point, and two more months to build up. I am going to ask Malloy to pick another man from the mill to come along with him—some man he feels confident of. I'll write Bull that if he finds that he and the other man he picks to come to me can't get leave of absence from the mill for six months, both of them are to quit their jobs and come anyhow." Lindon brought his jaws together with a snap very like Lindon, senior's, in determined moments. "At the end of six months, if I get through at all—and I think I will—I'll be pretty nearly able to get them reinstated in their jobs and to make up to them for their loss of time at the mills."

"And if you're not, I reckon I pretty nearly will be!" exclaimed Buck. "Here, come out to my room. There's a desk there. Get busy and write that letter to Bull Malloy. Start something! We're losing time!"

Lindon's letter to Bull Malloy was in the mail box half an hour later.

CHAPTER VIII.

Doctor Forsyth, chief *pro tempore* of the Lindon Steel Mills, during the absence of Lindon, senior, who had gone

to Florida with his wife and daughter for the winter, was looking over the first morning mail.

He sat at Lindon, senior's, huge desk, a dominant personality. The symbol of his forsaken profession, the sparse Vandyke beard, was gone, revealing a countenance of hard angularities, but with plenty of driving power in the long, pointed chin. Another physician-surgeon, a young man carefully picked by Doctor Forsyth, now attended to the bruised, burned, or sick workers of the Lindon mills. Doctor Forsyth, coequal with Lindon, senior, as guiding hand of the mills even before the old gentleman had gone South for his health, now, as head of the vast plant, was "all business."

He was efficiency and economy, in this new capacity, to an extent that caused him to be more disliked by the mills' employees than he had been as their "company doctor," which is saying a great deal.

With his enthusiasm for work and his eye for detail, Forsyth insisted that every letter that came to the mills should pass over his desk. This involved considerable labor on his part in sorting mail. But he was deft, willing—and inquisitive. He did not in the least care for the business of anybody else—except when the business of other people might have a bearing, imminent or remote, upon his own.

So it happened that a letter addressed to "William J. Malloy, assistant foreman, Lindon Steel Works," came under Forsyth's pale-gray, sharply observant eyes. There was no "If not returned —" address on the envelope. But there did not need to be, in so far as Forsyth's identification of the writer of the letter was concerned. He knew that sprawly handwriting very well. There was no doubt in his mind. The letter to William J. Malloy was from none other than Lindon, junior, who, it would appear, still was in New York.

Holding the letter in one hand, Forsyth leaned back in his swivel chair, and with the other stroked, from habit, the chin where the Vandyke beard had been. Why was Lindon, junior, writing to Bull Malloy? For one of two reasons, Forsyth quickly concluded: either to find out how things were going in Lindon, or to communicate, perhaps with the purpose of having the communication being carried farther, how things were going with Lindon, junior.

Forsyth retired to the small inner office, a holy of holies reserved for important conferences, adjoining the ampler office, and skillfully opened the letter addressed to William J. Malloy. He read it with a puckered brow, stroking with spraddled fingers the chin from which the Vandyke had vanished.

It was not only a very informative letter, but a very frank one. Lindon, junior, could write with perfect confidence and candor to a simple-souled, forthright, two-fisted man, though he was only ten years older than himself, often had plucked Lindon, junior, from the ground and carried him on his shoulders when Lindon, junior, had been a boy. Forsyth's eyes narrowed reflectively when he came to the meat of the letter, which, dashed off at top speed by Lindon, junior, in his hour of hopefulness at the close of the Christmas Day which had contributed so much toward his reawakening, was nevertheless plentifully furnished with details of high and even acute interest to Forsyth.

The letter told Malloy very candidly why he wanted Bull's services and the services of another man to be selected by Bull for a number of months. Lindon, junior, was going into the woods to get off a drug habit, and he wanted, as companions and helpers, men in whom he could place implicit confidence. Perhaps for sentimental reason he preferred that those men should be from his home town.

The habit was one that would have to be got off from gradually, and it was of such a sort that Lindon, junior, did not care to trust himself to handle or have charge of the drug to which he had become addicted. He knew that he could rely upon Malloy's saying no word to anybody about the nature of the summons he was receiving, and that he could also trust him to get the right kind of a man to act as his assistant in the undertaking. If he found any trouble in getting leave of absence from the mills for himself and another man, the two need not hesitate to resign their jobs. They would be reimbursed liberally for their lost time. A statement of the nature of the undertaking for which they were joining Lindon, junior, would in due time be placed in the hands of Lindon, senior, which would not only provide for their reimbursement, but for their reinstatement in their old jobs.

There was need for promptness. Lindon, junior, wanted to make the start for the lodge in the Adirondacks within a few days. He would trust Bull and the other man picked by him from the mills to join him in New York as soon as they could get away. They would be met at the railroad station upon wiring the train by which they would start.

Doctor Forsyth remained in the holy of holies for nearly an hour, pondering. Then he dexterously resealed the letter addressed to William J. Malloy, resumed the great desk of Lindon, senior, and summoned an office boy.

"Take this letter at once to Malloy, assistant foreman in structurals," said Forsyth to the boy.

Then the doctor turned his diverted attention to the still unopened stack of mail. But there was an expectant expression in his eyes.

About two hours later, the office boy announced to the head *pro tempore* of the mills that "Malloy of the struc-

structurals" desired audience of him. Bull Malloy was not in his working clothes; he had been home, where he had washed up and changed to street clothes. He was a clean-faced, clear-eyed giant who, with no apparent aggressiveness of manner, had a disquieting habit, as Doctor Forsyth considered it, of looking squarely into the eyes of people with whom he talked.

Forsyth glanced swiftly at Malloy's street clothes and appeared to be greatly surprised by them.

"Aren't you working to-day, Malloy—as busy as we are in structurals?" he asked the assistant foreman sharply.

"No, sir," replied Malloy. "I went on, then reported off to the foreman. I'm going away, sir. I've come to ask for a few months' leave from the mills. A sort of a vacation, like, you might call it; I haven't been off a working day for six years."

"It's a bad time to ask for anything like that, Malloy, with the structurals working in three shifts at full capacity," said Forsyth discouragingly. "Is this going-away business of yours a thing that can't be put off?"

"I want to go to-night, sir," replied Malloy. "And I forgot to say that I want to take a friend with me—Jim King, foreman in the rails department."

Forsyth made a gesture of impatience.

"Oh, that's coming it a little too strong," he broke out. "Speak for yourself, Malloy, but not for other men in the mills. I can't let King go. What is all this, anyhow? Are you going off labor agitating, or what?"

Malloy flushed hotly. He knew precisely where he stood with Lindon, senior. And he had no possible use for Doctor Forsyth.

"I've been here more than twenty years without doing any agitating," replied Malloy, carefully omitting the "sir" this time. "It's personal business I'm going away on, and I want a friend

with me. That's why I picked Jim King."

Doctor Forsyth, knowing that Lindon, senior, would never countenance any rough treatment of Bull Malloy at his hands, assumed the good-naturedly argumentative tone.

"Oh, well, if it's an imperative matter, Malloy, I won't hold you back," he said. "You're needed pretty badly just now, but that can't be helped, I suppose. As to King it is different. He's superintending the setting up of some new machinery in the rails department, and it's out of the question, absolutely impossible, for him to take any leave now. You haven't spoken to him yet about going with you, have you?"

"No, sir," said Malloy. "I wanted to know first, of course, how it would be about his getting leave."

"Well," said Forsyth persuasively, "you've got friends, men that you're close to, all over the mills. If you've got to have some friend along with you on this—er—uh—trip you're going on, why not choose a man from a department that is not so busy? There's Delaney, for instance, in the tubular-boilers department. We're laying off men there. I see you often enough with Delaney. Why not take him?"

Malloy pondered. Delaney and he were pretty good friends, true enough. He wasn't quite so thick with Delaney as with Jim King, but Delaney was all right, and if it was going to be so hard for Jim King to get away, why—

"I'll probably be laying Delaney off for a month or so, anyhow, presently," Doctor Forsyth went on, working on Malloy's hesitancy.

"All right, sir," said Malloy. "Delaney's all right for me. If you say it's all right, I'll tell him right away what I want of him, and he'll come along with me."

Forsyth nodded, and Malloy walked swiftly to the steel-boilers building,

where he found Delaney, a man of his own inches and bulk, superintending some freight loading. He told Delaney briefly, without details, what he wanted him for, mentioning, however, the name of Lindon, junior, as the man the two of them were to serve on a peculiar undertaking. Delaney, a close-mouthed, rather somber-looking man, younger than Malloy, was for Bull's proposition at once, particularly when he heard that Doctor Forsyth was considering laying him off, anyhow.

"We're off for New York to-night, then," said Malloy. "Better report off, see Forsyth and tell him you're coming with me, and then go home and get your gear together. We'll be taking the six-o'clock train."

Delaney followed Bull's instructions. But, when it came to reporting to Forsyth, he approached that gentleman's office with a lagging step.

"Oh, here you are, Delaney," said Doctor Forsyth, an odd sort of sneer at the corners of his mouth, when the big foreman boilermaker appeared in the office doorway. "Come in. I take it you're going off on that wild-goose chase, or whatever it is, with Malloy?"

"Yes, sir," replied Delaney, whose cowed manner with Forsyth was singularly at variance with his manner with Malloy. "He's asked me, and I'm going with him if——" He hesitated.

"If I let you go, and under certain conditions which I shall lay down for your guidance, my man," sharply broke in Forsyth. "Come in here"—and he pushed open the door of the small inner sanctum—"and I'll tell you what those conditions are."

Delaney, erect man of might that he was, followed limply into the inner office after Forsyth, who carefully closed the door and placed two chairs side by side at the corner of the office most distant from the door, obviously to guard against the remote contingency of eavesdropping from the outer office.

When Delaney walked out of the office, an hour later, he wore the furtive look of a man just released after a term of imprisonment. If Bull Malloy, then at home doing his simple packing, could have seen Delaney just then, and vaguely guessed the nature of the "conditions" laid down in the little inner office, he would have been justifiably uncomfortable in his mind. As it was, he figured that so far he had pretty well fulfilled the injunctions in Lindon, junior's, letter, and was eager to get away and start in to "make good" to the young man whose letter showed that he reposed such profound confidence in him.

Malloy and Delaney, the latter now back at his usual reserved manner, took the six-o'clock train from Lindon; and Buck Whiting, with his automobile, met them at the station in New York three hours later. Buck remembered Bull Malloy, who had been Lindon, junior's, boyish idol for his prodigious strength—whence the "Bull"—and who, on Buck's boyhood visits to Lindon, had been pointed out to him by his friend. He took the two men straight to his apartment, where Lindon, junior, now with his plan for self-redemption worked out in detail, awaited them.

The four men sat up half the night going over the details. On the following evening Lindon and the two men from his father's mills started for Whiting's lodge in the Adirondacks.

CHAPTER IX.

At the close of a dark January afternoon, two weeks later, Lindon stood at a window of the great sitting room of the silent lodge in the heart of the north woods, gazing out at the heavily falling snow. With Malloy and Delaney he had tramped many miles through the snow that day, rigidly intent upon his program of building himself up, as he had been since the day of his ar-

rival at the lodge, before starting in on his desperate effort to free himself from his shackles. He was tired. But he was carrying his shoulders pretty well back, and there was some color in his face. Still haggard and thin, he nevertheless was twice the man who had been found by Buck Whiting in a cell.

"We'll not be here for any six months," he said suddenly, turning to Malloy and Delaney, who, smoking their pipes, sat before the great fireplace, now piled high with logs that crackled and sang. "I said six months for the whole thing, didn't I? Well, we'll do it in three!"

His two companions looked up at him interestedly.

"Three easily," went on Lindon. "I was going to wait two months before starting the cut-down. There's no need. We've been here only two weeks, and I'm ready now. I'll never be any more ready."

"Take your time, Junior," respectfully suggested Malloy, knocking the ashes from his pipe. "You're going to give yourself every chance. It's not exactly lively up here"—and he grinned in saying this—"but you'll make a mistake, won't you, if you try to hurry yourself?"

"I'm not hurrying, Bull," said Lindon, in a tone of conviction. "See here—that hand." He held out his right hand. It was fairly steady. "I had my last shot seven hours ago, and the next one isn't due for an hour. Two weeks ago I'd have been shaking all over seven hours after an injection. I've walked, in the meantime, six or seven miles through deep snow with you fellows. So I am strong enough, and I'm as ready as ever I'll be. We'll start to-morrow."

He walked back and forth in the wide, spacious room, his hands locked behind him, planning, planning—wild to "get off," as drug-addicted men are once they have espied the first faint

glimmering of a chance to win out of their slavery.

"I'm on fifteen grains now—it was easy to cut down from twenty when we got up here, with this open-air life and all that," he went on. "Well, to-morrow I'll go on ten grains. That will be cutting it in two in two weeks."

"More power to you, Junior!" put in Malloy. "But do you think you are up to it? You're remembering your instructions to me and Delaney, here, aren't you? That is, that once you cut down, we're not to give you ever again any more than what you've cut down to, no matter what you say to us afterward?"

"Yes, I'm remembering that, Bull," replied Lindon. "I'm remembering everything. The hard part of it begins when we get down to low dosage. Well, from to-morrow, when I go down from fifteen to ten grains, I'm going to cut a grain a day till we get down to three a day. The big fight begins when I'm down to three. It won't be easy cutting to ten to-morrow. But it can be done, and I'm going to do it."

"That's a sight faster than any of your figures, Junior," said Malloy warningly. "Better go a little slower, if you're asking me."

By this time Malloy and Delaney, a pair of steel-mill workers, who, fifteen days before, had entertained the vaguest imaginable idea of what morphia was, and who had not known that there was any habit in the world that a man couldn't stop instantly by the mere process of "just stopping"—by this time, by a queer twist of the wheel of chance, these two essentially normal, natural men had become almost expert in the manipulation of the hypodermic needle, gained in a fortnight's experience with the man they were helping and guarding from himself. They had noted, with the wonderment of perfectly healthy men, the many-phased effects of the drug on Lindon. They knew by

heart the much more lengthy and liberal schedule he had blocked out for himself before leaving New York than the swift one he now proposed. But they knew, too, that he meant what he was saying now—for, as he had told them, it had been seven hours since he had had an injection of the drug, so that he must be thinking now without the cocksure, excessive overconfidence of the Lindon who had just had a "shot" of the stuff.

"It's slow enough, Bull!" exclaimed Lindon. "Too slow, I'm thinking. But let it go at that. It's understood then? Ten grains, and no more, to-morrow."

"Right, Junior!" said Malloy. Delaney, who had been unusually silent even for him since their arrival at the lodge, nodded over his pipe. Then Delaney, who took turn and turn about with Malloy in cooking, went into the kitchen to prepare the supper.

"I believe Delaney would give a good deal to be back in Lindon, Bull," Lindon said, with his haggard smile, to Malloy, when Delaney left the sitting room. "I dare say it's good news to him that I am shortening the schedule."

"Delaney is just a quiet one, that's all, Junior," replied Malloy. "And he's been even more on the quiet side since his roommate, Luke Doran, a foreman, too, died sudden a year or so ago of heart disease. Delaney set a lot of store by Luke. They were buddies right. Delaney closed up tighter than ever after Luke cashed in."

"I don't mind his quietness," said Lindon, "but I don't like to think of his being miserable here."

"He ain't miserable, Junior, no more than I am," impulsively said the huge friend of Lindon's boyhood. "You know, there ain't really a hull lot to be said, but me and Delaney's with you from hell to breakfast! Don't you ever forget that, no matter what kind of a

hard game you've rigged for yourself up here in the woods."

During that week of heavy reduction, Lindon spent most of the hours of daylight trudging wearily through the snow, his entire body one pulsing ache, his brain and nerves putting their demand for the drug into words which he imagined he actually could hear, and which, repeating the words to himself as he plunged through the snow, he would loudly and fiercely deny, as if he were holding converse with a threatening tempter visible to his eye.

He would return to the lodge from these walks, all a-tremble for the need of the drug, and, still trembling, he would sit down and wait for the exact minute for his injection to arrive. His instructions to the two men with him were that they were to give him his injections eight hours apart.

On one of these occasions, a little while before Lindon's injection was due—this was the day when he had cut his addiction to three grains a day, from which time the real struggle would begin—Lindon was pacing the whole length of the lodge, room to room, on tottering legs, his knees bending beneath him, his eyes fixed and staring, the sweat of agony rolling down his gray face, his lips moving, but giving forth no sound. Malloy shot a questioning glance at Delaney, who nodded his head affirmatively. The two men found it hard to accustom themselves to the spectacle of a man bravely suffering for the need of a thing so inconsequent, so inexplicable, as a little jet out of a needle attached to a hypodermic syringe.

"All right, Junior, your shot is due; we'll call it the eight hours," said Malloy, starting for his bedroom, where he had the morphia and the hypodermic kit locked away in a place Lindon knew not, and did not want to know.

Lindon, out of bloodshot eyes, stopped in his blundering, zigzag stride

—the walk of a drunken man, though he had drunk nothing for many weeks—darted a swift glance at the clock on the mantel over the great fireplace.

"Not yet, Malloy," he said in a voice almost inaudible. "Twenty-five minutes yet. I'll wait—not only now, but every time, until the finish!"

He resumed his half-blind walk, and Malloy sat down. From that time neither of the men, who soon were to take twelve-hour watches over the man fighting himself, did not again suggest to him that he take his injection before it was due.

When the clock chimed four, the end of the eight-hour period, Malloy was ready with the injection. A few minutes after receiving it, Lindon, unspeakably relieved, the worst of his torture departed—for a little, little while—turned to Malloy.

"You meant well, Bull, when you suggested giving me the benefit of those twenty-five minutes," he said in the all but inaudible tone which now had become habitual with him. "But don't propose anything like that again, eh? I came here not only to win the fight as a whole, but to conquer in the details of it. I'm not asking for any quarter. The thing has been lashing me because I wouldn't fight it back. Now I not only want to get the decision over it, but I want to win on points. If I can't do that, then, you two will be scraping some of that snow away out there and pitching me into a hole in the ground—that's all. But I am going to win."

From the three grains he began to reduce by quarters of a grain a day. After his first injection, on the morning of the day this more gradual reduction was started, Lindon took occasion to clinch his instructions, often gone over before, to the two men with him.

"I'm pretty close now to what I can stand with my head working all right," he said to them through teeth which

he kept locked so that they would not chatter from the hideous nervousness that shook his frame. "From now on I may seem a little twisted in the upper story occasionally. Don't mind that. It's one of the things to be gone through. But here's the main thing: Stick to the reduction schedule, as I've told it to you, and as you've got it by heart."

Four days later, when he was down to two grains, Lindon became at times incoherent. Then Malloy and Delaney began to stand watches over him, twelve hours on for each man. Malloy took the day watch, and Delaney the night. There was now no talk at all between the three men. They sat at their meals without a word. When Lindon was lucid he sat down at the meals mainly to encourage his two companions to eat, for he touched scarcely any food. When he was irrational, but on his feet, they led him to the table so that he could be under their eye. At such times they were careful that no knife or fork were set beside his plate. Lucid or wandering, he had shown no inclination toward self-destruction, but they were taking no chances. So the three sat like mutes at the table, waiting for the slowly dragging time to pass, for the arrival of the supreme crisis which would reveal whether Lindon was going to conquer or be conquered.

The reserve strength which Lindon had stowed away in his body in his younger days, before poisons had begun to pull him down, now stood him in splendid stead. When he had cut the drug down to one grain he still was on his feet, walking, walking during all the hours of the day, and walking always, as he began to imagine in his state of low, muttering delirium, on the face of the drug demon that now, instead of bestriding him, he knew he had fought to the ground.

One day, Lindon, hatless and without an overcoat, started half blindly out of

the lodge to walk in the open. Malloy bounded after him and held him back until he could put hat and overcoat on him. Beyond a patch of pine and fir in front of the lodge was a clearing where on previous days Lindon had worn a hard-packed path in the snow, walking down his demon. He made for that clearing now, groping, slipping, staring wildly. Malloy walked a little to the rear of him, but Lindon was not aware that he was being followed. He came to his hard-packed path in the clearing, a sort of trench which he had worn in snow that came above his knees, and took up his crazy striding back and forth in the little hollow, his hands extended in front of him and hanging loosely from the hinges of limp wrists, his face distorted in agony, and his lips moving.

From walking, he began to step through the paces of a sort of insane saraband suggested to him by his delirium, humming a discordant, monotonous air to accompany the grisly dance. Malloy stood at a little distance, by the trunk of a tree, watching, with a rueful face, the pass to which this man had come to—this man whom Bull had known as a fresh-cheeked boy, with the laughter and the enthusiasm and the promise of a boy.

"I'm glad it's me, and not his mother, that's looking at him now," Malloy muttered to himself.

It was very cold, but the sweat was pouring from Lindon's face as he weaved through the paces of his uncanny rigadon. Suddenly he pitched forward on his face in the soft snow beside his path. He had come to the end of his strength. Malloy was at his side in an instant. He picked him up in his great arms, and carried him to the lodge. It was the hour for the injection. When he had had it, Lindon's head cleared.

"Hello, Malloy," he said, with his mere flicker of a drawn smile. "What

day is it? How much of the stuff am I on to-day?"

This was always his first question on coming from a clouded mental state.

"Three-eighths only to-day, Junior," replied Malloy. "I've just given you your second eighth for to-day." They had been reducing the drug by eighths of a grain since getting it down to a grain a day.

"Three-eighths!" A light almost of happiness appeared in Lindon's sunken eyes. "And I'll be going off day after to-morrow on one-eighth! Bull, I'm nearly through, eh?"

"The way you play cards, you're as good as through now, son," huskily replied Malloy. There was a mist before the honest fellow's eyes. "This ain't the time, but some day I'll tell you all about the kind of a hawss race you've been giving Mister Dope. And now that you're just about at the finish of it, don't you ever think that Mister Dope don't know he's been to the races!"

Malloy, resolving that Lindon should not go outside again to exhaust his strength, helped him to bed.

Lindon, eased for a little space, his mind relieved from the host of appalling images that had been crowding his delirium, lay back on the pillow and listened to the wailing notes of the wind in the fireplace chimney, coming and departing with the gusts of a rising storm. It brought back to his memory the music of a cello that he had heard not long before—music that had fanned the embers of hope in his heart as the wind fans a dying beacon into flame. The calm, lovely profile of the girl bending over the cello strings swam before his eyes, clear as a longed-for face seen in a tranquil dream.

And he was nearly free! He had fought the fight. Once more he was to take his place as a man among men, to have his fair and free chance with other men for the love of—

He fell into a quiet sleep, the wind in the chimney transmuted by his dream into the supernally lovely singing of a cello.

CHAPTER X.

Delaney, on night watch over a man winning a fight, paced the floor with the air of a man making a fight of his own that was not yet won.

Lindon was nearly through. To-day he had got down to one-quarter of a grain. He was living from minute to minute.

He struggled on like a man dragging himself out of a waterless desert. He could feel the wings of the morphia vampires brushing his body, he could hear the wheedling, then threatening, then commanding voices of the drug's thong-driven spirits besieging the ear of his mind with their never-ceasing arguments.

Now he was conscious and wide awake most of the time, tossing on a bed that was for him a rack. But he fought on. He had it all discounted in advance. He had known how, when he got down to this pitch of horror, he would be stormed front and rear, flanked, ambushed, enfiladed. And when the diapasonic chorus of the tempters swelled to such a volume that his mind began to rock he would sit up in the bed and shake a clenched fist at the hordes of morphia hobgoblins which he no longer could see, but whose voices he must listen to, and shout out his "NO!" between locked teeth.

When daylight came, Delaney would give him one-eighth of a grain of morphia in a hypodermic injection. That would be the last. After that he would be at final grips with himself. This was the program he himself had mapped out. And at the very apex of his agony, when time and again the thought darted swiftly through his mind that death itself would be a release, Lindon

was glad—glad—that he had made that program—and that he was sticking to it.

Delaney, a man with a fight not yet quite won, watched him through the long, long night. And, when for spaces there was no need to watch, Delaney paced the lodge floor, strewn thick with the skins of animals, and worked out his own problem. The flickering red light from the heaped-up logs in the fireplace outlined his powerful figure against the opposite wall of the lodge as, with his chin sunk on his breast, Delaney strode back and forth, back and forth, through the long night, plucking at cords by which he, too, was bound—or by which he thought he was bound.

Every time he passed the door of Lindon's room he would stop for an instant and peer in.

There, tossing in torture on that bed, thought Delaney—there was a regular man doing his fighting! Delaney had no nerves that he knew of. If he possessed any such things, they had never made themselves manifest to him. But he had a fair working idea of what nerves were or must be, and, after his weeks of watching beside Lindon, he clearly realized the height and depth of the agony which Lindon must be suffering.

Here, then, was Lindon, thought Delaney, who had come up to these somber woods expressly for the purpose of going through this suffering as a means to a great end—to cleanse himself of a dark and fiendish thing that was clutching at his throat and trying to tear him down. Lindon was at battle with himself. He had come up to the snowy forest to do just that.

And what had he—Delaney—come up to the north woods for?

When he thought of that, when the question presented itself to him in words, he clenched a pair of horn-hard fists and scowled at the fire.

The next time he passed Lindon's

door, he saw, by the light of the turned-down lamp, that Lindon, quiet for a little brief space, was looking up at him out of hollow, fevered eyes.

"What time, Delaney?" he asked.

"Five in the morning," replied Delaney.

"At nine I take that final eighth, eh?" asked Lindon. He wanted to be sure that he had not merely dreamed that he was so nearly through with the actual taking of the drug—though he knew his ordeal would last for many days after he had taken the final injection.

"Yes, at nine," replied Delaney.

Lindon's hands were shaking on the counterpane like those of a man with buck ague.

"It will come in pretty handy at nine, that eighth," he said, with the merest ghost of an attempt at a smile. "May it be damned everlastingly, but it will come in pretty handy!"

Delaney sat down in a chair beside the bed.

"I'd hate to have any kin of mine go through what you've gone through," he said. Lindon glanced curiously at him. It was odd to hear Delaney talk, it was so unusual. "Bull Malloy and me know a fighting man when we see one. And we was saying at supper last night that we'd never seen a man stand the hell's gaff and come back for more the way you have in this fight, Mr. Lindon," and he rose heavily from the chair and started for the door.

Rare words of kindness, of encouragement, of praise, from a man who did not talk! Lindon was glad his head was in semidarkness, for he found his eyes filling.

"Bull and you have been pretty decent and square to me, Delaney," he said. "Don't think I am ever going to forget that when I get entirely out of my swamp." Then the twitching agony, the pain as of a thousand white-hot irons hissing through his body, the sear-

ing fires as of flaming torches bobbing about in his brain, came upon him again, and he could speak no more.

Delaney, lumbering heavily out of the room, walked through the firelight of the sitting room, opened the door leading on to the wide porch, and went out. For a full quarter of an hour he stood bareheaded at the base of the porch steps, gazing somberly at the deep firmament of brilliant, frosty stars. Then his great fists clenched again, and he shook his head savagely as he walked heavily up the steps.

"I won't do it!" he muttered in his throat as he gained the porch, where he stood for a moment. "I don't believe I ever meant to do it from the beginning, thank God!" he said then, in a quieter tone. Then he entered the sitting room and cast himself heavily into a chair before the log fire.

Two hours later, when the first glimmerings of a wintry-red dawn began to steal through the windows, he heard Malloy stirring. Bull would relieve him from watch at ten o'clock that Sunday morning, so it would fall to Delaney to give Lindon his final injection of the drug. Before going to the kitchen to cook the breakfast, Bull came into the sitting room.

"What kind of a night did he have?" he asked Delaney.

"The night of a man in a hot pit," replied Delaney. "But he never let out a whimper."

"Didn't ask for the stuff?" Malloy asked. Both Malloy and Delaney had dreaded the time when Lindon would, as they feared, and, indeed, as Lindon had told them he himself feared, beg them for more morphia.

"Not a beg," answered Delaney. Malloy's eyes kindled.

"Game as a pebble in a hard-water crick, eh?" he said delightedly to Delaney in a subdued tone so that Lindon, if he were awake, might not overhear. "Didn't I always tell you the

kid was a thoroughbred? And only last night, after I went to bed, I was reading in a book that I got out of that bookcase there that not one in a million ever gets out of these drug habits, once they get into them."

"The man lying in that room is one out of a million," said Delaney. Malloy, too, like Lindon, peered at Delaney, the man who now would say a few words instead of keeping his tongue tight behind his teeth. "I'm glad I made up my mind about him—and about myself—in time," Delaney added musingly, as if to himself.

Malloy, however, who was passing out of the sitting room for the kitchen, did not hear Delaney's last sentence.

An hour later, when Malloy had had his own breakfast and had relieved Delaney so that the latter could eat, all three of the men—Lindon was trying to sip some coffee in bed—started at the sound of sleigh bells. Malloy and Delaney rushed out to the porch and gazed up the narrow, sunlit trail. The double sleigh of the station master of the village, eighteen miles away, rounded a curve. The station master's son was driving the horses, and Buck Whiting, the collar of his fur coat turned up to his eyes, occupied the rear seat.

"Who is it?" Lindon called out from his bedroom.

"It's your friend, the gent that owns this lodge," Malloy called back delightedly from the porch. Lindon, still "a man in a hot pit," racked and worn, tried to crawl out of his bed to go to the door to greet Buck, but had to fall back helplessly. But an instant later Buck was in the room, wringing both of his hands. Whiting smothered an inclination to utter an exclamation when he saw how like death Lindon's face looked. Instead, he was all cheerfulness.

"Just bolted up for the day," he said subduedly, sensing his friend's suffer-

ings. "Station master's boy is driving on to another camp on an errand, and he'll call for me on his way back this evening. Just wanted to see how things were breaking here, old pal."

"Buck," broke out Lindon huskily, rising on an elbow, "I've got it beat! It's half past eight now. At nine o'clock I get a shot of one-eighth—yes, we've got it down to that! And that's my last jab. I'm through!"

Whiting, to whom this was absolutely unexpected, looked bewildered. He had supposed that it would be almost a month yet before Lindon would even begin to reduce the morphia.

"He began cutting it two weeks after we got here, sir," Malloy explained in a low tone, for Lindon was now tossing from side to side of the bed again and groaning in misery. Bull told Whiting in a few words of how Lindon had revised the reduction schedule and how amazingly he had adhered to it. Buck's eyes lit up with admiration.

"But how magnificently you two regular he-men have pulled him through!" Buck broke out, looking from Malloy to Delaney. He gripped Malloy's hand, and then walked over to give the same hearty shake to Delaney. But Delaney did not take the proffered hand.

"I ain't got any right to shake the hand of a friend of his," nodding toward Lindon. "But I am glad you've come. I've got something to say."

Buck and Malloy stared curiously at Delaney, Buck dropping his outstretched hand to his side. Lindon, turning over, and seeing the three men standing thus silently, looking at one another, for a tense moment, lay back and viewed the scene wonderingly.

"Come out of it, Delaney!" said Malloy, in a hushed tone. He had quickly concluded that Delaney's mind had let down a bit under the prolonged strain. "What d'ye mean—you haven't got any right?"

"Just what I say," replied Delaney,

his head back like that of a man who has made a strong resolution and is going through with it; nor was there any symptom of a slumping mind in his clear, steady eyes. "I did not come up here to play square. I came up here to do this suffering, game man"—nodding again toward Lindon—"an injury."

Lindon was listening as keenly now as the other two.

"An injury, Delaney?" he broke out, in his weak voice. "In God's name, man, what greater injury could you have done to me than I had done to myself?"

"I came up here," doggedly went on Delaney, "to see to it that you didn't get off that drug at all. That was what I was sent for. I haven't played the dirty game of the man that sent me, thank God! I don't believe now that I ever meant to! But he had me in his grip, or it looked like he had, and I told him I'd do it."

"But, look here, Delaney," said Lindon, sitting up in bed and staring, puzzled, at the man, "how could you keep me on——"

Delaney, holding up a staying hand, reached the other hand into the breast pocket of his coat. He pulled forth a thin, unopened package. Slowly he broke the manufacturer's sealed paper covering from the package, revealing a slender black box. The unopened box, also with the manufacturer's seal on it, contained a dozen long tubes of morphia tablets. Delaney placed the box on the bed beside Lindon.

"The low-down dog gave me that box of the drug you're taking," he said, now addressing Lindon with an unflinching gaze, "and I was to keep on giving you the stuff without your knowing anything about it. When you got down so low on your doses that you'd notice it if I gave the extra stuff to you in your shots, he told me to put it in your coffee. His idea, I guess, was to discourage you and make you think it was

impossible for you ever to get off the stuff. Anyhow, that's what he bullied me into promising him to do when I come up here, that's what he sent me here for. I haven't done it. I couldn't do it. It ain't in me. I ain't ever done any man like that—and I never will, Forsyth or no Forsyth, grip or no grip that he says he's got on me, and——"

"Forsyth!" both Lindon and Whiting broke out at once, in voices that sounded strange in their own ears.

"Yes, Forsyth—the mean, ornery whelp that's running your father's business to-day," replied Delaney, looking at Lindon.

"But," put in Lindon, "how did Forsyth ever know that I was coming up here, to get off morphia? Who ever told him that?"

"God knows," broke out Malloy. He had been raking his mind to answer that question ever since Delaney had made his amazing confession and mentioned Forsyth's name. Now a faint light began to break over him. "Why, it was Forsyth who suggested that Delaney come with me," he went on, in a mystified tone. "I told him I wanted Jim King to come, and he wouldn't let King, but suggested that I fetch Delaney along. And I did. And that letter that I got from you, Junior, asking me to come—Forsyth's office boy brought me that letter while I was at work. Forsyth must have recognized your handwriting and opened it before I got it. Here it is," fumbling in his breast pocket and producing the letter.

Whiting reached out a hand for the letter, which was in its envelope, and carefully examined the envelope.

"That envelope was opened at the flap and resealed," he pronounced, without hesitation.

"But what did Forsyth have on you," Malloy asked Delaney, "that would get you to promise him to do a hellish thing like that?"

"He held Luke Doran's death over

me," quickly replied Delaney. "Doran," he explained to Whiting and Lindon, "was my best friend. We roomed together, and both worked in the same shop as foremen at the mills. One Saturday night, a little more than a year ago, we had a few drinks and went home. We got to scuffling in the room. It was all fun. There never was a rough word between Doran and me. I was even easy in scuffling with him always, for I knew he had a weak heart for a big man. Suddenly, when I had hold of him, I felt him slipping through my arms. He tumbled onto the floor in a heap, and turned white. I hustled out and phoned for Forsyth, who was still doing the mill doctoring then. Forsyth came. Luke was dead. Forsyth pulled his shirt back and told me Luke had died from a blow over the heart. I hadn't hit him any blow. But Forsyth kept harping on that till he almost made me believe that I had. He told me he would report that Luke had died of plain heart disease, but that I had killed my friend. I hated to say anything to anybody about our scuffling before Luke fell down, dying. So Forsyth, from that time on, had me clutched. He would make it his business, every time he came upon me, to say something to me about how I had murdered my friend. Why, men, I would give half my life—all of it!—if Luke was standing here alive to-day—that's how I felt toward him! And then this dog Forsyth, that by working and working on me had got me to believing that I was guilty of putting my best friend in his grave—he sends for me and orders me to do this hell's job for him. But I'm glad that I never done it—glad—glad!"

The huge man broke into a dry sob that shook his whole frame.

Lindon, ghastly, but his voice steady, looked at Whiting.

"Forsyth!" he said quietly. "The calculating hound who hooked me twice and drove me into the ditch, and would

have done it again if it hadn't been for the decency of this other man here he has victimized!" He stopped for a space, as if turning something over in his mind. "You men here know something of what I've been up against, what I'm up against now. There's one-eighth of a grain of morphia coming to me now. I've been waiting, wide-awake, for that one-eighth all night. The way I feel now, none of you has any way of imagining what that one-eighth of morphia would do for me—the ease it would give me, the pain it would relieve me from, the blackness that, for a little while, anyhow, it would take away from me. But I'm through. I won't take that eighth. I'll just make that little sacrifice, on the blackest morning I ever awakened upon, as a token that Forsyth hasn't won, and never is going to win—and that I have!"

Whiting walked over to Delaney and held out his hand. Delaney looked him squarely in the eyes.

"I had to say what I have said before I took it," he said. "If you think it's all right now for me to shake——"

"If it wasn't all right, my hand wouldn't be there," Buck put in quietly. "God Almighty never holds anything against a man who, under the lash of temptation and oppression, nevertheless makes good. Well, that being the case, I don't see why I should."

Two pretty middling decent men, of somewhat different types, enjoyed a deferred but none the less sincere handshake.

CHAPTER XI.

Lindon, stepping in springily, fainted with his left for Malloy's body. Malloy lowered his guard to cover that section. Then Lindon sent his right glove, not with all his force, but with enough steam to send his man's head back, against Malloy's jaw.

"Got you that time, Bull," said Delaney, sitting on the porch steps of

the lodge in the brilliant May sunshine, smoking his pipe.

Malloy grinned.

"We'll call it enough for the morning," he said to Lindon. "You'll do, all right. If anybody had told me three months ago that you'd ever slip me a paste on the chin like that, I'd have called him crazy."

"Let's go after some of those trout," said Lindon, pulling off his gloves. "They ought to be biting after that rain last night."

So they got on some real clothes, being now stripped down to trousers and sleeveless undershirts, to go fishing. Lindon, looking himself over while under the shower in the lodge bathroom, figured that he would "weigh in" at about a hundred and eighty—still ten or fifteen pounds "under," considering his height. But he was pretty trim. His flesh was firm. His muscles, so long poisoned and starved, were standing out again. The putty-gray color of his face had given way to a pinkish bronze. Its drug-graven lines had disappeared. His eyes were clear. He had had his breakfast two hours before putting on the gloves this morning. Now he was ravenous again.

Thus he had come back, within less than three months after he had refused his last one-eighth of a grain injection of morphia and turned his face to the wall and suffered it out.

But it had not been easy, that comeback!

His first month off the drug had been a month of the blackest mental depression and of unarousable physical lethargy, due to weakness of brain and body.

Two weeks after Lindon had taken his final injection, Buck Whiting wrote from New York:

I've just met a doctor chap who knows everything, and he told me this: That a fellow just off morphia needs change of scene more than anything else on earth. So,

if you're up to it, I guess you'd better romp down here to my apartment, and in a week or so we'll hop a boat and go down to Nassau or Bermuda or some place like those for a while—for it's devilish cold and miserable in New York this March.

And Lindon had written back, forcing himself to use the pen with his lethargy still heavy upon him:

I knew that before I came up here, for I'd been through it before. But I didn't come here to attend a tea party, Buck. I came here to lick the thing that had me, or get licked. The black aftermath of that thing is part of the game. I'll stand for it. I told you that I not only wanted the decision, but the victory on points. Well, I'm going to get it. I am going to stay right here with Malloy and Delaney until I am something like the D. Lindon, junior, that used to be. I'll begin to come back soon. Feeling rotten now—but in about a fortnight more I'll be beginning to sit up and take notice. Then I'm going to begin to put some meat on my carcass and to get to looking like a human being. I want to do that before going back to Lindon, you know. So forget Nassau and Bermuda so far as I'm concerned, old man. I'd like a change. I'd like to coddle myself and stretch out like a lizard in a warm land. But I'm not going to. I'm going to buck this thing to the finish, and I'm going to do it right here.

"Go to it, and more power to you!" Buck had written back. And Lindon had stayed on at the lodge.

One morning, about a month after he'd been off the drug, Lindon woke up, after his first good night's sleep, hungry. And, while he was rubbing himself down after his shower, he caught himself whistling. He smiled at that. It had been many a long moon since Lindon had whistled.

Malloy, who was lounging in the sitting room while Delaney cooked the breakfast, came running to the bathroom.

"What the devil's this I hear?" he exclaimed, looking at Lindon out of kindling eyes. "A tune? Out of you?"

"Feeling fairly decent this morning, Malloy," said Lindon, rubbing away at his still emaciated form with a hard

towel. "Sort o' hungry. Believe I'll eat some regular food."

"You'll not only do that, but it's a ten-mile walk you'll be taking with me and Delaney between now and sundown," said Malloy. "No more huddling in a chair before the fire for you, Junior. A man that can whistle is a man that can walk."

Lindon walked the ten miles, getting back dog tired. But he had made a start, and was on his way! From that day on, there was no stopping him. He lived altogether in the open, rain or snow or shine, except for his meals and sleep. He tramped the deep woods with Malloy and Delaney all day long, climbed all of the peaks within walking distance of the lodge—and, after his long starvation, he began to eat like a man rescued from an ice-crushed whaler.

Malloy rigged a punching bag on the porch when the April weather of the early spring in the mountains became fine. Lindon banged away at the bag between trudges in the forest. Delaney found a medicine ball in the lodge's lumber room. The three men shot the ball around at each other out in the balsamic air.

"Come up for Sunday, eh?" Lindon wrote to Buck Whiting, at the end of a month of this life. "I'm becoming human."

Buck came up for the Sunday. He laughed aloud when he drove over from the station in the balmy morning air and found Lindon and Malloy violating the Sabbath by banging away at each other with the gloves on the porch.

"Why, you lummox, you haven't been so fit since you stroked our college eight!" he shouted at Lindon.

"I'd be all right if I could take a little nourishment," replied Lindon. "I can't get these fellows"—nodding at Malloy and Delaney—"to give me enough food to sustain life. I've only had one steak this morning, and six

soft-boiled eggs, and three or four potatoes, hash-browned, and fourteen biscuits and three cups of coffee. Many a man could make a meal off a little snack like that, but it's not enough to keep the feeble light burning within me. Come on in, and we'll partake of a little sustenance."

"When are you coming down to town?" Buck had asked Lindon, before leaving the lodge that Sunday.

"I'm in no hurry," replied Lindon. "The simple life for mine. If you'll give me the job of caretaker of this lodge, I believe I'll stay here for life." He added, more seriously: "I'll do another month here, I reckon. Then I'm going down to Lindon to see the folks. You're going with me. So are Malloy and Delaney. We'll all go together. There'll be doings."

A certain glint came into Lindon's eyes when he mentioned "doings," and Buck caught it and smiled.

"I've already declared myself in on the doings," he said. "Did you know that your man Forsyth has full charge down there in Lindon now? Your governor has virtually turned the plant over to his direction. The Senior spent the winter in Florida with your mother and sister, and now they've gone to Europe. Read it in the paper a few days ago."

Lindon looked disappointed.

"I wonder how long the folks will be over there?" he said musingly. "I hope the governor won't spend the summer abroad. I wanted to show up in Lindon after another month up here, and, after certain preliminaries, go to work and get into the current of life again. Perhaps you don't know it, Buck, but I know a heap about the steel business—particularly about Lindon's steel business. I didn't waste all of my time before I began to go mad, you know."

"Well?" said Buck.

"Oh, nothing," said Lindon, "except

that I'm keen to get back into the steel business."

"If that's the case," said Buck, his eyes reflective, "you don't have to wait till your governor gets back from abroad. Just go down to Lindon and go into the steel business."

Lindon glanced swiftly at Buck. He had caught his friend's idea in mid-air.

"Why, that's right!" he exclaimed. "Why not?"

"Just put in one more tightening-up month here, as you want to," said Buck, "and then we'll all go down to little old Lindon and you can gratify this fad of yours for going into the steel business. See?"

The month was about up on the day of brilliant sunshine in late May on which this chapter opens. Lindon and his two companions spent the day thrashing the rain-swollen brooks, and the trout were eager. They were eating some of them at supper when Lindon spoke.

"Our Adirondack picnic is all over, fellows," he said suddenly. "To-morrow we pack, and day after to-morrow we're going to another place."

"Where to?" asked Malloy, his mouth full of trout.

"Lindon," said Lindon.

CHAPTER XII.

Doctor Forsyth, now pretty steadily in supreme charge of the Lindon Steel Mills, was in fine fettle on this lovely June forenoon. Seated in his nicely padded swivel chair at the huge desk of Lindon, senior, he felt pretty well disposed toward himself. The reins of power were in his hands. There wasn't any very good reason that he knew of why they shouldn't remain in his hands. Of course, Vera—

He frowned slightly when he thought of Vera. He remembered, in the midst of his fine fettle, that Vera was one of two matters resting a little disquietingly on his otherwise perfectly easy mind.

In the first place, Forsyth had been extremely desirous that Vera should marry him before leaving for Europe with her father and mother a little over a month before. When he had told Vera this, she had smiled. He remembered, now, as he had remembered quite a number of times before, that there had been a certain amount of disdain in that smile of Vera's. He would make it all square and even with Vera for that, some old day, he thought now, when the recollection of the disdainful smile flashed through his mind again. Not only that, but she had curtly told him that she was nowhere near thinking of entering into the holy bonds of wedlock that summer. She was going abroad with her people. Going abroad, she considered, she told him sweetly, was a far more agreeable adventure than getting married. One could get married any time, but going abroad was always a matter subject to many considerations.

Since going abroad, Vera had written just one brief little note to him, telling him that she earnestly hoped he was working excessively hard by way of vicarious penance, so to speak, for the perfectly magnificent time she was having in Europe—and that was about all she told him. Nothing by way of endearing phrases or anything remotely like them. Just that she hoped he was working excessively—she needn't have rubbed it in with that "excessively"—hard. Doctor Forsyth sometimes doubted if Vera actually loved him as fondly as he felt his proven merits deserved. The fact that he secretly entertained subtle designs of revenge upon her, after they should be married, and then perhaps after the old folks had passed away, did not in the least disillusion Forsyth with regard to his own merits. He was a man with a one-track mind, and the starting point and terminus of practically everything was in, by, and for himself.

The other matter that in buoyant moments like those he had enjoyed on this beautiful June morning would insist upon obtruding its disagreeable thoughts upon him, was this: He had not heard from Delaney since that poor fool, who had been so idiotically willing to believe that he was in Doctor Forsyth's power—the doctor smiled at the simplicity of some types of mankind when he thought of this—he had not had a line from Delaney since Delaney had, under the stress of a powerful threatening and browbeating, undertaken that little mission for him having to do with the final extinguishment, by means of secretly administered morphia, of young Lindon in the north woods.

Delaney had promised to report the progress of matters at the lodge in the Adirondacks. He had done nothing of the sort, and more than five months had elapsed since he had left Lindon. Forsyth, a man of the analytical method, tried frequently to pick this apart and reason it out. What did it argue that Delaney had not written to him? That Delaney was making a good job of it in keeping young Lindon addicted to the drug? Or that Delaney, perchance, had been won over to the other side and had broken his promise to Doctor Forsyth?

His analytical method did not serve him in this instance. He could not straighten it out in his own mind.

He heard somebody enter the office door at his back. The office boy, no doubt. The office boy was the only individual who entered that office without knocking. Even the stenographer knocked when he summoned her by buzzer.

There was a springy tread across the floor—springy, but too heavy for the tread of the office boy. Doctor Forsyth saw a shadow fall upon a side of the great desk of Lindon, senior. He glanced up.

It was the shadow of Lindon, junior,

who gazed downward at Doctor Forsyth, not angrily, as might have been expected, but with an expression of entire serenity. Forsyth flushed. Then he paled. Then he scrambled hastily to his feet.

"Well, this is a surprise and a pleasure!" he effusively remarked—in, however, a voice very unlike his own. His mouth had suddenly become parched. "How remarkably well you look!"

"Thanks," dryly replied Lindon, junior. He did look most amazingly well and most uncommonly powerful with his old way of squaring his shoulders and the old way of carrying his head. And his tailor had done himself justice! "Sit down," said Lindon, junior. "Not in that chair, though." And with a swift backward pull he yanked the swivel chair away from the desk. "That chair is, I think, a little large for you. Sit down there," pointing to the chair beside the desk in which Doctor Forsyth was wont to plant office visitors so that the light from the windows would shine full on their faces.

Forsyth moistened his dry lips with his tongue, and his pale eyes became greenish with wrath.

"You will have an opportunity to explain this conduct to your father, sir!" he broke out, in a falsetto key. "I am his representative here, and——"

"Sit down!" said Lindon, his jaw jutting slightly. Doctor Forsyth sat down in the visitor's chair. Lindon, junior, seated himself in his father's chair.

"As to your being anybody's representative here," said Lindon, junior, then, "you're misinformed. You were, perhaps, but now you are not. If that sounds enigmatic, have a look at these."

He drew from the breast pocket of his coat a long envelope bearing English postage stamps. From the envelope he pulled two sheets of paper, both neatly

typed, and both bearing the characteristic signature of Lindon, senior.

Lindon, junior, had written to his father in London on the day, a month before, when at the lodge Buck Whiting had suggested his return to Lindon during his father's absence. He had narrated in detail certain parts of the history of Doctor Forsyth as those parts concerned Lindon, junior. A highly amplified letter, and a letter convincingly corroborative, had gone forward at the same time from Buck Whiting, in New York, to Lindon, senior, in London. The two sheets of paper in the long envelope were parts of Lindon, senior's, reply, which Lindon, junior, had received two days before in New York.

"This one, I think, will be of especial interest to you," said Lindon, junior, spreading one of the sheets of paper out on the desk. "Read it. It belongs to you. The writer of it considered that it would be appropriate, in view of many things—cabbages and kings and the like—that I should hand it to you."

Doctor Forsyth picked up the paper. The first two lines of it told him its essence. It was his complete and final dismissal, coldly and most formally worded, from any sort of participation of any kind whatsoever in the business activities of the Lindon Steel Mills. Forsyth turned yet a little paler, his eyes grew a little greener, and his jaw began to hang.

"Now, this," said Lindon, junior, pushing the other sheet of paper in front of him for the man to read, but keeping hold of it.

Forsyth read it. It was Lindon, senior's, forthright and unmistakably termed appointment of his son to take over all of the duties that had been devolving upon Doctor Forsyth. Forsyth's eyes couldn't become any greener nor his physiognomy any paler. But his jaw could and did sag yet a little more.

"In case you have doubt as to the bindingness, so to speak, of those two documents," observed Lindon, junior, "I have brought a gentleman along with me who will inform you as to the legal point."

He stepped to the door and brought in the new attorney in chief for the Lindon Steel Mills who had been quite roundly abused by Doctor Forsyth only a few hours before for losing a just suit brought by a cripple. Lindon, junior, had stopped at the attorney's office and picked him up on his way from the station.

"Mr. Spencer," said Lindon, junior, "be good enough to express an opinion as to whether these two documents are of legal and binding force."

Mr. Spencer had seen the documents not more than a quarter of an hour ago. But he glanced casually at them again, beaming quite delightedly over the tops of the sheets at Forsyth as he did so.

"They're absolutely binding," pronounced Mr. Spencer, in the tone of voice of a man who says at a party: "I am perfectly charmed." "Binding and in full effect at the present moment. So much so, in fact, that in case of any question—though, of course, there'll be none—ahem!—in case of any question I should consider it my duty, as chief attorney for the company, to—ahem!—see that all of the terms of the papers are enforced."

"Thanks, Mr. Spencer," said Lindon, junior, conducting that worthy gentleman to the door and bowing him out.

When Lindon, junior, returned from the office door, he was at the head of a procession. That is to say, he was conducting three other visitors into the office. They were Buck Whiting, Malloy, and Delaney. Buck was debonair, as usual, although he took his first view of Doctor Forsyth out of dark eyes that narrowed peculiarly as he looked at the man. Malloy and Delaney were not

debonair. They were simply glowering and hard of jaw.

Delaney walked with a heavy tread across the office rug to where Forsyth sat beside the great desk of Lindon, senior, and placed a slender black box containing a dozen still unopened tubes of morphia on the desk. Doctor Forsyth could not conceal the start he gave at the sight of the box.

"Everybody in this room knows about what you tried to make me believe I done to my friend, Luke Doran," said Delaney, in a voice choking with the wrath which he was holding back as per instructions carefully delivered in advance by Lindon, junior. "So you can go as far as you like with that kind of gabble."

There was complete silence in the office for a space. Lindon, junior, punctured it.

"Can you do anything with your hands besides pushing a hypodermic needle?" he asked Doctor Forsyth, in a self-possessed tone. "I mean, do you know anything about how to defend yourself?"

Forsyth emitted a little gasp. His facial pallor became ghastliness.

"I wouldn't undertake to fight you, if that's what you mean," he snarled, in reply.

"Oh, I don't know so much about that," said Lindon, junior. "As a matter of fact, you did give me a pretty sound trimming. It wasn't your fault, at that, that you didn't finish me. Your intentions were all right."

As to that, it appeared Forsyth had nothing to say. Lindon, junior, rose from his chair.

"Stand up!" he said. The doctor, his facial skin gradually turning greenish as a match for the hue of his eyes, stood up as if it were a perfect matter of course for his standings up and his sittings down to be thus ordered.

"You know," said Lindon, junior, his face very close to Forsyth's and his

tone very tense but low, "there's nothing that I could do to you, I grieve to say, that would come anywhere near squaring up the things you've done to me and tried to do to me. I wish there were. But there isn't. If I thought there was any possible way to hurt you in your mind, I'd do it. But you're impervious to that kind of hurting. You're out of these mills, of course, and that doubles you up a bit. You'll be out of the town of Lindon, too, within two hours, which will sink in a little, too. But there isn't much nourishment in these things for me, considering the jumps you've put me over. There's no conceivable way that I could get hunk with you for the mire you sent me wading through. It wouldn't be of any comfort to me to mop up this floor with you, because on your own say-so you're too much of a cur to put up your hands and fight back. And even if you did have enough of the good graces of a man to fight back, you'd get a most unholy drubbing, which would furnish me no sort of satisfaction whatever, considering what a mush-meated individual you are. You can possess no idea how many long nights I've gone through, wide awake, longing to throttle you, to stamp on you, to beat you into shapelessness. But, as I say, I am denied even that luxury by the circumstances of the case. But I can't contemplate going through the rest of my life with a palm that fairly aches to give you one damned good slap at least, just for luck and the praise of God, you worm!"

Lindon, junior, suddenly drew back his right arm. He brought it around swingingly for a mighty sidewipe. His palm came against the left side of Doctor Forsyth's face with a smack that sounded like the report of a firecracker. The almost blood-red prints of his fingers remained on Forsyth's cheek as if they had been permanently painted there.

"Now," said Lindon, junior, walking to the office door and pushing and holding it open, "you may go!"

Forsyth started for the door.

"Here, Delaney, none of that!" shouted Lindon, junior.

His shout, while it did not stop him, had the effect of deflecting Delaney's marksmanship. His heavily shod foot missed the going-out person of Doctor Forsyth by so inconsequent a matter, perhaps, as a sixteenth of an inch, which caused Delaney to look profoundly gloomy.

CHAPTER XIII.

Lindon, junior, summoning all of the mills' heads of departments to his office on the next day to find out what was in progress all over the plant, plunged into the steel business. For a month he worked day and night, familiarizing himself with details. The whole plant, from heads of departments down to apprentices, rallied around a new boss who looked and acted human and who had a talent amounting to genius for giving all hands just a little more than an even chance. The older hands, who had known Lindon, junior, from his boyhood, set the pace for the younger ones. The mills hummed.

Lindon, senior, had cabled his son, early in July, that he would be starting home alone "directly," but naming no steamer. He was leaving the women-folk in London. Lindon, junior, had been taking it out of himself to get the plant in apple-pie order against his father's arrival. He expected to get a telegram from New York any day from his father announcing his arrival.

He got no telegram. One morning, however, about a fortnight after he had received the cablegram from his father, Lindon, junior, seated in the big swivel chair before the great desk, was pegging away hard at an estimate for a government contract when he heard the door open behind him.

"Don't let anybody in this forenoon, Brick," he called out, thinking the red-haired office boy was about to announce a caller. "Too busy to see anybody until after lunch."

A hand was laid upon his shoulder. Lindon, junior's, head whirled around. He bounced to his feet.

"Governor!" he shouted, grabbing the old man around the body. Lindon, senior, kissed his son's bronzed cheeks—something he had not done since his son had been in dresses. Then he held the young man off at the end of his extended arms and looked at him, up and down, down and up.

"You'll do, son," he said briefly, a little ashamed of the kiss. "How's business?"

"Big," replied Lindon, junior. "Not so big as it will be, though. But where's the rest of the bunch?"

"I left your mother and Vera in London. They're enjoying it in spite of the war, and they thought it would be nice if I sent you over there to bring them back."

Lindon, junior, was pretty complacent about that. All three of Buck Whiting's sisters also were in London—including a remarkable performer on the violoncello.

"Sure I'll go," he answered quickly. "When?"

"No hurry, my boy. In about a fortnight, say."

Father and son worked on together in the big office for a couple of weeks; then, at the breakfast table one morning, Lindon, junior, broached the matter of the trip to England.

"Start to-morrow," said Lindon, senior. "You might remain in London for a while and try your hand at getting a few contracts for war materials. Your mother and sister will be company for you."

"So they will," detachedly remarked Lindon, junior. He was hoping that he wouldn't be absolutely lonesome in

London, even if his mother and sister decided to return before he did. "By the way, where are they staying?"

"At the Savoy, where we always stay," replied Lindon, senior.

Of course, of course! And so were Buck Whiting's sisters, the two married ones and Cath—that is, the unmarried one—staying at the Savoy. Buck had told Lindon, junior, that only a week or so ago when he had spent a Sunday at Buck's apartment in New York.

Lindon, junior, went to New York that day and immediately found Buck.

"I'm going to England to get the mater and Vera," he said to Buck. "D'you want me to bring your sisters back—that is, if I can get passage for them?"

"Nope," replied Buck, "because I'm going with you and I'll bring 'em home myself."

They sailed that day.

At the end of a long, tranquil September day at sea, two months later, Lindon, junior, and Catherine Whiting leaned over the rail of a steamer plunging through the great furrow of her own making on the ocean path to New York, yet a day away. They had got away from the others—Buck and his married sisters and Lindon's mother and Vera—on the diaphanous and entirely superfluous plea that they "wanted to watch the sunset."

"It has been a lucky trip, hasn't it?" said Lindon, junior, musingly. "I've got an armful of contracts for war materials, and you've got the cherished cello that your old teacher used to play, and——"

"And last, but not, I hope, least, we've got each other," put in the girl, with a light laugh. There was a furtive pressure of hands.

"I believe I intended to say some-

thing about like that," said Lindon. They fell silent for a little while, and then he went on: "I want to hear you play on that poor dead master's cello before I go back to Lindon. I haven't heard a cello played since——" He paused abruptly, his face becoming serious.

"Since I played for you and Buck on last Christmas Day?" she asked him.

"That was the last time, really," he replied. "But one stormy night, after that, when I was up at Buck's lodge, I imagined that the wind in the fireplace chimney was making the most wonderful music. It reminded me of your playing—perhaps because I had heard you play such a short time before; and I was a bit off my head at the time, too."

"Do you know," she said to him, "I've often wondered why you spent those long winter months up at Buck's lodge. It must have been frightfully desolate up there at that season. Why did you do it?"

"I had a bit of a fight to make—a fight that I had to make," he replied reflectively. "I'll tell you all about it some time, Catherine—but not now. I want to get a little farther away from it before I talk about it—even to you."

"Was there a girl in it?" she asked him, with wistful curiosity, after a pause.

"No," he replied, soberly enough, to the characteristically feminine question. "But there was a demon in it—a demon that had full possession of me. I went up to Buck's lodge to grapple with and conquer that devil."

"You succeeded, I know," she put in, in a low tone.

"Yes, I was lucky, and I succeeded," said Lindon. "But a sort of miracle must have happened, or I never should have won out over that demon. But I did. And I am here—with you."

“Bo’ Jou’, Marie”

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

I DON’ know for why dat poetry,
He make like wan bird to sing,
But I know, by gar, dat I like him, me!
Mos’ better of anything.

When de portage is done and my leet’ canoe
She rest on the rivaire shore,
I think w’at he make, an’ I sing him, two,
T’ree time; den I sing some more.

I don’ know for why is dat poetry,
But I know dat it make me think
Dat I don’ grow old; dat I feel like he
W’at is play in de sun, dat mink.

Adieu, Marie! For dat trail is long,
And dose clouds she is big and black;
But I sing jus’ same him one las’ song;
“Adieu, Marie! And Bo’ Jou’, Marie!”
I sing when I sure come back.

Wan funny t’ing, dat he love her, too!
But I don’ stay ’roun’ for see;
Dose woods dey call an’ I come. Mo’ Dieu!
If dat man he was get Marie!
* * * * *

Bo’ Jou’, Marie! I’m for come again
With dat fur. Jus’ like you say,
We buil’ dat cabane on de hill, an’ den
We get marrie’ mos’ any day!

W’at is dat? You for marrie dat poetry
W’at make like wan bird to sing?
Den, adieu, Marie! . . . It was you, Marie,
I think all time was love all time, me,
Mos’ bettaire of anything.

I go for to make de trap, Marie,
An’ I don’ come back nex’ spring;
But I don’ get mad, for I like him, me!
An’ I love jus’ same. . . You was joke, Marie?
By gar, dat is wan good t’ing.

Mr. Gunn and the Fretful Volcano

By Robert Welles Ritchie

Author of "The Sandlotter," "Wung," Etc.

Introducing the man who was born to do good to towns. Nothing was too big for him; hence this more or less true story of Mr. Gunn and the trained volcano that was to bring the world to Sacto's doorstep

MR. SIMEON C. GUNN—"Self-cocking Gunn," his intimates called him—was born to do good to towns, just as Julius Cæsar was born to cross the Rubicon. It was a matter of predestination. He did good to his native town of Visalia at a very tender age by starting a grass fire, which in turn set the courthouse afire and burned it to the foundation; everybody said afterward that Visalia needed a new courthouse anyway and Lord only knew when Visalia'd gotten another one if it hadn't been for that Gunn boy. When he was a college correspondent for a San Francisco paper he did good to North Berkeley by printing a story of a gold strike in Wildcat Creek; many people rushed to North Berkeley to dig gold, and, though they went away empty-handed, North Berkeley was put on the map. Perhaps that incident of the fake story gave Gunn, '06, a clew to his life work, for immediately upon his graduation he started to hoist unconsidered towns into prominence.

A decayed Spanish mission, a lady violin player who took the Kniepp cure through the morning's dew, and a novelist who lived up a tree all happened to be occupying contemporaneously a wild and picturesque nick in the coast line; Gunn seized upon them, sprayed them with the publicity calcium, and behold! Hebron-by-the-Sea sprang into

being, full-armed with artistic atmosphere. Gunn took his in the shape of corner lots, which went like tamales on a cold night. Again, municipal engineers of Rathom, in Lake County, bored for a new water supply and struck a soda spring; instantly Gunn on the job and Sunday stories in all the syndicates from Pacific coast to Atlantic. "Gin rickeys from a fire hydrant! Rathom's homes piped with fizz water." The town council of Rathom voted Simeon C. a neat thousand for that.

So it went. Let any little California town show a circus feature which could be twisted to the infinite arts of publicity and promotion, and there the Self-cocking Gunn primed himself for volley firing; councilmen and Board of Trade members found themselves chained by his oratory; campaigns were devised and put through with a bang—and the town was done good. Somewhere in the process, certain emoluments inevitably were detached from some individual or corporate body and transferred to the account of Simeon C. Gunn. Sometimes accompanied by engrossed resolutions of thanks, sometimes just before the fast train could be flagged at the switch. Whether this increment came to him with a tableau or a quick curtain interested Mr. Gunn not half so much as its dimensional qualities: length, breadth, and thickness—more particularly thickness.

A mooted point among his biographers is, I believe, whether the mountain came to Mohammed. But if ever a man was fitted by natural gifts and the education which comes of their application to make a mountain move over his way, that man was Simeon C. Gunn. Trouble was that he hooked up with a mountain which, as a mountain, possessed much the same temperament that Gunn did as a man. That mountain happened to be Lassen.

When I was a youngster, folks from the northern end of the Sacramento Valley used to go camping on the little lakes and streams at Lassen's foot, and no such pilgrimage was complete without a visit to Bumpuss' Hell. This interesting three-acre stretch of bad lands halfway up the flank of the cone, presumably christened by a direct-spoken discoverer, a Mr. Bumpuss, was then all that remained of Lassen's earlier activity as a volcano—a place that smelled abominably and whispered in steamy voices through cracks in the ground. A visitor to Bumpuss' Hell—especially a young and imaginative visitor—enjoyed there all the thrills of a revivalist's sermon on the life hereafter, with a graphic chart displayed of certain territories specified by the exhorter as being pasturage for the goats. Though a relatively small hell, Mr. Bumpuss' was worth the price of admission. It gave food for thought.

As everybody who reads the papers knows, a couple of years ago Mount Lassen suddenly recalled its early wickedness and became once more a regular union-shop volcano, along with Vesuvius, Mauna Loa, and the other recognized smoke blowers. Bumpuss' resort changed from a pitiful barnstormers' back drop to a real Belasco stage set of the genuine article, and great was excitement throughout all California. Besides being "a land of sunshine, fruit, and flowers"—see ad.—the State had a volcano to blow for it.

The one peculiarity about Lassen as a volcano—and the one that makes this a story—is that it is irregular as a performer. Some went so far as to attach the same criticism to the activities of Simeon C. Gunn.

However, libel must not be allowed to cloud the rare summer day—rare because the silver thread in the tube stood at only one hundred and five—when Simeon C. Gunn and a modest traveling bag stepped off the two-seventeen train from Frisco at the Sacto station. Nothing about the heat-curled boards of the depot gave any indication of life but a saddle-colored dog, who sat with one hind leg in the air, and, with eyes closed, gently moaned as he drilled for fleas in an inaccessible spot. The train sighed its way up the track, and a figure detached itself from the shady side of the depot, approaching the newcomer tentatively.

"Waiting for anybody, mister?" The native computed an accurate trajectory and landed a tobacco shrapnel on the exact tip of the dog's tail.

"Oh, just waiting for the crowd to thin out," Gunn answered carelessly. "Then I'll call a taxi and run up to the hotel."

"Figure you'll have to call fair to middlin' loud for that taxicab, mister." Not a flicker in the native's tired eyes. "But I'm driver for the Occidental's bus, and I guess I can wedge you in somehow."

The traveler lit a cigarette in a plain-gold holder four inches long—integral part of the Gunn "flash" was that holder—and entered the empty bus. He made a play of stumbling over the toes of hypothetical passengers, lifting his hat and murmuring apologies. The driver, watching him from the door with a dull eye, slowly conceived the idea that the town of Sacto was being insulted.

"Guess you *are* a stranger in this

town," he asserted, with nascent hostility.

"Yes, drive slowly," Gunn purred, "so I won't miss any of the skyscrapers."

"They would miss seein' you an' that's a fact," was the parting shot, and the bus rolled away from the station.

As a matter of truth, Sacto is unfortunately placed in relation to its depot. A quarter of a mile of red dust separates Main Street from the railroad track, and tarweed is thicker than real-estate signs along the intervening distance. But once you turn the corner of the Bone & Gimball Building—three stories and a clock tower—you find yourself in one of those typical valley towns of California—hustling to make its trousers meet its shoe tops and planning to put a crease in the former and a polish on the latter after the junction has been happily formed. Sacto was laid out by its pioneers on the flat top of a high, red clay cliff above the river; since the cliff is given to crumbling in freshets, Chinatown was assigned the best view, on the brink of the high bank—and a secret hope for a particularly heavy freshet went with the assignment, no doubt. Main Street was laid out at a conservative distance back. Each cross street running to the bluff's brink frames at its easterly end a picture which could sell real estate in cities of far greater sophistication than Sacto: first the lazy, blue bend of the river down below; then the sweep of wheat fields and orchards up to the two great knuckles of Brown Buttes, sentinels of the foothills; and beyond, the blue battlements of the Sierra, with Mount Lassen a watchtower pinning them down forty miles due east of the town.

As the bus swung around the corner into Main Street, its lone occupant leaned far out the opened window to catch a glimpse of the mountain's white majesty. He saw the sharp, truncated

cone painted against the sky as against a blue screen, aloof, tremendously self-sufficient in its superiority over the lesser peaks. Mr. Simeon C. Gunn waved his greetings to Mount Lassen as one business man to another; he was on the ground, was Gunn, and now all Lassen, party of the second part, had to do was to play its game up to the handle and all would be well.

The Occidental's clerk was visibly impressed by the four-inch gold cigarette holder and the vital, hawklike features behind it; both pushed across the desk in an easy, confidential attitude.

"Any rooms left in the ice box—right alongside the butter?" Gunn put his query with that artless smile of his which could always win him farther than a Native Son's button, even.

"With use of the sample room?" the clerk asked, with professional promptness. Gunn removed the cigarette holder with a flourish calculated to make failure to observe the bauble admission of total blindness.

"My dear young friend, you have me wrong—wrong! I am not a commercial traveler in the accepted sense. My line is not insecticides, aluminum stew pans, or neckties, but civic prosperity. My sample room is the peerless State of California, and I can point you to a dozen little cities therein which have bought my line and swear by it—cities, my young friend, where the hoot owls used to drive setting hens off their nests before I came, but where now the trolley gong has silenced the voice of the coyote and a ground squirrel's rare enough to be an exhibit.

"Give me a nice, cool room, and I'll keep it until Sacto has a jitney line to the depot and a horse fountain in front of the opera house dedicated to me. You're going to hear something about Simeon C. Gunn before long."

The clerk's hand was on the keyboard, and Gunn's pen was poised over the register when something happened.

Somewhere outside on Main Street, a bell pumped clangorous sound; noise of running feet on the sidewalks; hails and hellos from store to store. A darky, the Occidental's bell hop, boot-black, bartenders' assistant, and baggage rustler, thrust his head through the swinging door of the bar and chanted, in a deep bass, just two words: "Numbah nine-ty!" Every chair in the office lounge was deserted forthwith. From the "ladies' parlor" on the second floor three young misses, giggling hysterically, raced downstairs to join the running crowd outside. A Chinese cook, with a half-plucked fowl dangling in his grasp, galloped through the office from the kitchen. The clerk was just vaulting over the desk when Gunn laid a commanding hand on his coat lapel.

"When the town's burned to the ground, I suppose it's customary——"

"No fire!" the clerk reassured. "Just No. 90. C'm' on, take a look!"

II.

The promoter of civic welfare followed the Occidental's young man out into buzzing Main Street and down to the nearest corner, where a crowd was milling in high excitement. Shirt-sleeved clerks from grocery stores, ranchers with brick-red faces aglow under varnished hats, Donovan's soda-fountain clerk with a bottle of raspberry sirup still grasped in his hand, Sacto's chief of police and Sacto's chief drunkard—all the town was neck stretching toward the east. Gunn elbowed a shoe clerk off a favorable position on a curb top and looked, too.

Old Lassen on the job already! That was the sight that gladdened the heart of California's town doctor. And what a sight!

Forty miles off there to the east, but through the telescopic lens of the crystal-clear atmosphere seeming not more than fifteen, a lordly white cone, spout-

ing tens of thousands of tons—yes, tons—of smoke—oily black-and-gray ostrich plumes that rose a thousand feet above the lip of the cone before drooping and turning on themselves with a fetching "willow" effect. Hot, blue-white sky, white and dun pyramid of the distant peak, reverse Niagara of tumbling blackness ascending to make a smear against the bowl of the sky—all this color magic and tremendous disruption of an ordered sky line progressed without the faintest whisper of a noise; without the creaking of a cinema crank. Lassen's show was stage-managed to a Frohman perfection.

The crowd at the Main Street corner kept silence; this spectacle was searching each individual to the core of his soul. Not so Simeon C. Gunn. A showman's pride swelled within him. Here was his trained volcano doing its little trick in dress rehearsal, as it were, before the première which Mr. Gunn had come as manager to Sacto to stage. He bubbled exuberant satisfaction.

"There's the little stunt that's going to bring the world to Sacto's doorstep." Gunn clapped a white-aproned butcher on the shoulder as he pointed. "Now, *that's* class!"

"Aw, you'd oughta seen No. 79," the meat merchant retorted. "That was something! Old Lassen threw in a lot of frills with No. 79—a peewee earthquake and a noise like somebody sliding down a tin roof."

"No. 79?" Gunn echoed, mystified.

"Sure! Last Monday week, I think it was, we got No. 79. This is No. 90. We got 'em all numbered, you savvy, so's to keep tabs on 'em. They've been getting stronger right along, and some of the boys figure we'll have a rain of frogs or bath bricks or something out of the usual like that when Old Hundred breezes along."

"My friend"—Gunn tapped the butcher's shoulder solemnly and gave him the full voltage of the famous Gunn smile

—"by the time 'Old Hundred,' as you call him, gets here, Sacto will have T. Roosevelt, old Doctor Carranza, and the fort of Novo Georgievsk backed right off the front page. Sacto will be a household word from Maine to Alaska, and they'll be naming babies and two-bit cigars after your pretty little town. And there's just two people who are going to do this—old Mr. Mount Lassen, over yonder, and a man by the name of Simeon C. Gunn. Just mark that name down in your little book and consider it a bona-fide prophecy."

Saying which, Mr. Gunn moved on his philanthropical mission of doing Sacto good. He had the excellent intention of striking while the volcano was hot.

Now when Simeon C. Gunn struck, in the course of his affairs, it was with more foot pounds of energy and a heavier caliber of oratory than any man of his weight and class from Del Norte to San Bernardino. He was a Native Son, remember, and a Native Son does not have to be persuaded that California is the only unmortgaged piece of God's country in the sisterhood of States. He knows and he can expound this fact to a stranger in more diversified language than has been heard since the labor troubles at Babel. Dealing largely with Native Sons, as he did, Gunn's forte lay in convincing the residents of the town he happened to be doing good that theirs was the most generously sun-kissed of all the cosseted area of California—better than the best, in short.

III.

There was something ineffably gracious in the way the Self-cocking Gunn led a town councilman or member of a Board of Trade to the mahogany. He did it in the part of a man who has lived many years in anticipation of the

pleasure of asking this particular councilman or Board of Trade member what it would be. Then, the private stock being set out, the savior of unconsidered towns would hook one elbow over the rail, fix his victim with an eye burning in crusader flame, and unlimber, battery by battery, the whole artillery arm of his oratory. That councilman who, unconvinced and unenthusiastic, could push through swinging doors and out into plain sunlight afterward either had left his ear trumpet at home or had a heart like Skipper Ireson.

On this summer's day, when the fire bell summoned the citizens of Sacto to witness the ninetieth matinee performance of the Sierra smoke blower, the door to the Occidental bar swung many, many times behind the missionary of Sacto's salvation and material for his converting. Long after Lassen had finished his act—the mountain was an irregular performer, remember—members of the town council and of the Sacto Board of Trade had feet on the rail and were hearkening to winged words. That night there was a little meeting of the two bodies—oh, purely informal!—at the home of Major Horace Saleeby, who was president of the Board of Trade. Major Saleeby's house was on the top of River Hill; from its wide veranda, where the meeting convened, the faint loom of Brown Buttes, across the river, and of the dim white cone of Lassen, directly behind the buttes, could be seen. Not a flicker of firelight over Lassen's crater; the fickle volcano seemed as dead as any in the moon.

Burning cigar points punctured the darkness of the veranda. There was no sound but the mellifluous purling of the Gunn voice.

"Gentlemen"—he plunged to the climax which fifteen minutes of fervid word painting had precluded—"gentlemen, next week the conference of governors will be held at the Exposition

down in San Francisco. There will be twenty-nine governors of States in attendance upon that conference—twenty-nine executives of as many great commonwealths of our Union, from the savannahs of Florida to the wheat empires of the Dakotas. Gentlemen, these governors are shrewd men, observant men—the picked men of their several States. What they see in California—her magnificent fruits, her glorious flowers, the wealth of her mines, the richness of her ranches—these things the governors will carry back with them to make report upon them to their people.

“Men of Sacto, I say show these governors the only active volcano in the confines of continental America. Bring them to this thriving little city of yours, let them see that unparalleled spectacle which I witnessed to-day for the first time, my very soul trembling with the terror and the grandeur of it all. Then let those twenty-nine governors return to their respective States, and what will be the first message they will give to their people? ‘See Sacto and its volcano!’ That will be the message, gentlemen. Sacto—Sacto—Sacto! The name will spread through all the East. I personally will guarantee that within ten days of the governors’ visit to Sacto photographs and write-up will appear in Sunday supplements in ten great Eastern cities. You will get on the map. Future tourists to California will arrange their schedule to read: ‘See Sacto first.’ Yosemite Valley and the big trees will be mere side shows; the big tent will be right here in Sacto. Why, gentlemen, I was tremendously surprised, when I came to town to-day, and discovered that intelligent men like yourselves did not realize your opportunity—Sacto’s great chance. A smoking volcano, with the brand, ‘Made in the U. S. A.,’ stamped on it—why, that’s a business asset for this town beside which the hanging gardens of Babylon

had about as much kick as a horse-liniment sign on a rail fence.

“Here’s my proposition, gentlemen.” Gunn’s voice dropped to a tense, confidential timbre. “Raise a fund for expenses and entertainment; place that sum in my hands within a week, and before I spend a five-cent nickel of it I’ll have the promise of at least twenty-five of those twenty-nine governors to accept Sacto’s invitation, come up here in a body, be the guests of your lively little city, and view the volcano. The value of my services I place at the reasonable sum of a thousand dollars—including the management of every detail.”

Cigar tips all flared into brightness as if in reaction from the spell of the Gunn monologue, now finished. Then from over in the darkest corner the dry, thin pipe of old Henny Harkins, councilman and town wit:

“Does that thousand cover the management of the volcano, too? Maybe old Lassen’ll be skittish ’bout performing before the guvners.”

The question caught the angel of municipal good fairly between wind and water. Under the spell of the tremendous spectacle of that afternoon, Gunn’s burgeoning plans had progressed without consideration of the possibility this wet-blanket hurler had tossed out of the dark. Lassen had spouted smoke so whole-heartedly, with such an air of dependability, he had not given a thought to the faithful mountain’s refusal to do its tricks before company. Gunn was thrown back upon his old reliable antidote for mental chilblains—talk. Affecting to accept Councilman Henny Harkins’ query in the light of a humorous suggestion, nothing more, Gunn wove his airiest cobwebs of fancy above the hoary brow of Lassen, drew with a crayon of gold a picture of a glorified Sacto after twenty-nine—or positively twenty-five—governors had chanted its wonders back in a listening

East. In the end he cut a gem of innuendo, which left his listeners to infer that Simeon C. Gunn found it no more difficult to guarantee a timely eruption of Lassen than the presence of the governors to witness the same. Happily none of the other confrères appeared to share the skepticism of Councilman Harkins, and the weak span in Gunn's bridge of dreams held up.

Right there on Major Saleeby's veranda Sacto's representative citizens decided to raise two thousand dollars and capitalize Mount Lassen for the greater glory of the town. Committees were appointed—finance, ways and means, entertainment, et cetera; a tentative program of entertainment of the governors—aside, of course, from the great spectacle of the guaranteed eruption—was fashioned, and Gunn was empowered to take up with the railroad people the matter of a special train from Frisco. Incidentally he was to round up the governors and have them in Sacto the day after the adjournment of their conference at the Exposition.

IV.

Simeon C. went back to the Occidental near midnight with the pleasant sense of a good day's work accomplished. But before he retired he sent to a friend of his, who was secretary to one of California's senators in Washington, this telegram:

Ask Smithsonian or somebody who knows how to make a volcano shoot to order. Do you soap it like you soap a geyser, or what? Get right dope if you love me. SIM.

Came next morning this answer:

Smithsonian says surest way is to put request for eruption in writing and drop it down crater. BILL.

In a black fit of anger at this ill-timed humor, Gunn took an auto and was carried out to Brown Buttes, those two great knuckles of hills that rise be-

tween Sacto and Lassen, about midway of the road to the volcano. A little hotel resort squats over some boiling sulphur springs in the hollow between the two buttes, and this gave Gunn an objective. But during the course of luncheon served in an atmosphere of boiled bad eggs, a star-bright idea avalanched upon him—one of those ideas that made Napoleon win battles or Andrew Carnegie triple his output of libraries. His afternoon was spent in clambering among the rocks and rattlesnakes on the higher of the two buttes. From the top he reconnoitered the panoramic fling of the landscape east and west.

Behind, to the east, rose the dun and white cone of Lassen, like some mammoth quartz crystal lifting above the mass of conglomerate. A thin ribbon of smoke trailed off from its summit, index of the passing of No. 91 in the schedule of eruptions. Over to the west stretched the yellow valley, mottled with the pockmarks of live oaks and cut in twain by the silver blade of the Sacramento; the roofs of Sacto looked like a clutter of oyster shells.

Gunn was careful to determine the position of his vantage point in relation to the two objectives, Lassen and the town. The summit of the butte he stood on interposed itself directly upon a vision line between Sacto and the volcano. Satisfied on this and sundry other essential points, the Self-cocker returned to Sacto with the sunset.

In five days, the governors' committee, as the Gunn-inspired organization of citizens styled itself, had collected the requisite two thousand dollars, and Simeon C. Gunn, accompanied by a welcoming delegation which was headed by Major Saleeby, went to San Francisco to round up Sacto's distinguished guests. During the five days of frenzied financial campaigning, Lassen extended fair and honest promise of being on best behavior at the critical moment.

The mountain gave one exhibition, sometimes two, a day. No. 99 was voted a "stem-winder"; but at No. 99 the volcano stopped. "Saving Old Hundred for the governors," all of Sacto said, with pride in the promise of a red-hot century demonstration.

V.

The governors—all twenty-nine of them, with their families—came to Sacto in two private cars hitched to the tail of the Shasta Express. And Sacto was at the station to greet them. While the California Silver Cornet Band played "Hail to the Chief"—with the delicate insinuation of a plural object instead of the glorified singular embraced in the title—and the school children laid a path of roses for executive boots to tread, Simeon C. Gunn left Major Saleeby temporarily in charge of the distinguished guests and hurried to the baggage car before the express should continue its northward journey. There he had the satisfaction of seeing a long wooden case, strapped and bound with iron and having every outward sign of containing a great treasure, gently lowered to a hand truck. The case was addressed to "Simeon C. Gunn, Sacto," and bore on its top and sides such stenciled monitions as "This side up," "Use no hooks," and "Keep dry."

From one of the day coaches stepped a dark-visaged stranger with a powder mark over one eye, who spoke a word to Gunn and then followed the mysterious case to an express wagon, riding away from the scene of the welcoming festivities on one of the stenciled "Use no hooks."

Now the official program for the two days of the governors' visit, artfully worded by Gunn and sold on the streets at ten cents the copy, told of a reception luncheon at the Occidental at noon, an automobile excursion to Los Animas Rancho at three p. m., visit to the Board

of Trade exhibit in the skating rink at five o'clock, and so forth, right down to the farewell ball in Major Saleeby's home on River Hill on the second and last night of the governors' stay. But there was nothing even remotely hinting at volcano viewing. That was the unknown quantity in the program.

Lassen, bland and innocent as the "infant phenomenon" in a road show, lifted its snowy cone to the blue and seemed to simper coyly under the battery of inquiring eyes turned from Sacto. But not a puff of smoke was launched from its lips, not a stone hurled. No. 99 was now two days past, but Old Hundred did not come.

Sacto's citizens began to show all the symptoms of the seven-day itch when the visitors passed the first night in their midst without ever a peep from the mulish volcano. Privately they called down upon Lassen all the plagues of a mythical Sheol, but in the presence of the governors they talked about olives and wheat and California's grand climate, sunshine, fruit, and flowers. Insensibly the wrath of Sacto, especially of the governors' committee, which had persuaded Sacto to part with two thousand dollars, turned against Simeon C. Gunn. He *would* guarantee an eruption by that crazy-horse mountain, huh? He *would* bring all these governors and their wives and daughters up here just to make a goat of Sacto. All right—this the solemn promise made to a sympathetic crowd in the Occidental bar by Councilman Henny Harkins—all right; no eruption, no pay for Gunn. He was a smart Aleck, this Gunn fella, but he wasn't quite slick enough to get his thousand without delivering the goods.

So matters stood when, on the afternoon of the governors' second and last day in Sacto, the mysterious stranger with the powder mark over one eye went out of town over the road to Brown Buttes. He went seated on top

of the iron-bound packing case with the "Use-no-hooks" signs on it, the case being now in the wagon box of a light auto delivery cart. Before his departure he had a whispered conversation with Simeon C. Gunn.

The farewell ball in the spacious Saleeby mansion was all that anybody, except perhaps the sunshine-fruit-and-flower-fed governors themselves, could demand. The California Silver Cornet Band furnished the music; all the broad veranda overlooking the river was canvassed for dancing; a fairyland of winking lanterns lay among the orange trees. Members of the governors' committee, designated by broad badges, had now come to the easy, confidential relation of joking with the visiting executives about the eruption which refused to fill an engagement. Each merry quip on the subject of Lassen evoked a tired "Ha, ha!"—short and grudging, like that—from the governor against whom it impinged.

As for Simeon C. Gunn, good angel of unconsidered towns, he was so frankly snubbed by Major Saleeby and the committee members that he did not go near the ballrooms. Instead he sat out under a blossoming orange tree with a sweet young fluffy person and was quite content. From time to time he lit a match to consult the face of his watch, as if he had an engagement in mind, and occasionally his eyes turned out over the river to the east, where lay Brown Buttes, and the recalcitrant Lassen just behind them.

"I think we're just about due for an eruption," Gunn murmured, when a fifth match showed him the watch hands at eleven-thirty. "Ah——"

Over in the east, a red glow appeared; first a pin point of blood against the night's curtain, then quickly growing to a wide smear. Little tongues of red flames felt their way higher and higher.

"Oh!" exclaimed the fluffy young

thing. "Oh, goodness! But isn't that a little bit low down for Lassen?"

"Hush, sister!" Gunn quickly interposed. "This is a low-down eruption; but it's for the dear governors."

From the house, meanwhile, excited calls, a rush of dark figures to the veranda rail, high-pitched "Ohs!" and "Ahs!" The red glow in the eastern sky deepened and broadened. A whole flock of vivid sparks—could they be rockets or red-hot bowlders?—arched up from the hot heart of the distant fire core and winked into oblivion. Gunn nodded his head sagely, as one who checks off the specifications of a contract.

"This is going very well, sister," he purred. "This is going to make a hit."

As if his words were a cue for a mighty piece of stage business, came then a most unusual noise. It was like driving a fire engine over a tin roof—if one may imagine that circumstance. It was ear-filling, cumulative. Frightened shrieks and squeaks sounded from the crowded veranda.

Then the big kick.

It came first from straight down in the major muscles of the earth—a sharp thrust upward, as if the area whereon Sacto stood was part of a coverlet over the shoulders of a sleeping giant and the sleeper had turned. Then the motion shifted to a sidewise thrust, violent and wavelike. An orange fell squarely on Gunn's head. The fluffy young person fainted with a sad sigh. In the house of Major Saleeby, every light winked out, and above the creaking of strained timbers and crash of glass arose a pandemonium of shrieks.

All of this was but a prelude—a ruffle of the drums, as it were, to bring the star performer onto the stage. Over in the east, the blackness of night was burned away by a sudden flash of incandescence, and the whole cone of Lassen glowed blood-red in lava light.

Hardly to be seen, so dwarfed was it by the greater brilliancy, the puny pin point of red in line with Lassen's flaring beacon but below it—as far below as the summit of Brown Buttes, say—continued to spark fitfully.

So with earthquake and fire came Old Hundred, as advertised.

With the governors, whose private cars could not be hitched onto the midnight southbound too soon to suit, departed also Simeon C. Gunn, bringer

of good to towns. Unfortunately Mr. Gunn was not as pleased as might have been by the cuddling of a check for one thousand dollars against his bosom.

For that thousand was not net. Out of it had to be deducted a matter of three hundred dollars for fireworks, expressage, and the services of a mysterious stranger with a powder mark over one eye.

All of which had been so positively unnecessary, you see.



The Old Call

By Berton Braley

HARRIGAN came home again; he said he'd never roam again,
 He'd had enough of wandering, adventure, and romance,
 His life had been an olio of battle and imbroglio,
 A calendar of danger and a chronicle of chance;
 But now, in all sobriety, he swore he'd found satiety,
 He'd had his fill of struggle in the lands of East and West.
 "Me one desire," said Harrigan, "is just an easy-chair again,
 A pipe, a pair of slippers, and a lot of time to rest."

Harrigan came home again to tread the common loam again.
 "I long to loaf about," he said, "and let me girth increase;
 To settle down complacently and quietly and dacently,
 Where everything is orderly and all the ways are peace!"
 Yet though he ceased from traveling, his tongue would keep unraveling
 A golden string of stories of the roving days gone by;
 And in the eyes of Harrigan a sudden flame would flare again,
 And from the breast of Harrigan would issue forth a sigh!

Harrigan came home again—but far across the foam again
 The old red god of slaughter called his millions to the fray,
 And Harrigan? Why, Harrigan, he sniffed the ambient air again,
 Forgot his vows of peacefulness, and started on his way;
 Time never can diminish it, and only death can finish it—
 The magic of adventure which is strong beyond our ken,
 And so it is with Harrigan, who's off to do and dare again,
 To taste the smoke of battle and to play the game with Men!

Homeward Bound

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "The Wall Between," "Jane Hardy, Shipmaster," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS

On board the *Columbian*, bound for a Southern port, are two passengers, brother and sister, who are large stockholders in the navigation company. Stella and Ashley Corbin are alike only in name, and it is not strange that their preference should differ in regard to Captain Pope and his chief officer, Edward Barrington. To Stella, the captain is a self-satisfied snob, while her brother finds him a congenial spirit. Oppositely, Ashley dislikes Barrington while his sister finds the chief officer a charming gentleman. Between Captain Pope and Barrington there is strained feeling, and when the chief officer, on watch, calls the captain to verify Temple Rock light, Pope is furious at such foolish conduct. But there is something puzzling about the light to Barrington, and he is insistent. Captain Pope arrogantly orders him to steer according to the signal. Soon the *Columbian* is piled up on a reef, and the crew and passengers take to the boats. Ashore the captain meets with an engineer who is troubled about the wreck, fearing that his broken headlight, which had flared most peculiarly, might have put the ship off her course. Pope experiences dread at learning this, but assures the engineer that his theory is nonsense. At the official investigation the captain manages to throw all the blame upon the chief officer, and he is abetted by Ashley Corbin, who uses his influence to ruin Barrington. Stella had requested Ashley to stay out of it, and when she questions him as to what he has heard of the trial he dissembles and reports retailed information, telling her that the chief officer has been found guilty and disgraced.

(A Four-Part Serial—Part Two)

CHAPTER IV.

THE formal notice came to Barrington by mail, a few typewritten lines and the signature of Allen P. Hersey. He had tried to prepare himself for it, but until he read this brief document a hope persisted, and he could not wholly realize that this cruel finality confronted him. He read it several times, sitting in a room of a small hotel near the New York water front, where masters and mates were wont to stay between voyages. Then he endeavored to comprehend what it meant to him. Maritime gossip sped swiftly, and everywhere that sailors met together they were waiting to learn who was held responsible for the loss of the *Columbian*. It was a sensational affair, more or less inexplicable, a cause for speculation and argument among the men who earned their bread upon the sea.

He wanted no sympathy from them; nothing but the chance to sail again as an officer, but the door was closed and barred. His case was too notorious. For his age he had held one of the most enviable positions in the American merchant service. Now the meritorious record of sixteen years had been obliterated as one wipes a sponge over a slate. He might go as far as the Pacific coast, but the verdict would be there to mock and defeat him.

The shock benumbed his confidence in himself. It was his first encounter with discouragement and the strangling grip of circumstances. He dreaded meeting his friends, yet he was instinctively reluctant to run away from them, to turn his back to the sea. It was an intolerable situation to brood in idleness and feed his black enmity toward Ashley Corbin and Captain McCready Pope. He must seek employment of

some sort, anything at living wages, while he rallied from the knock-out blow. His trade had taught him to handle men and cargoes, and he decided to try the wharves, where the stevedores drove their sweating gangs.

The first interview could have been no more unfortunate. The dock superintendent whom he sought at random proved to be a blustering Irishman who had formerly worked for the Tropical Navigation Company. He knew Barrington by sight, and loudly hailed him by name as they met where the rattling trucks were streaming down a vessel's gangway.

"'Tis sorry I am for ye," he roared above the noise. "I dropped in to see Captain Ridpath a bit ago to ask a small favor, and he told me. A man 'u'd naturally ask the question. Me head aches wid wonderin' how it happened to ye."

Several idlers stared and drifted closer, surmising that this must be the Barrington of the *Columbian*. He noticed them, and the blood surged into his cheek as he replied:

"We will not discuss that, Mr. O'Donnell. I am not asking you to sign me on as a mate. I think I can qualify as a foreman in your business. Will you let me show you whether I can keep the freight moving and load a ship properly?"

"Down and out, are ye, Mr. Barrington?" said the stentorian O'Donnell, whose motives were not unkind. "Me advice is to beat it out of New York till they quit talkin' about it. I have no job at all for ye at present, for I'm layin' off good men right and left. 'Tis a slack time. I know what your feelin' is. A sailor will not be driven away from the smell of salt water. But you are a marked man, Mr. Barrington."

"I didn't ask you for advice," stiffly replied the chief officer. "Where I go is my own affair."

"You are welcome to me advice all the same," good-naturedly observed the other. "And if you're broke, there's wan place where the loan of a ten-dollar note will be waitin' for ye."

Barrington thanked him, and walked away. O'Donnell had not meant to hurt him, but it was like turning a knife in a wound. Irresolutely he wandered to another wharf, not to ask for employment, but to lean against a piling and gaze at the traffic-burdened harbor and the many masts and funnels rising above the warehouses. A white steamer moved out into the stream, and a tug nudged her bow around to head for the lower bay and Sandy Hook. The house flag snapped in the breeze, a blue Maltese cross on a square of red, to signify that she belonged to the Tropical Navigation Company's fleet. Barrington recognized her as the *Hesperian*, in which he had served as second officer. And she was outward bound!

Waving a farewell to her, he forsook the wharf, and lingered no longer within sight and sound of the shipping. His manner was less indecisive as he struck into a street which led away from the haunts of sailors. Hitherto he had regarded the business activities of New York with the eye of a spectator, casual and detached. The region of tall buildings and gloomy alleys, of merchants and lawyers and what not, was a hinterland whose ways and customs were alien.

Now he studied the crowds with a kind of intent curiosity. Here were to be found the successful men, shrewd masters of the art of making money and gaining power. Of what use could he be to such as these? All he had to offer was a long experience on the sea, and not even a recommendation from his last employer. It filled him with repugnance to think of spending his days in this noisy, jangling inferno. He had been accustomed to the orderly

quietude of ships and the sweep of clean, wide horizons.

For several hours he rambled, as a pilgrim and a stranger, until the unfamiliar pavements made him leg weary. Returning to his hotel, he entered the taproom and retired to a corner to solace himself with a pipe and a mug of beer while he took stock of the situation. Why delude himself with pretending he could fight it out?

"I must take time to get my second wind," he said to himself. "A week of this and I should be afraid of my shadow. I never knew I had nerves."

From these unhappy reflections he was diverted by the entrance of a gaunt, hoary man who walked with a rheumatic limp. Barrington set down the mug and blinked at him. It was as though a memory of youth had taken substantial shape. The leathery cheeks were more deeply cross-hatched with seams and wrinkles, and the powerful frame looked shrunken, but it might have been the same suit of shore-going black clothes all creased from being folded in a locker. He dropped into a chair with a sigh of relief, banged his hard hat on the table to summon a waiter, and boomed out an order for coffee, beans, and griddle cakes.

The voice made Barrington jump. The intervening years had not broken the bonds of habit. The next order might be to call all hands and shorten sail. Before announcing himself, Barrington gazed at the venerable apparition with affectionate enjoyment. Presently the latter caught sight of the young man in the corner, puckered his shaggy brows, wiped his spectacles, grinned, and shouted:

"Come here, you rascal! Playin' hide and seek with me, are you? Set there and drink yourself to death and never say a word!"

The mighty grip of their handclasp would have disabled an ordinary dweller in Manhattan.

"Adrift from your moorings, aren't you, Captain Moses Carpenter?" exclaimed Barrington. "It has been years since we last spoke each other. Whenever I went home to Eppingham to see my mother, and it wasn't often, with so few days in port, you happened to be at sea yourself. You look as sound as a nut. Retired, have you?"

"Not by a jugful, Ed, though there are signs and symptoms that I'm pretty near due. Still bangin' up and down the coast same as usual, but layin' up winters for longer spells and fonder of a red-hot stove than I used to be."

"And the *Henrietta*? Do you mean to tell me the old schooner is still in service?"

"As spry as I be," was the vigorous assertion. "I wish my own timbers was as stanch. Why, that vessel is only forty years old. I suppose she seemed like Noah's Ark to you when you sailed in her as a boy. Not that I'm anxious to weather a January blow off Cape Cod in her, but bless your soul, Ed, I don't turn handsprings or shin down a topmast stay as nimble as I did once."

"But you didn't make a voyage to New York in her, Captain Moses?"

"She is in the Harlem River dischargin' lumber," proudly returned the skipper of the *Henrietta*. "I don't come this side of Boston as a rule, but freights were high enough to tempt me, so I took a cargo from the sawmill at Eppingham, and I go back in coal."

He rubbed his smooth-shaven chin, and waited for Barrington to speak. A sense of embarrassment possessed the younger man, who dreaded being asked questions about himself. Captain Carpenter understood, and tactfully resumed, after demanding another cup of coffee:

"Meeting you this way is a miracle, to my notion. I've forgotten how many million folks they say lives in this town. Anyhow, there's an awful raft of 'em. I had to come down from Harlem to

see about some insurance papers, and I was suddenly took hungry. First thing I did was to hunt up the Tropical Navigation Company's office and find out about you."

"You heard about the wreck, of course," Barrington forced himself to say.

"Not all I wanted to hear, Ed. And I didn't get a whole lot of satisfaction out of your owners this morning. The only person that 'u'd talk to me was a snippet of a typewriter girl in the manager's room. I tried to respect her sex, but she made me mad. I tell you, Ed, there's something serious the matter with the way they raise children nowadays. This one chewed gum, and was sassified. She called me grandpop, and she says, says she: 'Mr. Barrington was told where he got off.' 'What's that?' says I, bein' puzzled. 'They tied the can to him,' says she. By the disagreeable way she said it I got it through my head that you had quit workin' for the company, Edward. Now I figger it that you feel bad enough without an old fool like me pesterin' you with questions. You look older than I expected to see you. Tell me just this one thing, and I agree to let you be: Did they give you a square deal?"

"No. Captain Moses, they gave me a raw one," bitterly answered Barrington.

"I want to know. Why, there was no smarter seaman in their employ. Made any plans?"

"Not a plan. They stood me on my beam ends."

Captain Carpenter ruminated over a plate of griddle cakes. He appeared to be holding an argument with himself. Awkwardly hesitating, he said, with a simple fondness which wonderfully softened his harsh lineaments:

"I dunno as I ought to insult you by suggestin' it, Ed, but you look to me like a man that don't know which way

to turn. If you set around New York and mope and break your heart, you'll never be worth your salt again. Now there's the *Henrietta*. You know her, and you know me. You sailed with me as a lad, and I made an able seaman of you. I've got a lazy sot for a mate this voyage. Will you sign on with me if I kick him ashore? It's like be-ginnin' life all over again for you, but you will be with an old friend, and sometimes old friends are best."

Barrington winced as he replied unsteadily:

"Right you are about old friends. But I can't bear to think of going home. Yes, it would be beginning all over again."

"You are not afraid to go home in the old schooner and see your mother, be you, Ed? Seems to me it 'u'd be healthy for you just now to be with people that believe in you, blow high, blow low. Susan Barrington is a woman with a mind of her own. Do you suppose she could ever lose faith in her boy or be ashamed of him?"

"It will be hard for her," muttered Edward. "I know what the village is. I wasn't intending to go back."

"I sail in a couple of days," gently suggested Captain Moses. "You can take it or leave it. The schooner will seem dreadful small and rough to you, and mebbe it does sound like a ridiculous proposition."

"It is not ridiculous," smiled the chief officer, his eyes suffused. "You were always more like a daddy to me than my own father. I am a quitter to hold back. Of course I am going in the *Henrietta* with you, and I thank you for the chance. But you ought to know about the *Columbian*. The company says I am an incompetent mate and an unmitigated liar."

"Didn't you tell me they wouldn't give you a square deal? What's the good of hashin' it over?"

"I should like to forget it. Very

well, I shall report for duty to-morrow."

"It's about all we old folks are good for," said Captain Carpenter, "to try and help mend things for the youngsters we love."

When Barrington went to find the *Henrietta* next day, she had been shifted to a grimy coal wharf. The little schooner belonged to the vanishing type of humble two-master which creeps up and down the New England coast. Forty years of hard service had given her an air of respectable antiquity. Besides the captain and a mate, she carried one sailor, a boy, and a cook. In heavy weather the water worked through the seams, and they manned the pump as a matter of habit.

Coal was pouring into both hatches from the overhead chutes, and the *Henrietta* was amazingly dirty. Barrington smothered a sigh, and entered the cabin. The aspect of the room was uncannily familiar. Nothing seemed to have changed. There was the table of scrubbed plank at which he had proudly eaten with the skipper when promoted to act as mate during his last year on board. The same brass lamp hung from the ceiling, the same pictures adorned the walls, highly colored masterpieces once known as chromos, "A New Bedford Whaler Crushed in the Ice," and "A British Troopship Foundering in a Typhoon." Seated at a wooden shelf which he called his desk was Captain Moses Carpenter, chewing the stub of a pencil, and making very hard work of his accounts as Barrington had beheld him a hundred times.

At the right was the door of the closet called a stateroom by courtesy where the boy Barrington had lain in his bunk and dreamed of going into steam some day, of being an officer in a brass-buttoned uniform and giving orders from a lofty bridge. Captain Carpenter looked up and exclaimed:

"Glad to see you aboard. I suppose

it ought to be *Mister* Barrington from now on. It's perfectly astonishing how they pour the coal in with these loading machines. It beats a horse and a bucket and whip, eh? At this rate we will tow into the Sound before dark and fill away with a fair wind."

"I will take a look around and begin to tidy things up, sir," replied the mate, and the note of willing cheerfulness had returned to his voice. There was to be no more sulking and repining under punishment. He went into the stateroom and put on working clothes—flannel shirt, khaki trousers, and duck hat. On the partition at the head of the bunk he found his initials and a date, and he remembered when he had carved them there. Hastening on deck, he made the acquaintance of the crew and inspected the galley and tiny forecabin.

The cook and the one sailor moved at a gait too leisurely to please him, but he bided his time. It was not until the *Henrietta* had begun her voyage and was stealing toward the eastward in the twilight with all her canvas spread that he realized how much Captain Moses Carpenter stood in need of him. There were signs of slackness to indicate that old age was dulling the skipper's efficiency, not as a navigator but as an executive. His men had been taking advantage of him. In former days there had been no smarter, cleaner vessel on the coast.

The supper was badly cooked and sloppily served, but the captain made no complaint and said grace with his customary earnestness. It seemed rather pitiful to Barrington, who had seen a trembling cook compelled to drink a pot of burned coffee to the dregs in this same cabin. The woodwork needed scrubbing and a fresh coat of paint. The standing rigging was gray for lack of tar. The brasswork was more tarnished than should be. Barrington quietly took note of these and many

other details. The old man fretfully tried to explain.

"You can't get sailors any more. The wuthless critturs holler for less work and bigger wages. All they're good for is to loaf and guzzle rum."

Barrington gravely agreed with him, but he knew where the trouble lay. He felt profound gratitude that he could be of service. There was honest work to be done, work that was worthy of him, even in this shabby little schooner. After all, there was not much else in life that really counted. It was the training given him in the *Henrietta*, when Captain Carpenter was in his prime, that had hammered him into shape and made success possible. Now an opportunity for payment was offered him. He comprehended that it might be possible to find happiness in defeat and victory born of disaster. It was no more than a glimpse as yet, but his face was less careworn, and he thanked God that New York was left behind him.

In the white radiance of a full moon the *Henrietta* moved between the shadowy shores of Long Island Sound. The foremost hand was at the wheel. Captain Carpenter sat upon the cabin roof. His posture was relaxed, and he hummed a tune, gently beating time with his foot. Barrington fell into conversation with the boy of the crew, curious to know something about him. He was country bred and of a wholesome countenance.

"I'll tell you why I went to sea, sir," he exclaimed, with fine enthusiasm. "The farm had got pretty well run down. It needed money to bring it up again, and it looked like a poor chance for me to do anything with it. Anyhow, my two brothers wanted to stay home, and there wasn't a living for the three of us. Father wouldn't listen, though, till Captain Moses Carpenter offered to let me sail with him. Dad said he was willing to trust me to him

and nobody else. He'd make a man of me."

"Why, that is what my father—but never mind that," ejaculated Barrington. "And how do you like it, Frank?"

"Great, now that a mate like you is aboard," was the flattering response. "You know your business. I can see that already. I'm anxious to learn and work my way up. Captain Carpenter says he'll teach me navigation some day, but I get worried for fear he won't sail another season. His rheumatism cripples him all up in bad weather. Say, Mr. Barrington, you must have been in bigger vessels than this. I'll bet you have seen a lot of the world. What chance is there for a fellow to get into steam when he's old enough?"

"Plenty of opportunity for a lad that knows his trade and has the right stuff in him," said the mate, after a perceptible hesitation. "There is luck in sailing, like everything else."

"I don't believe in luck," stoutly declared young Frank. "A man gets what's coming to him in this world. Have you had any experience in steamers, Mr. Barrington?"

"Some. I was one of the unlucky men that you don't believe in. If you really want to tackle navigation, I will send for my books and we can make a start at it next voyage."

The boy was effusively grateful. He yearned to ask more questions, but an innate sense of courtesy stilled his tongue. The mate seemed reluctant to talk about himself. There was something almost mysterious in the presence of a man so clean cut and masterful aboard this ancient tub of a coaster. However that might be, it was amazingly kind of him to show a friendly interest in a boy in the fore-castle. But the boy little knew what motive had inspired this friendly interest. As in a magic mirror, Barrington had beheld himself. Musingly he walked aft and said to the skipper:

"Please turn in whenever you feel like it, sir, and sleep the night through. The vessel is safe with me."

"You always was a good-hearted, willin' lad, Ed. I know I can sleep sound with you on deck, but I don't aim to shirk my watch. Rouse me out at midnight, same as usual."

"If I need you," was the evasive reply. "I have found out one thing since we left port. I never knew before what it really meant to be homeward bound."

CHAPTER V.

Many times Stella Corbin wondered what had become of the chief officer of the *Columbian*. Her brother had dismissed the objectionable Barrington from his mind, and testily refused to make inquiry at the company's offices. A sense of duty reproached her. If she honestly doubted the justice of the verdict which had ruined him, then he ought to know that he had not lost her respect. And would he misunderstand if she should offer substantial help? It was something of a problem, and while she debated it there came to her house the quiet and elderly Mr. Bayne, second officer of the wrecked steamer. He wished particularly to see Miss Corbin, he explained at the door, and perhaps she might remember his name.

Stella felt genuine pleasure at meeting him again, and prettily concealed her perplexed surprise. He displayed no awkwardness, he had too much simple dignity for that, but it was not difficult to guess that he stood a trifle in awe of this prepossessing young woman and her environment. She coaxed him into a small reception room, where they could chat undisturbed, and Bayne earnestly explained:

"I wasn't looking for Mr. Corbin, your brother. My business is not with him. That is clear, is it?"

"Certainly. He is not at home," she cordially replied, "and if he happens

to come in, you and I are otherwise engaged."

"You recovered with no bad effects?" he thoughtfully inquired; "didn't catch cold or have nervous prostration or anything?"

"Oh, no. I think I rather enjoyed it as an experience, Mr. Bayne. And what about you? Have you been appointed to another ship?"

"Not yet, Miss Corbin. But never mind about me," he answered more hastily. "I didn't come here to talk about myself. It seems as if I had run pretty wide of my course to call on you in this fashion, but my errand may excuse me. There was a steward in the ship; he was stationed in the officers' messroom, a man by the name of Carney. He had been with us only two voyages, but we thought a good deal of him. He wasn't very rugged, and he fell overboard that night, jumped for a boat and missed it, and was fished out exhausted. That, and lying about in his wet clothes, didn't do him any good. After he came back to New York he was taken down with pleurisy, and it finished him. He died a couple of days ago, so I learned from the chief steward when I met him in the office this morning."

"And did he leave a family, poor man?" sympathetically asked Stella.

"A wife and four children; small ones at that. They live in a room or two over on Second Avenue, and it was hard enough to pull along when they had Carney's wages. He got no tips, like a first-cabin steward. God knows how they managed it. The company gives the widow a month's pay, and will do no more. Carney didn't lose his life in the line of duty, says Mr. Hersey. He might have had pleurisy if he had been caught in a shower without an umbrella. The chief steward has raised what money he could, but it isn't a very large purse. Without meaning to criticize the com-

pany, salaries are not exactly fancy. And a good many of us are idle just now."

"Dear me, and I received a handsome dividend only yesterday," murmured Stella, more to herself than to Mr. Bayne. "How did you happen to think of coming to me?"

"It was said on board that you had a great deal of money, but nobody had to tell me that you liked to make other people happy with it. I found that out by looking at you."

"It takes a sailor to blarney a woman," laughed Stella. "And what do you advise me to do for the Carneys?"

"Carney tried to make a decent home for them, Miss Corbin. The chief steward went to see them last night. The woman is a worn, weary little body, but full of pluck and love for her babies. She wants work, for one thing, but she ought to stay at home with them. Her mortal fear is that the organized charity people will break up the family and put the little ones in institutions. She sits and cries about it when she isn't weeping for Carney. My notion was that you might be willing to carry them along for a while, until the older ones get some schooling and can work for themselves."

"Take them away from New York, do you mean? Put them in the country, where they can have healthful, decent surroundings?" impulsively cried Stella. "Thank you so much, Mr. Bayne, for telling me about them. You and I will go to see them to-day."

"Carney's shipmates will worship you for it," said he. "They will want to chip in a little bit now and then just for remembrance. He was a common, insignificant messroom steward, was Carney, but a patient man and true to his friends. He couldn't have loved his family more if he had lived in this great house of yours."

"That is the epitaph of a hero, Mr. Bayne, and I wish I might have known

him. And so this rich steamship company could give his widow no more than a month's wages, a few dollars?"

"There are a couple of thousand men on the pay roll, afloat and ashore," loyally answered the second mate. "And I suppose business has to be trimmed to a fine edge. Your brother would know more about that than I. He takes an active interest in the company's affairs. It would have seemed meddlesome of me to come to him about Carney, but speaking to you was different. This was a personal errand; nothing to do with Mr. Ashley Corbin or the company."

"I understand," said Stella, more serious of mien than at any time during the interview. "This is strictly personal, a secret between you and me about the Carneys. And I shall not tell my brother that you have called. But it sounds odd to hear you say that Mr. Corbin takes an active interest in the affairs of the Tropical Navigation Company. Your impression is that he has large holdings in the corporation, or something of the sort?"

"I took that for granted," replied Mr. Bayne, who could see no reason for being less straightforward than usual. "It was why he took a hand in the *Columbian* investigation and steered it as he wanted it to go."

This was a bold statement, perhaps more than he had meant to convey. Stella caught her breath, and appeared bewildered. Then her expression was such that he felt remorse at having somehow grieved her. It took him all aback, and he made a stumbling apology while looking for his hat. It was time for him to go. After winning the day for the Carney household he should have let well enough alone. She detained him, however, and her gesture was a command as she said:

"This is between friends, Mr. Bayne. You must not look so distressed. You did not hurt my feelings. I am very

anxious to know what you meant by that last remark. Were you one of the witnesses at the investigation? I have heard very little about it; merely the result. Do you mind telling me about it; everything you can remember?"

"Why not? It was presumed to be open and aboveboard," he cried, with rising emotion. "You see, I didn't agree with the findings, Miss Corbin, and I have tried to keep silent as a servant of the company. But I can't put it out of my mind. It is a fearful thing to see a man stain his immortal soul to hold his job."

"That would be Captain McCready Pope," was Stella's whispered comment.

Mr. Bayne heard her, and his face was melancholy as he exclaimed:

"It is not for me to name him. Perhaps you won't like to hear what I have to say about your brother. Hadn't I better fetch up before I begin?"

"No. This is wiser. You are doing me a favor," she assured him.

"Well, there had been a quarrel between Mr. Barrington and Mr. Corbin. I would rather not tell you what it was about unless I had Mr. Barrington's permission. Please let it go at that. Your brother had no use for him. He wanted to pay a score. And so he bullied Captain Ridpath and intimidated Mr. Hersey——"

"This was actually during the investigation?" broke in Stella, her dark eyes flashing.

"Yes. Mr. Corbin took the center of the stage, as you might say. He made it conspicuous that Captain Pope was to go clear. It was anything to smash the chief officer. His shipmates were unable to help him, although we all believed that he told the truth."

"He was a shipmate of mine, and he saved my life," earnestly replied Stella, with her brave smile. "And he did not disclose my brother's motive for his intense dislike?"

"Mr. Barrington couldn't do that very

well. Telling tales on passengers is not a gentlemanly thing to do. It isn't customary among officers."

"Ah, I see. Pardon my blunder, Mr. Bayne. If Mr. Corbin had not interfered in the investigation, would it have resulted differently, do you think?"

"I can't swear to that, Miss Corbin, but my opinion is that the marine superintendent favored Mr. Barrington. And Mr. Hersey might have left the decision to him if pressure had not been brought to bear. Captain Pope was skating on pretty thin ice. All this sounds as if I were telling tales out of school, but it is my only chance, our only chance, to say a word for a friend. I am a much older man than Mr. Barrington, and he was put over me in the *Columbian*. The way he treated me has placed me under obligations to him. The company has lost as fine an officer and as straight a man as ever trod a deck."

"You and I think alike," warmly spoke Stella. "And I admire your loyalty. Do you know what has become of him?"

"I asked the office for his address. At the hotel they told me he had gone to sea. He will be hard to find. He may have shipped before the mast."

"How dreadful! And where is his home? He told me that as a boy he sailed out of some river—I can't recall the name—I think it was in a schooner. Perhaps he lived in a town on that river."

"Eppingham was the village, Miss Corbin. He mentioned it when we were yarning together on shipboard. Down East—Maine or New Hampshire, I forget which. He is not married, which is a blessed good thing."

"I took it for granted that he was unmarried," observed Stella, unexpectedly emphatic. "And so he has gone to sea again! You sailors are always running across each other, Mr. Bayne,

in this port or that. If you see him again, will you remember me to him?"

"It will please him, Miss Corbin. He has a very high opinion of you."

"And how did you find that out?" she demanded.

"Well, for one thing, when the boats were ordered out, he stopped to tell me to be sure to look out for you if the ship dropped out from us sooner than expected, and he had to fight the crowd back. I am letting my tongue run away with me. It's time to heave short."

"Not at all, Mr. Bayne. Every word is interesting. But this is not fair. Don't you ever talk about yourself?"

He became taciturn, and showed symptoms of uneasiness. It was not for her to know that he was on the waiting list and that younger men had the right of way with the management of the Tropical Navigation Company. Miss Corbin might infer that he wished her to intercede for him. Informing her that he expected to be assigned to a ship, he suggested that they go to find the Carney family, if agreeable to her.

Later in the day, Ashley Corbin telephoned from somewhere on Long Island that he had decided to spend the week-end with a brace of jolly old pals. They had picked him up at a club and whisked him off in a motor, and he wanted to have some clothes sent down. Stella could have thanked these amiable kidnapers. She was granted a respite, a brief calm before the storm. Ashley had deceived her more than once, but he had never been so base as this. He had been a swaggering pretender, and until now she was willing to let him pretend. It had been a harmless masquerade, this assumption of his that he was a person of some importance. But to appropriate to his own cowardly uses the influence of wealth which belonged to her, and to try to cover it with falsehood was be-

yond the pale of pardon. She did not question the truth of Mr. Bayne's unselfish revelation. It accorded all too sadly with her intimate knowledge of her brother.

He deserved to be set adrift, but ought she to let him go from bad to worse? The habit of accepting him as one of her responsibilities was not easy to ignore, and in his boyhood she had been fond of him. Hers was the only restraining hand to save him from the demoralizing friends and hangers-on who swelled his sense of importance and abused his hospitality. Strip him of his extravagant income and these parasites would desert him, but even on two thousand a year he could be idle and aimless, a man who believed himself incapable of doing a day's work. There was so much of the maternal in her feeling for this pampered wastrel that she yearned to find some way to make him better as well as to punish him for this despicable performance.

It was refreshing to turn from this distressing problem to planning the destiny of the Carney family. Her visit with Mr. Bayne had made her enthusiastic about them. Mrs. Carney was uncomplaining and pathetically determined to make the best of things. The children were clean, attractive tots who sat solemnly in a row and stared with round eyes at the beautiful lady. Their father had been carried away in a box, the eldest carefully explained, and he was never coming back, having gone to God for this long voyage instead of aboard his ship, at which Stella hugged the wee girl and wiped away her tears. Their decorum was upset by the news that they were to live out in the green country. Mrs. Carney had to quell a joyous riot. It was not charity, Stella informed her, mentioning her financial interest in the steamship company, but a duty toward the family of a faithful employee which she considered it a privilege to undertake.

Having won Mrs. Carney's consent, the next step was to find a proper home for them. Diligently Stella searched the real-estate advertising of the New York and Boston newspapers. It was a most entertaining pastime. New England appealed to her as a legendary land of rugged simplicity and homely virtues and little red schoolhouses. The essentials were a neat white cottage, land enough for a garden, and some sort of a barn. Later there would be a cow and a pig. As a North of Ireland girl, Mrs. Carney had rural memories, and she expected to work wonders with a flock of hens. It was her firm resolve to become self-supporting and pay back every cent the family cost the blessed Miss Corbin.

At this season, in the spring of the year, there were hundreds of exciting advertisements to scan. It seemed as though every farmer between the Connecticut shore and the Canada line was anxious for tenants as his chief summer crop, or desired to sell his acres outright. Stella's search was quite at random until her eye alighted on this paragraph:

FOR SALE OR TO RENT FOR THE
SUMMER.

Seven-room cottage and twenty acres of good land. Some wood. Cuts twelve tons of hay. Barn and outbuildings. Spring water piped into the kitchen. Fine view. Splendid air. Near salt water. Comfortably furnished. Not far from village. Rural delivery. Address Hamlin Eaton, East Eppingham, N. H.

This sounded like an ideal place for the Carneys, not to mention the coincidence which made the advertisement distinctive. Mr. Barrington's home town was called Eppingham, of this Mr. Bayne had seemed quite certain. Stella hastily consulted an atlas, and discovered an Eppingham in Maine as well as in New Hampshire. Both appeared to be situated on small rivers near the coast, which left the matter

in doubt. It offered a pleasant conjecture, however, and caused her, for the moment, to forget that she was deciding the future of the Carney brood. If this should happen to be Edward Barrington's Eppingham it by no means followed that she could expect to meet him there. Quite the contrary, as she swiftly reasoned it. He had gone to sea again, probably on a long voyage, for a man who had been publicly disgraced would naturally wish to find new scenes and other associations.

"But I should like to know more about him, all about him," she said to herself, "and if this is his Eppingham it will be most interesting to be among people who have known him all his life. And if they still believe in him, I should like to hear them say so."

When Ashley Corbin returned from Long Island his appearance was that of a man who had spared no pains in the pursuit of pleasure. The three days had consisted largely of nights. He was puffy under the eyes, and the pallor was more pronounced. He could not stand the pace as well as his more robust companions. They had been unkind enough to tell him that he was slowing up. He tried to avoid Stella. She got on his nerves when he felt seedy. Warily he let himself into the house and tiptoed to his room. Presently there was a knock at the door, and he opened it, expecting to find a servant.

"Oh, Lord, Stella, is that you?" he groaned. "I am a sick man. I can't talk to anybody. Let me alone; that's a good girl."

She entered, and critically looked him over before saying:

"In a bad way, aren't you? Really I never saw you much worse."

"You are a common scold," he whined, sprawling upon a divan. "Such a pity the ducking stool has gone out of fashion. I understand why men's wives drive them to drink."

"It is not to be a scolding this time, Ashley," she icily announced. Pity and affection had forsaken her. She had come, not to persuade him, but to issue a decree. His sensations were acutely uncomfortable. With a feeble smile he drawled:

"The grand manner, eh, Stella? Quite stogy to-day. Off with his head! Sorry I didn't stay away longer. The same old sisterly welcome. Only more so."

"I have been waiting to tell you our program for the summer," said she, with no more preamble. "We shall go to a small farm in New Hampshire, you and I and one servant. If the place is as attractive as the description I expect to buy it for a poor family that I found here in New York. But we may use it ourselves for a while and put them somewhere else in the neighborhood."

"The deuce we will!" sputtered Ashley, scrambling to his feet. "You were always queer, Stella, but I never heard you rave. Why this delusion? What's the matter with our own country place?"

"I shall keep it closed this year. I am tired of having it filled with your sort of people whom my friends don't care to meet. The trouble is that I can't divorce you, Ashley. And I am going to try an experiment, a last resort, not because I have any great fondness for you, but because you were named after your father. He might have made a man of you, and I am sure he wanted me to try."

"Oh, come now, Stella; what's it all about?" he asked uncertainly. There was no mistaking the portents. Stella meant business this time. Something had gone wrong in his absence, for he thought he had patched up a truce.

"Don't you know why?" she demanded. "Can't you guess?" Unconsciously he raised a hand to the bruise on his jaw. She took note of

the telltale gesture and read it as a confession to confirm what she had already surmised. This injury was a mark of his quarrel with Barrington, and it was something to be ashamed of.

"All I can guess is that you have some idiotic notion of dragging me off to the backwoods," he sulkily grumbled. "Is it another scheme of reformation? Won't this poor family of yours give you enough to do? For Heaven's sake, experiment on them and leave me alone!"

"They will give me something to do, and a chance to get away from you now and then," curtly declared Stella. "I have thought it out very carefully. This means that you are to be sentenced to hard labor, and I shall be a sort of probation officer. You will loathe it, of course, which is an excellent argument in its favor. I intend to take you away from everything that is indispensable to your happiness—your clubs and your flashy, counterfeit friends and your little suppers and your chorus ladies and the rest of it. You are to be the man of all work on this farm in New Hampshire. There are trees to be cut for firewood, and twelve tons of hay to harvest, and what do they call it?—the chores to do. I love that homely old word. Ashley Corbin doing chores!"

"I fail to get you," he shouted at her, furious at his own helplessness, but attempting to bluster it out. "What if I decline to be dragged off into exile for the good of my soul? What then?"

"Then I shall cut off your income from the estate," his sister deliberately informed him, at which he displayed signs of panic.

"And leave me stranded with a miserable two thousand a year?" he wailed.

"That is more than the company paid a man like Mr. Barrington, who was fit to command any ship in the line,

and he had spent sixteen years in learning how."

Ashley glared suspiciously, and his smile was extremely unpleasant as he said:

"So that is the game, is it? Barrington came sniveling to you about his troubles while I was away, and you fixed up this scheme between you? And you listened to a convicted liar? All right, Stella, old girl. This is the big scene. I am cast for the heavy villain. Play it out."

"I shouldn't be insulting if I were you, Ashley. You can't afford it. Money, or the loss of it, is the only argument that will make the slightest impression on you. I mean every word I say. Your future income depends entirely on how you behave this summer. It is your last chance. You are not a thoughtless boy just out of college with a crop of wild oats to sow, but a man old enough to share my responsibilities and help me carry them. What do they call you? A man about town! That is the most pitiful part of it."

"Truly a sad picture. Now weep and wring your hands," he exclaimed, trying to jeer, but in a fainter voice. "I hope with all my heart that this Barrington blighter marries you. I couldn't wish him any worse luck. What do you say to my trying to square him with Hersey and getting him another job with the company? Will that do me any good with you?"

"You are simply condemning yourself, and confessing your guilt," hotly replied Stella.

"It is a cursedly humiliating position to put a man in," he muttered, ready to surrender, "but what else can I do?"

CHAPTER VI.

Expecting a letter from her son, Mrs. Susan Barrington was waiting in the Eppingham post office for the noon mail.

The years had dealt graciously with her slim, reliant figure, and on her cheek lingered an afterglow of the radiant flush of girlhood. Her hair had whitened rapidly of late, but no woman with such a pair of snapping black eyes could be said to be growing old. Those eyes were wonderfully proud and fond when she spoke of the absent seafarer. Sorrows she had known, and hard work, and many sacrifices, but she had found life more sweet than bitter, and happiness the possession of those who knew how to seek it.

Eppingham was not too small to have its distinctions of social caste. Mrs. Barrington had been one of the Levering girls, whose father might have left them in easier circumstances if he had not been so upright a judge of the supreme court of the State and so scrupulous in his dealings when away from the bench. He came of a solid, honorable line of men who had been lawyers in Eppingham, from father to son, since the Revolution. Susan had married a student in her father's office, a charming young fellow who failed of success at the bar and turned to farming and storekeeping with indifferent results, discouragement helping to cut his life short.

The postmaster's wife was a near-sighted, sharp-featured woman who had worked in a mill, and she resented the fact that Mrs. Barrington had never called on her. No slight was intended. The one had been born in the square, white Levering house facing the town common; the other in the humble settlement of Fish Hill, down near the brick-yard wharf. It was not Susan Barrington's habit to display her emotions for others to read, but as she lingered for the mail her movements were restless and she chatted absently with those who entered. The postmaster's wife watched her with interest and peered through the delivery window to say, in a penetrating voice:

"Waitin' to hear from your son Edward? The whole village was excited when they heard he was shipwrecked, and everybody is thankful he escaped out of it alive."

"It is very kind of them, Mrs. Mitchell. Yes, I am hoping for another letter."

"It must be lonesome for you with him away all the time, though, of course you've been visiting with him in New York City now and again. Is he still workin' for the same steamship company, may I ask?"

Susan Barrington bridled at this, but recovered her composure and replied:

"That is to be taken for granted. Edward is one of their most valued chief officers."

"There was some talk in the newspapers about his misunderstandin' the captain's orders," shrilly persisted Mrs. Mitchell. "I trust he wasn't blamed for the dreadful accident. Him being an Eppingham boy born and raised, we feel entitled to get the true facts from you."

"There will be nothing whatever to hide," spiritedly quoth the mother, her black eyes dangerous. "If Edward were in the habit of using postal cards in writing to me, you wouldn't have to ask me any questions at all."

"Meaning to say I make a practice of readin' what's on the backs of 'em?" indignantly rejoined the postmaster's wife. "I consider that a real unladylike remark from one that sets herself above other folks, Mrs. Barrington, and I shan't soon forget it."

"It was unkind of me, Mrs. Mitchell, and I apologize, but you so plainly showed that you would rather hear bad news than good about my son."

The postmaster entered with a mail bag on his shoulder and dumped it on the sorting table. His wife began to distribute a packet of letters with a deliberation purposely annoying. Mrs. Barrington stood at the window, bravely curbing her impatience and dissembling

her anxiety. She had not slept well since Edward's last letter had warned her, in carefully guarded phrases, that the official investigation might not turn out as satisfactorily as he should like to have it.

At length, when the offended Mrs. Mitchell had twice mislaid her glasses and puzzled over several badly written addresses, she shoved a letter through the window and pleasantly exclaimed:

"It's from New York, and he wrote it, several sheets, by the thickness, so I guess he had a lot of explaining to do."

Without reply, Susan Barrington hastened from the post office. Pausing in the street, she began to read, and the postmaster's wife stole around the partition to squint at her from the doorway. The letter began:

DEAR MOTHER: I don't know how to break it gently, and the worst thing about it is that you have to suffer, too. The Tropical Navigation Company has dismissed me, and the verdict will become public property, of course. You know what that means to my professional standing. It makes it pretty hard to figure out the future. I have decided to go home with Captain Moses Carpenter in the *Henrietta*, being lucky enough to run across the old gentleman when I was feeling particularly blue. He is the salt of the earth. For the present I shall help him as mate. I am tired of big steamers and working for corporations, and it is better for me to get away from it all for a while.

No, I am not discouraged. I was, at first, but the idea of beginning all over again has begun to interest me. And I realized that the one thing to break your heart would be for me to admit discouragement. You used to worry for fear there was a streak of poor father in me. Losing faith in himself was what made him curl up and quit. But I have had to fight for a good many years, and they can't put me under quite yet. We can have a good visit together in port, and I will tell you all about the investigation. I feel too sore to write about it now. The *Henrietta* sails to-morrow, and I intend to shake her along—

Susan Barrington could read no more, for the tears blinded her vision. Tightly clasping the letter, she left the main street and wandered into a green

lane which led to the placid reaches of the river, above the mill dam. Instinctively she desired to be alone for a while.

The postmaster's wife returned from her espionage and waspishly announced to her husband:

"Something struck her all in a heap, and I'm not one mite sorry. She marched off as stiff and proud as ever, but her face turned pale and her hands was trembly. I guess something serious has happened to Ed Barrington this time. Maybe they put him in jail."

The long-suffering postmaster held the canceling stamp suspended in mid-air while he protested:

"Seems as if your disposition was getting weather-warped, like the shingles on an old barn. What under the sun have you got against Ed Barrington, a boy that went out from here and made a success of himself instead of going to seed in the village?"

"His mother puts on airs, just because she's a Levering," snapped Mrs. Mitchell. "Everybody knows Ed has had to support her out of his wages for years."

"Well, if you go round talkin' too free and spiteful," concluded the postmaster, "there's enough folks in Eppingham that think highly enough of old Judge Levering's daughter to push me out of this government job and put a Democrat in. I'm a hold-over appointment, survivin' on sufferance and during good behavior."

"What kind of behavior do you call it, Henry Mitchell, to stand there and never say beans when your wife is accused to her face of getting her news off other folks' postals?"

"All I've got to say, Clara, is that you'd better leave Susan Barrington be. She's a high stepper, and that boy is the apple of her eye."

It was well into the afternoon before the mother of Edward came back through the green lane and returned

to the house in which she lived. She had walked until weariness halted her on a hillside from which a pleasant landscape of field and wood and river lay outspread toward the sea. Twice daily the tide came rolling in and filled the river to the brim, so that it became a narrow, blue lake. Then the tide receded, leaving wide patches of salt mud and gray marsh, with the channel winding like a silver ribbon. The sight and smell of it made Susan's heart ache with remembrance. From this same hill she had watched the *Henrietta* drop down with the ebb of the tide and carry her boy away for many a voyage, and yearningly had she gazed until the topsails gleamed no more across the lowlands nearer the coast.

When Edward had quitted the schooner trade and gone into steamers sailing out of New York, she was left alone so much of the time that, inasmuch as she was deprived of the incentive of making a home for him, it had seemed inexpedient and rather dismal to maintain a house of which she was the solitary occupant. For the sake of economy and companionship, she had entered into a domestic arrangement which, to a stranger in Eppingham, might have seemed flavored with oddity. It was thoroughly characteristic of her independent spirit, however, and had long ceased to cause comment among her friends.

Mrs. Harriet Page, also a widow, had been an intimate of hers in girlhood. She was a plump, placid woman who laughed easily and made an infinitesimal income accomplish miracles of thrifty comfort. Fortunately she owned her house, and Susan Barrington had cordially accepted the invitation to share it with her. The terms of this partnership included the use of the dining room and kitchen, in which each conducted a separate establishment. That is to say, there were two stoves, two sinks, two pantries, and so on; and when the table

was set for meals, Mrs. Barrington graced one side of it with her own china and silver before her, while Mrs. Page adorned the other side, which was less elegantly furnished, perhaps, because she had not been a Levering.

Each ate what she had cooked in and on her own brightly polished stove, with an occasional exchange of delicacies by way of courtesy. And at the separate sinks they deftly washed the respective dishes and put them away on the Barrington and the Page shelves. It was only when company was to be entertained that they joined forces and prepared a supper of such surpassing merit and variety that the fame thereof aroused the jealousy of other housewives.

On this particular afternoon in May, Mrs. Harriet Page had planned to attend a meeting of the Ladies' Aid Society, of which she was vice president. The committees were to be appointed for the cake-and-fancywork sale in aid of the church debt which was a chronic affliction. She waited at home, however, because Susan Barrington had gone to the post office—only a few minutes' walk—leaving her bread in the oven and saying she would be back for dinner. Seated at a front window, Mrs. Page anxiously reflected:

"Three hours since she walked out of here and mysteriously disappeared. She is a strong, well woman and not apt to be taken sick of a sudden. She wouldn't have stayed for dinner anywhere, for people in Eppingham don't drop in unceremoniously unless they are invited beforehand."

When Mrs. Barrington turned into the street, she was not stepping along as briskly as usual. Her eyes were downcast, and she failed to notice a neighbor in passing. But at sight of Harriet Page she held her head erect and smilingly waved her hand, determined that her private grief should not cloud their companionship.

"It is such a wonderful spring day that I played truant," she explained, with animation. "The mail brought me some good news, Harriet. Edward is coming home for a visit."

"Now isn't that beautiful, Susan?" was the laughing reply, but there was solicitude in the voice as she added: "Please sit down and let me make you a cup of tea."

"Thank you, Harriet, but you don't have to wait on me," said Susan, as she put on a white apron and went to find her own tea caddy and kettle. "Did you stay at home this afternoon on my account? It was terribly thoughtless of me."

"I was worried, but it makes no difference about my missing the meeting. I could hurry off right now and be in time for my usual spat with Mrs. Henry Mitchell, but I prefer to sit with you and hem a tablecloth, for I can't bear to have my hands idle."

"I am glad you really want to stay home to-day," wistfully murmured Susan Barrington. "I—I should like to talk things over with you."

"I'm always delighted to hear about Edward. I dote on him, as you very well know."

"He may spend some time with me, Harriet. And, while this way of living has been perfectly satisfactory to you and me, and nobody could be sweeter and more patient than you, it doesn't seem as though Edward would quite fit into it——"

"He is welcome to visit as long as he likes," Harriet vigorously affirmed. "Naturally we seem queer and old-maidish to a man, and it always did amuse Edward, but there is plenty of room for him."

"It isn't that, Harriet. I want him to have a home that is all his own. That is the mother feeling, like a bird and her nest, and I have never outgrown it. Would it make a serious difference to you financially?"

"To lose the rent for your part of the house, Susan? Not a bit, for there is more business in Eppingham lately, and rooms conveniently located are in demand."

"Then I think I shall look at the Slocum place right away. It can be hired for a song."

"But it is more than a mile down the river," protested Harriet, "and the house is dreadfully out of repair. What put that into your head?"

"If the owner will shingle it, I can do the inside painting myself," replied Mrs. Barrington, with gentle stubbornness. "I have furniture enough. It is a dear old place, and I love the lilac bushes and the crooked apple trees, and—and it is right on the river, Harriet, where you can see the schooners come and go."

"But will Edward like to be so far from town and all his old friends?" was the puzzled query. "It doesn't sound a bit sociable for him."

"He may not care to spend his time in the village," said Susan, whose resolution was beginning to waver. It was not easy to keep her troubles to herself, and she craved the sympathy of a loyal comrade. Harriet perceived that she had been greatly shaken, and venturesomely asked:

"Are you going to feel like telling me the real reason for this? You have been as nervous as a witch for several days, and I knew it was about Edward, but I didn't dare say much. Is it good news and nothing else, Susan?"

"He has been cruelly, wickedly treated," tremulously exclaimed the mother, the words coming with a rush under the stress of pent-up emotion. "And the village will think he is disgraced. You know what Eppingham gossip is. I had a bitter foretaste of it to-day from that Mitchell woman in the post office. It will be easier for Edward if we are down at the Slocum place.

He will enjoy helping me fix it up, and he can see people or not, as he pleases."

"He is not with that line of steamers any more?" timidly said Harriet. "I am guessing at it, for he was never able to make you a real visit before."

"He is coming home with Captain Moses Carpenter, as mate of the *Henrietta*," confessed Mrs. Barrington. "It may be only temporary, and he writes as if it were. Don't breathe it to another soul, please. I simply can't bear to think of being stopped in the street a dozen times a day and asked to explain it. I am not ashamed. It isn't that, but there is a limit to my endurance. Coming back home is the bravest thing that Edward ever did, and I never was so proud of him."

"Now it doesn't seem queer at all for you to want the old Slocum place," softly observed Harriet Page. "Why, you can stand on the lawn and see the *Henrietta* pass, and maybe call out a welcome to him. Supposing I borrow a horse and buggy next door and we'll drive down this afternoon to look it over and find out what's to be done. I shall be delighted to help you get it all ready before he arrives in port."

"I don't have to explain Edward to you, do I?" affectionately declared Susan. "What a blessed comfort you are!"

"It is a fortunate thing I didn't go to the Ladies' Aid this afternoon," was the vehement reply. "If Mrs. Henry Mitchell had so much as hinted one word against him, I should have disrupted the meeting, mild-tempered as I am."

Soberly the borrowed horse jogged into the river road an hour later. The part of the town through which they passed had a pleasant, friendly aspect. It was difficult to believe that such a community could be unkind to one of its own who had met with misfortune in the hard and hazardous game of life. Here, if anywhere, he should expect

to find an atmosphere of sympathy, respectful and unobtrusive, and a readiness to accept him at his word. There was no air of pinching circumstances, akin to poverty, which cramps the human impulses of many small New England towns, nor was there any reason manifest for that sordid suspicion of one's neighbor and his motives such as blights the rural hamlet.

The brick academy, with its spacious grounds, still enjoyed a repute throughout the State after a hundred years of sterling service. The steepled meeting-house had a peculiar advantage because there was no other church society in Eppingham. Its religious life had few visible symptoms of dry rot among the older generation, although the young people were drifting away from the churchgoing habit, and no intelligent effort was made to hold them. The dwellings were comfortable and trimly kept, the stores appeared to have a prosperous trade. The coastwise shipping had almost vanished, but this was the fate of other towns on tidal rivers. Eppingham was extremely well satisfied with itself.

It was singular, therefore, that in this hour of sore trial Susan Barrington should have desired to make her abiding place elsewhere. It was like seeking shelter from pursuit, not for herself, but in her son's behalf, to spare him the hurts which wagging tongues, sharp with malice, were certain to inflict. Her suffering was vicarious because she was a mother. Harriet Page, so harmlessly loquacious and easily amused, became silent until the end of the pilgrimage along the river road. A tragedy whose significance she tried to comprehend had shattered the tranquil partnership and uprooted the habits of these two middle-aged women.

"If ever I ought to be cheerful and entertaining, it is right now," said Harriet to herself, "and here I am, low-spirited and lonesome already. But as

long as this scheme will make Susan and Edward happier, I mustn't object or throw cold water on it."

"This will look like home before long," exclaimed Mrs. Barrington, as the horse halted in the dooryard of the Slocum place. Already she was more like her reliant self.

"We'll start in to-morrow morning, both of us, with pail and scrubbing brush," vigorously asserted Harriet, "and this ramshackle house will shine like a new pin from cellar to attic. Who owns it now? Slocum himself? Then I shall get after him to-night and make him send a carpenter and a load of shingles. We can set up your stove and get our own meals and stay right with it."

"I have a four-poster for Edward's room," eagerly replied Susan, "and there is a landing where he can keep a skiff; and if the outside of the house is weather-beaten he won't mind that, for it will remind him of the place where we lived when he first went to sea. And he loves the smell of the salt marsh."

"He will rig one of those sailors' canvas hammocks between the apple trees, Susan, and swing there and smoke his pipe, and tease you just to see your eyes snap. Yes, you are wise. No man in the world appreciates a home and somebody to love him so much as a sailor."

There were so many details to plan that they trudged up and downstairs and took measurements and talked themselves breathless until the sinking sun turned the silver river to molten gold. Then they laid out a croquet ground and inspected the woodshed and made the dooryard tidy with a wooden rake. At this labor of love they quite forgot to be sorrowful, and Susan Barrington was almost blithe as they drove toward the village. She and Harriet felt so closely drawn together that each formally invited the other to supper.

A week later, Mrs. Barrington was

able to move the first wagonload of furniture. Another letter from Edward informed her that after a fine run the *Henrietta* was weather-bound with a large fleet of coastwise vessels in Vineyard Sound, all waiting for a wind to carry them around the cape. He was in good spirits, making himself useful to Captain Carpenter, and "had his two feet under him again," as he expressed it. They were scraping and painting like madmen, and the schooner looked like new. The skipper's wise old head was full of schemes which he was too old to undertake. For one thing, he believed that the schooner traffic out of Eppingham might be built up again with intelligence and a little capital. Water transportation was much cheaper than rail for bulk cargoes and general merchandise. Build a storage warehouse for the farmers, and they could hold their staple crops—pressed hay, apples, potatoes, and so on—for a rising market and ship them in Eppingham vessels.

Susan Barrington wept for joy. This was not the plaint of a beaten man, but the brave note of enthusiasm which had enabled him to batter a way through other obstacles. With ardor renewed, she set her house to rights and implored a neighbor to plow a garden in haste in order that Edward might have it to play with. Harriet was persuaded to spend the night with her in the new home by way of celebration. In the hall, the tall clock ticked its solemn greeting to those who should enter. The black cat purred on a braided rag rug in the sitting room. There was a lingering chill in the evening air, for the wind was out of the east, and Susan piled applewood logs upon the stately andirons in the brick fireplace and lighted a blaze which consecrated this hearthstone anew. Many lives had been lived beneath the roof timbers of this old house, nor had they left it wholly deserted when they vanished one by one. Their experiences and emotions

had mellowed it as the innumerable vibrations of music enrich a sounding board. Susan Barrington was sensitive to such impressions as these. There were ancient dwellings in Eppingham which, without having to be told the stories, she felt to have been shadowed by sadness and disaster. But this little gray farmhouse had aforetime known the peace of contentment and the warmth of affection. She was conscious of it, and the kindly influence both cheered and comforted her. In such a haven Edward should find rest after great misfortune undeserved.

Susan walked to the village with Harriet next morning, the latter volubly explaining:

"I'd dearly love to spend another day, but the Wednesday Afternoon Club meets at my house, and, as you know, those women come more for what they expect to get to eat than to hear the literary papers read. And there will be a large outpouring because they're crazy to find out why we gave up living together and what has become of Edward. Trust Mrs. Henry Mitchell to set the ball rolling, though she isn't socially eligible to join the club."

"This is a merciful deliverance for me," devoutly murmured Susan.

She wished to call on Mrs. Lucy Carpenter, who might have had some later word from her husband, Captain Moses, and Harriet left her at the door. The skipper's wife cheerfully bobbed her ruffled cap from a window which overlooked the river. Few sights were more familiar to the town than the bent, withered figure forever sitting in the cushioned chair at the window and tirelessly plying her knitting needles. She was an invalid by reason of many infirmities, but her vivacious interest in people and things was undimmed, and Captain Moses Carpenter still thought her adorable after fifty years of marriage. The rosy young maid who took care of her

opened the door to say to Mrs. Barrington:

"Walk right in. She's been wanting to send word for you to come and see her."

"There is no bad news?" gasped Susan, her cheek blanched.

"No, ma'am. Any bad news about the captain would kill her quicker'n a wink."

The high, sweet voice of Mrs. Carpenter was heard to say: "Don't waste time on that empty-headed child, Susan Barrington. I insist on seeing you this very minute."

Obediently the visitor flew into the room to kiss the cheek of the tyrannical little woman who ruled a Moses proverbially meek in her presence. Cocking a wonderfully bright eye, she graciously exclaimed:

"You are as good looking a woman as there is in this town, and as well preserved. If I didn't know better, I'd say you used paint on your face. I haven't seen you so young in years."

"A good reason," was the laughing reply. "The man I love is homeward bound. I am hoping for tidings."

"You are not fretting because your precious boy is in the *Henrietta*, are you, Susan? Bless your heart, if Moses was born to be drowned in that old schooner I should have lost him long ago. He honestly believes she is safer than dry land. He wrote me a letter from Vineyard Haven. That is why I was anxious to see you."

"Was it about Edward?" excitedly demanded Susan, clasping her shapely hands.

"More or less; and the thicker Moses lays it on the better you'll like it," chirruped Mrs. Carpenter. "Read it yourself, or you'll forget your manners and snatch it away from me."

The skipper's crabbed fist had penned this absorbing information and comment:

... Ed has low-spirited spells, and don't tackle his vittles as hearty as I should like, but that may be the cook's fault. He has suddenly developed into a real earnest cook, but the Lord intended him for some other calling, and Ed has him scared half to death. He spends his nights scrubbing his pots and pans, and you could eat off the galley floor. My eyes ain't what they was, and Ed gets after the crew in regular man-of-war's fashion.

Half the battle was to get him interested, Lucy. I have known good men to blow their brains out or drink themselves to death when the world slammed them down as hard as it did him. I figured it that after he had overhauled the schooner from keel to truck and polished off the crew there would be too much idle time on his hands. Let him get to thinking of himself, and he'd be apt to have a relapse. So I set and studied on it, and the idea came to me that he wasn't really going home to begin all over again. He and I had been wrong about that. Rightfully looked at, it could be made a promotion. For sixteen years he had been fitting himself to take command of men and bend them to his will. But he thought all this experience was good for nothing except at sea.

I began at him easy, Lucy, with my notions about the river trade of Eppingham, and discovered that he had the same kind of dreams in the back of his head. I talked to him about our town. It reminded me of some ships, says I, meaning nothing disrespectful to the *Henrietta*, that are painted fair and white, but there's rot in the timbers and mold under the hatches. The best men in our village are the women, Ed, says I, and he banged the cabin table and agreed with me. I told him some of the things that were crooked and cowardly, and there seemed no way of stopping them, and he got madder and madder. Just then the cook poked his head in, and he thought Ed was cussing and discussing him, and he fetched a deep groan and fell over the water cask and 'most broke his neck getting away.

Well, I am trying to doctor Ed's soul the best way I know how, and he as good as promised me last night to fight it out right in Eppingham, win or lose, sink or swim. And he looked me square in the eye, with that jaw of his clamped hard. He don't say much about his mother, but he worships the ground she walks on, and he has made up his mind to pitch in for her sake. We ate up that last crock of homemade apple butter yesterday, and—

CHAPTER VII.

Not long after this, Harriet Page, unreconciled to Susan's loneliness, spent another night with her. This time the east wind blew much harder and brought a driving rain. Susan Barrington heard it beat against the windows and patter on the roof, pleasantly reflecting, before she went to sleep again, that spring rains meant greener grass and earlier flowers. An hour later, the wind veered into the north and came booming across the lowlands with the strength of an autumn gale. It whipped the fresh young leaves from the apple trees and whirled a shower of pink petals against the house. The hewn rafters creaked, and the wind swept past the eaves with a rushing, singing sound.

Susan awoke and listened, no longer drowsy. The tide was high, and where the dooryard descended in a long slope to meet the river, the waves were loudly washing among the stones of the shore. She raised a window and gazed out into the night which was starless, obscured, and reeking with the smell of the salt marshes and the sea. Nervously she groped for a match and lighted the candle. Presently Harriet, also holding a candlestick, entered the room, explaining, as she patted Susan's arm:

"I thought I heard the woodshed door slam, and I've been screwing up my courage for the last ten minutes to go downstairs and tend to it. Then I saw your light in the hall, and it seemed to me this was an excellent time for a little sociability. It is an awful wild night for this season of the year."

"I never was more glad to see you," gratefully replied Mrs. Barrington, as the two white-robed figures seated themselves upon the side of the bed. "A wind like this used to make me uneasy years ago, but I thought I was accustomed to it. But I can't help worrying. A sudden gale like this must be cruel out at sea."

"And it's natural for you to think of the *Henrietta*," said Mrs. Page, in untroubled accents. "As like as not, this is what the weather reports call a local disturbance, a sort of extra-sized squall that won't be heard of down the coast."

"But Edward should be well up the coast, Harriet. The breeze has been westerly for several days, until this shift to-night. And he said in his letter that he proposed to 'shake her along.'"

"Susan Barrington, you know as well as I do that the *Henrietta* and Captain Moses Carpenter have been in every kind of weather for forty years. Why, they'd laugh at this as a mere capful of wind."

"But the schooner is so small and so old," persisted the mother. "Edward has been in big, stanch steamers."

"And the biggest of the lot struck a rock and went plump to the bottom like a leaky kettle, with Edward aboard," Harriet sensibly suggested. "I should say he is safer in a little old schooner. It's almost certain that Captain Carpenter saw this blow coming and ran into the nearest harbor to anchor."

"I hope so," sighed Susan. "If he did, Edward will telegraph me where he is and when to expect him."

The wind died with the dawn, and the sunrise was radiantly fair. Earth and sky were washed clean. The belated New England spring, for delicate loveliness unsurpassed, was at its consummation. For a few days it would hover on the borderland of summer. Now it was thrilled, palpitant, eager with the spirit of life after death, of youth resurgent. Its message entered into the hearts of these two women, and they met the day with shining faces. It was impossible to believe that such a world as this was aught but good.

"It was foolish of me to be so anxious in the night," cried Susan, as they set the table for breakfast on the porch. "God is sending my boy home for some

purpose of His own. Perhaps our town needs him, and there is a nobler career for him than if he were master of as fine a ship as the *Columbian*."

"I have tried the power of prayer on Eppingham," smiled Harriet, "and the results weren't encouraging. It isn't what I'd call a downright wicked place, just smug and ignorant and selfish and mean. Otherwise I consider it a real agreeable village. If a man like Edward Barrington was to put his back into it, he might do something, provided they didn't run him out of town for disturbing the peace."

"He will never be contented to stay as mate in the schooner," firmly declared Susan. Presently her blithe spirits ebbed a trifle, and Harriet suggested:

"If you can't get the noise of that wind out of your mind, why don't you drop in to see Lucy Carpenter again? She is always awake bright and early, and we'll whisk through these dishes and go right up to the village."

Susan consented. It was childishly unreasonable, no doubt, and Captain Carpenter's wife said so in plain and spirited language when she greeted that indomitable invalid. Didn't Susan remember the voyage, for pity's sakes, when Moses was a month beating back to Boston, blown clear off to Bermuda he was, and they ate every scrap of food on board and boiled their sea boots to chop up for hash. Somebody asked him how he liked that kind of fare and he said it tasted a leetle mite strong of leather. She certainly thought as much of her Moses, even if he was most worn out and rheumatic, as Susan Barrington did of her Edward, and if there was any worrying to be done, it was disrespectful to begin before she did.

"Listen to me, Susan!" cried the aged woman, her face illumined, her voice wonderful for feeling. "There's strong ties between a good mother and her boy, but it's something stronger that binds

together the souls of man and wife that have belonged to each other for fifty years. Folks think Moses and me are parted when he goes to sea. It's not so at all. And if anything happens to him I shall know it. Call it what you like, and most people would laugh at me for saying so, but there's ways and means of communication that pertain to the spirit."

"And you are sure the schooner is afloat and our men are alive?" was the subdued question, for Susan was awed.

"I have no doubt that Moses Carpenter is alive. When he goes, then God will slip his moorings, too. It's been talked over between us many times, and we both believe it. We don't want to go separate and lonesome and have to wait for the other one."

"If he is far away at sea, will you hear him call?"

"As plain as I hear you, Susan. And that's why you mustn't borrow trouble over a little wind or a few days' delay. As long as there's no message comes to me from my husband, there's no cause to fret about your son."

This was a mystical kind of consolation, and yet it conveyed a vivid sense of reality. Returning home without delay, she was happily trimming the edges of a flower bed when the telephone tinkled, and she ran into the hall, thinking her number had been rung. Other voices, however, were already in conversation, and she was about to hang up the receiver when this sentence caught and held her attention:

"I'm Jennie, the hired girl, and you're her own kin and nephew, so it's my duty to notify you as quick as I can."

"I will come as soon as I can throw a harness on a horse," was the masculine reply. "Who is there with you?"

"The doctor; but he couldn't do anything; and some of the neighbors, and the minister's on the way, though I don't know what for. Will you stay here and take charge of things?"

"Certainly. Dear, dear, it's sudden, and yet we ought to have felt prepared for it. She looked like a breath would blow her away and she'd lived out her threescore and ten. How long was she sick, Jennie?"

"She wasn't sick at all. I left her sitting in her chair by the window soon after breakfast. Mrs. Susan Barrington had been in to see her and wasn't gone more'n an hour. When I came back, I thought she was asleep with her knitting in her lap, the way she often dozed off. I put my hand on her shoulder and spoke to her. She just sat there with her head resting against the back of the chair and her eyes shut and looking as if she was dreaming of something happy. I shook her as gentle as I could and spoke louder, but she never moved. And I felt scared and put my hand on her lips and she wasn't breathing at all."

"A merciful death, Jennie. And she hadn't complained of feeling poorly?"

"No, she talked kind of solemn when Mrs. Barrington was here this morning, but I didn't pay much attention. She told me one time that she'd go at the turn of the tide, so I looked out at the river and it was beginning to ebb. Curious!"

"She was a sailor's wife. Do you know whether we can get word to Captain Carpenter? Where is the *Henrietta*? If he's loading anywhere he could leave his vessel and come home by rail to the funeral."

"He's due from New York with coal for Eppingham. He may be in the river by now, for the very last word she said to me before I went into the other room was that she was counting on seeing him to-day. And she was positive about it."

"Well, I'll be along as soon as I can, Jennie. This will be a terrible shock to the old man. I suppose I'll have to break it to him."

Dazed and incredulous, the listener

turned away. It could be nothing more than a coincidence, she protested to herself. She was too sensible a woman to take stock in this fantastic delusion, forgetting that she had found comfort in it only an hour before. Lucy Carpenter's death was in the natural order of things. The wonder was that she had lived so long. Her heart had merely ceased to beat, like a piece of worn machinery. She had been notably eccentric for years, and this belief in an invisible communion was no more than a superstition.

Even if it were true, why should it follow that harm had befallen the schooner? Captain Moses Carpenter was an old man, and ailing. Conceivably he might have died at sea and Edward was bringing the *Henrietta* home. Thus the mother argued until weary, but loud in her ears was the cry of that unseasonable gale.

Another week of bright days and pleasant breezes, but no white schooner came creeping up Eppingham River on the flood of the tide. Nor was any news received from the coastwise ports in which she might have tarried. Captain Carpenter was not famed for speedy voyages, and it was his prudent habit to reef down sooner than risk losing old and tender canvas. Likewise the *Henrietta* opened like a basket when driving against a strong head sea, and it was better to heave her to than wear out the crew at the back-breaking pump. In such favorable weather as this, however, the run from Vineyard Haven should be made in a few days.

The tardiness of Captain Carpenter caused little comment in the village. In recent years he had carried his cargoes oftener to Portland or Portsmouth, and, besides, there was not much interest in his humble affairs. Shipping had ceased to be a vital factor in the business of the community which had turned its back to the river and felt wholly dependent on the railroad. The

wharves were dilapidated and unsightly, while the vacant land near by which might have been beautified as a park and playground was used as a dumping place for rubbish. The *Henrietta* was an anachronism in modern Eppingham, a survival of another era. For the most part, she came and went unnoticed unless it was by the swarm of small boys who went in swimming from the wharves and dreamed the dreams of romantic adventure which the sight of a ship will always kindle.

Susan Barrington strove to disavow it to herself, but fear had come as a dweller in the house which she had made ready for her son. She was too much alone, for Harriet Page had been detained by the unexpected visit of cousins from the West. In the daytime she busied herself with a thousand and one things, indoors and out, but her mind was apart from them, and haste impelled every task so that she might again stand and look down the river for the first glimpse of a sail against the somber green of the pines on the point. She dreaded the nights. The darkness was no longer tranquil and friendly, but peopled with disturbing fancies which refused to be dismissed.

Harriet telephoned, urging her to come and spend the afternoon and stay for tea, but she could not be persuaded. Her mood was that of a recluse, and she was loath to be so long absent from the river and the expected sight of a schooner homeward bound. Already there was discernible in her eyes the first shadow of that sad, courageous patience with which women endure the pangs of hope deferred. That she had toiled with a single-minded purpose to have all things prepared made the house seem poignantly empty.

CHAPTER VIII.

The hamlet of East Eppingham was two miles nearer the sea than the larger town, but it lay a little way back from

the river, more among the rolling hills than in the wide valley. Its people were farmers who lived without haste or fret and had no reason to fear the poor-house, although their habits of tillage were old-fashioned, and they regarded scientific agriculture as a fad of rich men and theorists. When Stella Corbin and her reluctant brother arrived as summer visitors, East Eppingham was mildly interested, but not in the least excited. They brought only one servant, had no automobile, and occupied the Hamlin Eaton cottage which everybody knew could be rented for two hundred dollars a year, all furnished.

Stella's first impressions were enthusiastically favorable. This was the quaint, unspoiled country, unmistakably the real thing, and she was glad to forget the routine of a social existence which had become more and more complex and exacting. In a holiday mood, she concluded that she needed East Eppingham almost as much as the afflicted Carney family, and straightway asked Mr. Hamlin Eaton to find her a second cottage and farm. He was a shrewd, well-to-do lumberman who liked this energetic young woman from New York. It was in his blood to get the better of a bargain, but he surrendered to Stella, and suggested, after listening to her eager explanation:

"It's flattering to our section to have you want more of it within twenty-four hours after you landed, but what's the sense of buying more'n you really need? My oldest son has a camp on the river, half a mile from here, which he don't expect to use this year. It's comfortable enough. Why not put this woman and her children in it till you get ready to go back to the city? Then you can give 'em your place."

"Splendid!" cried Stella. "Ideal for the babies, right on salt water. And Mrs. Carney ought to rest before she undertakes the hens and the pig and all

that. What's worse, I am too selfish to give up our cottage."

Ashley Corbin received this news with gloomy resignation. He had been violently wrenched from his own world and dropped into this God-forsaken wilderness where there was nothing to look at but trees and nowhere to go. It was worse than he had anticipated. He wilted in his tracks. As a means of punishment this was inhuman, as a measure of reform he considered it asinine. Stella lost no time in convincing him that his sentence did indeed include hard labor. Bright and early on the first morning she called upstairs that loafing in bed meant no breakfast. He sleepily defied her, thought better of it, and made his appearance in a shocking bad humor.

"This won't do, Ashley," she brightly informed him, as she poured the coffee from a tin pot. "I shall mark you for misconduct."

"Oh, don't rub it in," he growled. "It's positively ghastly."

"You must not be allowed to think for yourself," she heartlessly replied. "That is mostly the matter with you. This morning Mr. Eaton is going to bring over the driving horse which he says I can hire by the week, and I shall go to Eppingham to do some errands. I told him you would take care of the horse. It is to be kept in our barn. Martha wants the woodbox filled and the trunks carried into the attic. Then you are to sweep out the barn and cut the bushes at the side of the house. The path in front needs raking, and——"

"Anything else, Stella, like moving the barn a few hundred feet or digging a well before noon?"

"Oh, a hundred things, and you must hurry through them so that you will be free to help get the Carneys settled at the camp. I expect them next week."

"Do I play nurse to those brats? You're joking."

"They have much nicer manners than

you, Ashley. The Carneys will be part of your education. The two little boys can help you in the garden."

Mr. Corbin was garbed in white flannel, doeskin shoes, and lavender silk socks. He shuddered and demanded more coffee.

"I bought some blue overalls for you," said Stella, with ardor. "You will have an hour off for dinner, and no more naps. A healthy perspiration will be so beneficial!"

"Is it worth while? Is any stake big enough to make it worth while?" dolorously muttered Ashley.

"That is for me to say at the end of the summer," crisply replied Stella, and he detected an ominous threat. Struggling into the overalls, he cursed this badge of his servitude, while Stella ran for a camera and Martha snickered from a kitchen window. Men had committed murder with far less provocation. As his sister drove away, he was listlessly filling his arms with stove-wood.

Martha was a woman who had served many years in the Corbin household, and she adored Stella. A strong-armed, buxom creature, she needed no instructions to play the tyrant in her realm of pots and pans. When Ashley tramped into the kitchen and haughtily dropped his burden, she roundly declaimed:

"Don't you dare throw that wood about and litter up my floor! Pile it neat and sweep up after yourself. And next time remember to wipe your feet and not track over my clean oilcloth."

This was too much. He swore, not loudly, but with burning fervor, and wondered how many miles intervened between him and a drink. Martha observed that she would report his bad language to Miss Stella and he had better be careful. He retreated and sat himself upon a stump to smoke a cigarette. His sister was a remorseless, unprincipled woman who was seeking to do him out of a fortune. He had

been living under the same roof with a sleeping tigress, by Jove! And some people thought her charming! They didn't know her. His nerves couldn't stand this sort of thing, and the doctors had been tinkering with his heart for years.

The adventure with the militant Martha had been so painfully disturbing that he was unfit for further exertion. A brief stroll might restore his composure and enable him to contemplate, with more fortitude, the loathsome catalogue of tasks assigned. With a demeanor almost resolute, he moved toward the road in search of friendly solitude, but Martha waylaid him, her hands on her hips, and sternly exclaimed:

"Who gave you permission to quit work, I want to know? I've a good mind to lock you up till Miss Stella comes back."

"Subside, woman, or I will brain you with my sharp new ax," he hissed as he thrust her aside. "The worm has turned. You might tell my sister that you heard me mention suicide."

"You wouldn't dare. And you'd better not let her catch you running away."

"Forget it," he flung back over his shoulder, and hastened away as rapidly as dignity permitted. It was something to have escaped from Martha. He trudged into a pine grove, where the shade was grateful, and steered a random course until the gleam of blue water lured him in the direction of the river. Following a grass-grown path, he found himself at a small strip of sandy beach and near a cheaply constructed bungalow, which he took to be the camp mentioned by Hamlin Eaton. This reminded him of the impossible Carney family, and he scowled until a skiff was discovered at a wooden pier.

This was playing truant, and a boyish sense of freedom caused him to clamber into the boat and row out into

the channel, where the tide was running in. The breeze cooled him, and the exertion was not distressing. His sullen expression vanished, and he might have been heard to chuckle. He was fond of boating, and this salt river would help to make his exile endurable. Stella might be coaxed into buying a launch.

The skiff had drifted a mile, or half-way to Eppingham, before he was aware. It drew abreast of a low-roofed, weather-beaten house with lilacs beside the door and a lawn sloping to the shore. Ashley was about to turn and pull back to the camp when there was suddenly displayed before his eyes a domestic tragedy. A clothesline stretched between two apple trees was laden with snowy sheets and counterpanes, one of which a predacious cow had begun to munch. To the man in the boat it was a novel fact in natural history that the lowing kine were wont to browse on the family washing. Stella had threatened him with a cow, and Hamlin Eaton was to teach him to milk it.

But from the house, in agitated haste, sped a comely woman, gray-haired, but of a youthful figure. Indignantly she approached the spotted cow, which resented the interruption. Lowering its head and whisking its tail, it refused to be driven away, and proceeded to sample another sheet. The woman caught sight of the skiff on the river, and advanced to call out in a voice of singularly attractive quality:

"Will you be kind enough to come and chase it out of the yard? Some cows don't like women, and I presume this is one of them."

The gentleman in the boat might be a convicted coward, but at heart he was a bolder man than when he had set out on this small adventure. Freedom was a heady draft, and he had actually defied Martha. Here was a summons which even the most conventional sem-

blance of chivalry could not disregard. Gallantly he pulled for the shore, snatched an oar for a weapon, and charged up the slope. His intention was to be gentle but firm with this spotted cow which objected to being ordered about by a woman. He knew how it felt.

From a side doorway the mistress of the house urged caution. This was so complimentary that Ashley's mood flamed into heroism. Brandishing the oar, he walked straight toward the animal, which stood blandly regarding him, a corner of a sheet hanging from her mouth.

"Whoa, now!" he soothingly exclaimed. "Scat! On your way! Let the laundry alone. You are a scandal. I'm thoroughly ashamed of you."

The cow snorted, and declined to be cajoled, at which Ashley's knees wobbled a trifle, but it was too late to draw back. As a champion of dames he had committed himself. Moving closer, he whacked the creature across the nose with the oar instead of taking her in flank, which would have been the correct strategy. There was an aggrieved bellow, a commotion, and Mr. Corbin dodged barely in time to avoid a lunging horn. He was not quick on his feet, as a rule, but now he fairly whizzed behind an apple tree which the spotted cow, an instant later, butted in a head-on collision. She then sauntered off with a deceitful air of indifference, and Mr. Corbin trotted heavily in the direction of the river, still clutching the oar.

The animal wheeled like a deer and cut off his line of retreat, at which he attempted to leap a stone wall. He was a poor hurdler, however, and, instead of clearing the barrier, he tumbled over it, dislodging several loose stones. The spotted cow halted to gaze at him with the most obvious amusement, as though this had been pastime enough for one

morning, and then passed out through a gap in the wall.

Very hot and ruffled, Ashley tried to rise, but one leg was anchored by a small boulder. Susan Barrington ran to help him, and together they tipped the stone to one side. He struggled to his feet, tried not to groan, and sat down in the grass, holding his ankle in both hands.

"It isn't broken," said he, "and I think it was not very badly wrenched. More bruised and numbed."

All solicitude and tenderness, Mrs. Barrington bent over the kindly stranger and told him:

"I am alone, but if I can manage to get you as far as the house and make you comfortable while I telephone for the doctor——"

"Please don't go to the trouble," said he. "If you will hand me the oar I can hop along on one leg and sit down somewhere for a little while."

He was an example of fortitude. Using the oar as a staff, and steadied by her grasp on his arm, he reached the kitchen porch, and she dragged a wooden rocker from the sitting room and whisked out a stool and several cushions as a resting place for the disabled ankle, unlacing his shoes with nimble fingers and running to fetch hot water and witch-hazel. He admired her efficiency when he was not admiring his own behavior.

"It was all my fault," cried Susan. "I moved into this house quite recently, and there has been so much to do that I haven't had the walls patched up to keep out the neighbors' cows. Do you feel faint? I wish I had let the wretched beast devour everything on the clothesline."

"I am rather shy of inside facts about cows," he feelingly declared, "but I should say they are possessed of devils. Don't reproach yourself. I was a bungler. And now I am a nuisance."

"A nuisance?" she exclaimed, with a

smile of sunny gratitude. "After you flew to my rescue so nobly?"

Ashley's soul expanded. For a man who had been so shamefully humiliated at home this episode was peculiarly opportune. It was a little thing, perhaps, but his life was a bundle of little things and shallow emotions. When he chose to exert himself his manners could be engaging, and he was familiar with the pattern of courtesy, even though money had made him a snob. Just now to be considered heroic was a boon which caused him to appear at his best. And this ministering angel of a woman somewhat changed his ideas concerning the inhabitants of this benighted region. Not only was she pleasing to the eye, uncommonly so, but he was reminded of certain family connections, cousins from Albany, or aunts from Washington Square, whom Stella occasionally entertained. They were absurdly exclusive and given to ancestor worship, yet while Ashley ridiculed them behind their backs he was nevertheless conscious of a certain intrinsic refinement, of a subdued elegance which could not be acquired in one generation.

For her part, Susan Barrington beheld a heavily built, fair-haired man, fastidiously dressed, whose age was baffling. He might have been younger or older than thirty. High living had not marked his face with the customary symbols other than to iron the expression out of it. He was quite evidently a stranger to Eppingham and the product of a very different environment. Although summer visitors strayed into the neighborhood now and then, they were not of this exotic type, so distinctly incongruous. His suave urbanity of address was pleasing to a woman who had exacted deference as her rightful tribute in years gone by. In short, he was a diversion which broke into the monotony of her days of waiting, and, for the moment, eased the strain of her continual apprehension.

It happened, therefore, that motives existed for a mutual attitude of friendliness rather more informal than was the custom of either. Ashley resolved to say nothing about the adventure to his sister. He hoped to cultivate the acquaintance of this charming woman who thought him a knight-errant, and to drop in, say, for tea in the afternoon, by way of seeking refuge from his own stormy circumstances. Stella's intrusion would utterly spoil it for him.

It seemed odd for her to be living alone in genteel poverty. An unusual sense of delicacy restrained him from asking questions, and she volunteered no personal information. Something more than native reserve made her reluctant to disclose her name. Seclusion and anxiety had made her almost morbidly sensitive concerning her own affairs, and even a stranger might have heard the gossip which hinted that disgrace had overtaken her son. It occurred to Ashley to give her his card, but this seemed a bit ceremonious, too much like magnifying the service he had rendered her, so he said unaffectionately:

"I hope to have the pleasure of an introduction in due form as soon as I can find some one who will vouch for me."

"Then you are staying near here?" she politely inquired.

"Yes, a mile or so down the river, at East Eppingham. Not much in the way of excitement there, but I am rustivating for my health."

"Then I feel guiltier than ever," warmly exclaimed Susan. "I am sure that being chased by a cow is not good for your health."

"Exercise was prescribed for me," and he good-naturedly smiled at his own jest. "I am supposed to chop wood and what do you do to hay—reap and mow it?—and all that sort of thing."

"But your bruised ankle will interfere. Does it feel any better?"

He tried hobbling across the porch. There was sufficient discomfort to make him wince.

"I can row downstream without any trouble," said he. "Do you know, I feel rather kindly toward the spotted cow, after all. You have helped reconcile me to East Eppingham."

"But you should let me send to the village for a team," replied Susan, prettily animated by this homage. "Who am I to thank? May I ask your name?"

"Corbin—Ashley Corbin," said he, with the least touch of importance, but it held no significance for her, golden or otherwise.

"Please allow me to walk to the landing with you, Mr. Corbin. You may find it awkward getting into your boat. Are you boarding far from the river?"

"Near enough to manage it alone, thank you," he answered as they moved slowly toward the dooryard, her hand at his elbow.

"Perhaps I shall see you passing some time," vouchsafed Susan. "I shall be sure to notice you, for a stranger is an event."

"I was hoping that you might regard me as a friend in need," said Ashley, with a shade of wistfulness.

"Oh, that did sound discourteous of me," apologized Susan, who was somewhat perplexed. She knew nothing whatever about him, and it was therefore out of the question to ask him to call. She hastened to smooth matters by exclaiming:

"Really, and I want you to know it, this has been a genuine pleasure, and I am under obligations to you."

Her manner was both gracious and dignified, and they fell to chatting about the spring weather and the country roundabout and the storied associations of old Eppingham. Her tales of queer people and ancient landmarks were vivid for detail and quiet humor, and awakened a feeling of human interest in this sequestered region which Ashley

had viewed with blank indifference or repugnance. He caught glimpses of the same ruling motives, disguised and yet recognizable, which swayed the men and women of his own world. Had Susan Barrington been younger, in all likelihood he would have attempted a flirtation and made a rather silly spectacle of himself. As it was, she exerted a distinctly feminine appeal, for he had not dreamed that she could be fifty years old, but he was much more alive to the responsive play of her mind and the unmistakable hall mark of gentle breeding.

It was a less disgruntled Ashley Corbin who rowed downriver in the skiff and limped back through the pine grove to the cottage at East Eppingham. A woman whom he found reason to admire had praised him for valor, and the solace of it lingered most agreeably. Another result of the adventure was that he had conceived an idea, brilliant for him. On the spur of the moment he had plausibly explained that he was committed to a program of hard physical exercise, presumably by order of his physician. Stupid of him not to have thought of it before. Instead of turning sulky and quarreling with Stella, why not use the summer to put himself in condition to stand the New York pace? The verdict of his friends that he was slowing up had rankled. He was fat, short-winded, and easily fatigued. Other chaps had to lay up for repairs, and athletic trainers made a business of mending them. This penitential season, taken sensibly, should enable him to go the route again and keep up with the swiftest. It was not at all what Stella intended, and the joke would be on her. Not probation, but preparation, that was the word, and at the same time persuade her that the prodigal brother had turned over a new leaf.

This little pilgrimage afloat had so mellowed his temper that he was ready

to surprise Stella by an unprecedented display of obedience and amiability. She had not returned from driving, however, and he began to ply a broom in the barn. The vigilant Martha perceived that he limped, and her animosity was softened. He informed her that he had been to the river to inspect the camp and see what needed to be done before the Carneys arrived. A large stone had fallen upon his foot, but he didn't propose to make it an excuse for neglecting his work. Martha repented of her harsh words, said there must be a spark of pluck in him, after all, and, as a peace offering, carried a plate of doughnuts to the barn.

CHAPTER IX.

Stella's first errand in Eppingham happened to lead her to the post office, where Mrs. Henry Mitchell was transacting business in the absence of her consort. Miss Corbin, innocently buying stamps and mailing letters, was subjected to a searching scrutiny from the delivery window, and cunningly tempted into conversation. There was nothing conspicuous about her to attract attention, this dark-eyed girl, simply dressed, who spoke with a low voice and smiled her thanks, but she was unknown in the village, and therefore had to be accounted for. It suited her purpose to submit to this official inquisition, and while Mrs. Mitchell was framing another question she forestalled it by asking, with a certain trepidation which heightened her fine color:

"Do you know any one by the name of Barrington? Is it a common name hereabouts?"

The postmaster's wife sniffed and answered, tossing her head: "Only one family so far as I know, and there's not much left of that, though you wouldn't think so to meet her. Mrs. Susan Barrington lives here, she that was a Levering. Her husband was

spindlin' and not much account, and the Lord took him young. There was three brothers of them Barringtons, but the others moved away and I've lost track of 'em. Any relation of yours?"

"No. I had in mind a Mr. Edward Barrington, who has been away from home most of the time."

"A friend?" eagerly demanded Mrs. Henry Mitchell, scenting either a romance or a scandal. Possibly this was a deserted wife. "Why, sakes alive, you must be thinkin' of Susan Barrington's son. His name is Ed, and he first went off to sea from here the year the town hall was burned, which is how I recollect it. He comes back now and then for a few days, but it must be a year or two since I last set eyes on him."

"It must be the same Mr. Barrington," said Stella, while her voluble informant paused for breath. "I wasn't sure that this was his Eppingham. There is one in Maine, I believe."

"There surely is," cried Mrs. Henry Mitchell, her thin features showing annoyance, "and letters are always going wrong and we get the blame for it. So you're acquainted with Ed Barrington. You're a considerable younger girl than he is a man, accordin' to looks, but that's neither here nor there. From New York, I should say, from the addresses on those letters you just dropped in the box. Meet him there, did you?"

Stella parried this, and decided to shift the discussion which the postmaster's wife was bent on making awkwardly personal.

"You mentioned his mother," ventured the visitor. "I should like to know where she lives."

"Never met her? Well, she'll look you over mighty careful if you're a friend of Ed's," emphatically declared Mrs. Mitchell. "There's some that like her and others that don't. I've seen her act real cold and distant to people who were raised with her and went to

the same school. It's an affliction, I often think, to come of a fine family, as they call it, and have nothing to keep up appearances with. I suppose she's the nearest thing to an aristocracy we have in Eppingham, and the Leverings did amount to something once, but——"

"She is a lady then?" was Stella's unfortunate interruption. Mrs. Henry Mitchell bit off her words as she exclaimed:

"No more a lady than any respectable woman who goes to church and can afford to keep a hired girl. I'm dead set against socialists and other disturbin' elements, but I vow I believe there's something in all this rumpus about class distinctions. Here I go, flyin' off at a tangent, and you asked me where Susan Barrington lived. Well, she and Harriet Page hitched up together for years as sociable as two kittens in a basket, but they suddenly quit each other two or three weeks ago. Whether there was a disagreement or not I don't know, but there was something said about it. You know how folks will talk in a small town. Susan Barrington picked up her traps and moved downriver to the old Slocum place."

"But why should she wish to leave the village?" queried Stella. "Rural delivery sounds so remote, and she is alone and ailing?"

"I have my own opinion," confidentially responded Mrs. Mitchell. "It has something to do with Ed. Maybe she'll tell you. Nobody's been able to get a word out of her, not even at Lucy Carpenter's funeral, she was Captain Moses Carpenter's wife and died of a sudden. Several people asked her about Ed, but all she told 'em was that he had gone to sea again. It seemed to me she was laboring under more emotion than you'd expect, and I asked a few questions of Jennie, the girl that worked in the house. She'd kind of got it into her head, from something she heard said, that Captain Carpenter

and Ed Barrington was both expected home in time for the funeral. Ed couldn't have been so very far out of reach, accordin' to this, and his mother's remark about his being off to sea didn't hang together."

"Is this Moses Carpenter a sea captain?" inquired Stella.

"A sort of one. He owns and sails a little schooner called the *Henrietta* that putters up and down the coast."

"Why, that must be the very one in which Mr. Barrington went away from here as a boy. I recall the name, because it was my own mother's."

"Yes, Ed went ahead fast and was put in great, big steamers, but maybe he wasn't old enough for so much responsibility. Do you know what happened to him since he was wrecked in the *Columbian*? There's been a great deal of speculation about it in the village."

"I know enough to assure you that Eppingham need never be ashamed of him," said Stella, a defiant note in her voice.

"Then what ails his mother?" demanded Mrs. Henry Mitchell, by no means convinced. "His letters stirred her up terrible, and now she mopes all by herself and is more stand-offish than ever. Why, she fixed the Slocum house up like new, and spared no expense, so I'm told, just as if she expected that Ed was coming home to live with her. And she was in a great hurry, too."

It occurred to Stella that she might obtain more satisfactory and kindlier information from this Harriet Page as an intimate friend of Mrs. Barrington. Already the quest was intensely interesting, but it made her distraught, as though the case of the chief officer of the *Columbian* were casting a shadow even darker than she had surmised. Mrs. Henry Mitchell would have detained her longer, but she escaped during a lull, and pensively wandered into Elm Street, as directed.

There was nothing "stand-offish" in

the greeting of motherly, beaming Harriet Page as soon as Stella had introduced herself. And so Miss Corbin had actually been on a voyage in the same ship with Edward and thought enough of him to inquire about Susan!

"If you don't mind stepping into the kitchen," said she. "You have caught me with my hands all flour and a pan of cookies in the oven. Susan had the knack of always looking fit to entertain company no matter what she was doing. And you just happened to come to East Eppingham for the summer, and you took all this trouble to look her up. What a good-hearted world it is in spite of a sprinklin' of Mrs. Henry Mitchells!"

"One of her is quite enough," laughed Stella. "May I wait for a cooky?"

"If you'll watch them while I run and phone Susan to expect you. You have nice feelings, Miss Corbin, it's easy to see that, and I appreciate your reluctance to intrude on Susan Barrington, specially as she is making such a hermit of herself, but I want you to walk right in on her and tell her what a fine man she has for a son. You think so or you wouldn't be here. Why, it will be the next best thing to seeing him."

Harriet hastened to the telephone and delivered her message, returning in time to save the cookies from scorching, for Stella had been absorbed as an eavesdropper. It was gratifying to hear herself indorsed as a splendid-looking young lady with the sweetest manners, but a trifle embarrassing. Altruism might become complicated.

"Please go to see her to-day, won't you, Miss Corbin?" urged Harriet, her eyes filled with tears. "And if you hear anything against Edward in the village, don't think any less of him. He has made enemies, but they are really a credit to him. Susan will tell you a

great deal about him, for she can't help unlocking her poor, dear heart to you."

"But why should he have made enemies in his own town?" asked Stella.

"Well, for instance, there is John Markle, our first selectman and most prominent citizen. The last time that Edward came home for a few days, he heard some talk about the Hungarians who were selling liquor in a house on the back road. Eppingham is no-license, and these foreigners were doing a lot of harm to our village boys who thought it smart to sneak out there and get drunk. John Markle owned the house, and these Hungarians worked on his farm for small wages because he protected them as first selectman. Complaints did no good. It was as miserable a piece of business as ever went on in our town. The county attorney was appealed to as prosecuting officer, but John Markle had too much pull in county politics, and nothing was done.

"Edward Barrington got wind of it, as I say. He is fond of looking out for boys and keeping them straight. I guess he learned it from Captain Moses Carpenter. He had himself sworn in as a deputy, and they say he marched the county attorney out the back road by the collar. Anyhow, they broke into the Hungarians' place and found it full of men and boys. There was a free fight with chairs and bottles and pistols, and Edward emerged with a squirming Hungarian under each arm. After he locked them up he went to see John Markle and told him what he thought of him. And what did Eppingham do at the next town meeting? Reëlected John Markle as selectman because he had the voters under his thumb. You may care to know, Miss Corbin, what kind of man Edward Barrington is when he's ashore."

"He is the same kind of man afloat," replied Stella, her face aglow.

Mechanician for Cupid

By Wilbur Hall

Author of "Chiroptera Insectivora for Luck," "For Charity," Etc.

Told by the mechanician himself. The tale of the Kid-glove Speed King—a regular fellow, who drove racing cars for a living, though he was one of those educated boys; had a diploma, and talked French like a waiter, and could look like a million dollars in a fifteen-dollar hand-me-down.

WHEN I signed up as mechanician with Monty Merrick all I had in the world was a complete set of automobile tools—the finest I ever handled—made in Belgium. I had bought them from Mrs. Jargstorff after poor old Jarg went into the ditch with that Italian driver in the Tacoma two years ago. The only reason why I still had them was because I knew I'd never get more like them if they once went into hock, and I hated to part with 'em. Hadn't felt that way about my overcoat or my watch.

One outfit of high-class tools, and no job! I was looking for work so hard I'm afraid I pretty near ruined my eyesight. We'd had an off year on the coast, and a lot of good shopmen and mechanics were living on a meal a day and patching their pants with tire tape to keep them respectable. Of course, like most other fellows that hang on to the automobile business, I wanted to break into the racing game, but my chances didn't look bright enough to make me dizzy. It shows that you never can tell what you're going to hit just around a curve in this world, though, because right then, when my meal ticket was carrying a fifty-per-cent overload of punched holes, Monty Merrick sent for me—and signed me!

It seemed, from what Monty said, that I had Lou Gross to thank for my chance—him and Mr. Forcyth, manager of the Eclipse Coast Agency. I had worked for Mr. Forcyth. But Gross—you know him, of course; he's the famous driver for the Federal factory people; he was the main one because he had stole Monty's old mechanician and left Monty without anybody. Merrick said, when we made the deal, that it was just as well, and afterward he said he was awful glad Gross did it, but Gross 'wouldn't have if he'd known it would turn that way. He pulled the play to try and put Monty in the hole, I found out.

I want to start by telling you a little about Monty Merrick.

He was a regular fellow. I never did see why he wanted to drive racing cars for a living, because he was one of those educated boys—had a diploma written in old-fashioned Italian or something like that, and could talk French like a waiter, and front! Say, that fellow could sure look like a million dollars in a fifteen-dollar hand-me-down and his shoes shined. The newspaper writers used to call him the "kid-glove speed king" because Monty always started a race all dolled up and clean. He never hung out with the

booze parties, and the only white lights he knew anything about was the one over his table, where he read all the books that were written about automobiles and such things. But if that gives you a idea that there was anything sissy about him, though, I'd like to have you skip that part, because you'd be as far wrong as a dog that hasn't found out yet that a skunk can fight. Monty was full size, and if you don't know his records just ask any auto-race fan. Records talk.

He'd had a lot of run-ins with drivers that didn't like him because he was different from them, and because he always was so clean, and kept his car looking so sweet and yet ran rings around them—track, speedway, or road event. Those that went to the trouble to get acquainted with him found out he was like I've told you—anyhow you took him—but some of 'em didn't take that trouble and so they were jealous. And the worst of them all was Lou Gross.

Lou is a smooth customer, and he's put over a lot of tricks on American courses that ought to have gotten him disqualified for life. He gets by because he's slick. I heard Bob Brooke say once that of all the drivers in the world only one of them was a worse little hater than Archie de Garmo, and that was Lou Gross. Bob and his partner, Adolph Stearns, put the skids under Lou a couple of times, but Monty wasn't built that way. He'd just keep on taking things and smiling, and playing fair, because, he said: "The man that puts bumps in the course for the other drivers usually ends in one of them himself." And that's all he'd ever say about Lou Gross. "He'll accidentally steer into one of his own traps some of these times. I'm not going to interfere."

The latest low-down trick Lou Gross had pulled was to sign that mechanic—Tommy Desbro—away from Monty

just before a match race in Los Angeles. And it turned out a good deal the way Monty had said, too, and that's a fact, although it hasn't anything to do with this story. Monty got me, on Mr. Forcyth's recommendation. Monty and I fitted like the rings in a cylinder and got along great, but Tommy Desbro lost his head the night before the Phoenix race that fall and forgot to clamp the prestolite tank to the floor of the car. The tank banged loose the third day out, hammered the flooring to pieces, and fell into the flywheel, and that Federal of Lou Gross' went out of the race at Wickenburg. Lou fired Tommy Desbro on the spot—even if it was in Wickenburg, where a man wouldn't leave a cigar butt that he thought anything of—but that didn't put the Federal No. 22 back in the race. As I say, though, this hasn't anything to do with my story.

Monty had that track-race-benefit date in Los Angeles, and as soon as we filled that—first money by half a lap—we went back East and hit the big circuits. Monty always says I was his rabbit's foot. Anyway, we cleaned them all that summer, and in the fall we came back, by way of Galveston, where we added two firsts, one second, and four thirds to our string, and landed in southern California again. Lou Gross was there just ahead of us for the Phoenix. We missed that, but we were in the Corona, and it was at that place Monty and Lou got away from the start in a race that never had an A. A. A. sanction, but that was worth a lot more in purse and honors than any event either of these drivers entered in, as you'll see. Her name was Miss Virginia Bruere.

It was at a dance the night before the race, given in a hall by some club or other, and a lot of the drivers and mechanics were there. Corona is a small burg out in the orange belt, and about all it's got is local pride, two

drug stores, and the fastest three-mile race course in America. I bet it's a bum town three hundred and sixty-four days in the year, but it's live enough the day of the race. The dance was a catch-as-catch-can affair, because the committees were so excited they got all balled up, and so everybody danced with everybody else, and pretty soon I saw Monty Merrick doing the grapevine with Miss Bruere.

I was never in love with her myself—not officially, anyhow; she's out of my class, of course—and so you needn't duck because you think I'm going to spout a lot about her. She was some little queen, and I could write a book of descriptions of her if I could. But I can't. Just take it from me that Monty Merrick and Lou Gross had seen a lot of girls in their time, and they both—

Yes, Lou Gross, too. I saw the play. Monty was just signing her up for another dance when Lou Gross butted in and he said something to her, and before she could think, Lou was walking on her feet in what he probably thought was the fox trot. If it was the fox trot I'm a gospel mission street preacher. Lou Gross is a good race driver—I'll say that for him—but when it comes to dancing he'd ought to sit in a wheel chair and let a boy shove him around; he'd do less damage that way, and be more graceful. Anyhow, Lou Gross never gave her a chance to look at Monty after that. He mangled her through a couple of dances, then they went away, and pretty soon I rubbered from the window and saw him rolling his big Federal roadster out of the garage and going down the street with the girl at about eighty miles.

All this time Monty was just grouching around by himself. I had a mind to kick him. If he'd not paid any attention to Miss Bruere and Lou, and had gotten busy with some of the other wrens there were around he wouldn't

have given his feelings away to her. Instead of that, he showed everybody in the place that he had a peeve, and a fortune teller would have took his hand and half a dollar and said: "You've just met a small, blond lady, with silvery kind of stickpins in her hair and a black dress, that's going to have a strong influence on your life." And Monty would have said: "Now what do you know about that? Isn't it wonderful how these palmists can read a fellow's secrets that way?"

I didn't read his palm, but I went over finally and told him I thought we ought to give our spark plugs a look that night, and he said: "That's right, Billy. I forgot them." And so we went down to the garage.

When we rolled out of the pits the next morning for the start, Monty caught sight of Miss Bruere in the grand stand, and I did, too. We had drawn the second place from the inside in the first rank of starters, and Lou Gross was back in the smoke somewhere. I had a notion that Miss Bruere wasn't looking for Lou very hard. She waved to us, and Monty nodded, but just before we got the word to move I reached over behind and grabbed the sleeve of his driving suit and jerked his hand up so that it looked as though he was waving to her. She threw him a kiss, and when he turned around and tried to get mad at me I just laughed at him. And then we got the word.

I knew before we'd done fifty laps that our old Eclipse wouldn't stand the pace Monty was setting. If I hadn't seen the lady I would have wondered if my driver hadn't gone bugs. When we went in to the pits in the thirties somewhere I said to him: "Great guns, Monty, you'll burn us up or go through the curb. You can't win this way!" But he said: "You pump oil and air, and let me drive, will you, Billy?" So I shut up. But I wasn't surprised when we went out in the

seventy-third with everything the matter with the car except the mumps. I didn't say "I told you so," because Monty was feeling pretty sore. The only time he smiled after that was when the announcer bawled; "No. 7 car has gone out in the back stretch with transmission trouble while in sixth place." No. 7 was Lou Gross, and *we* had gone out when we were leading the whole field by almost half a lap.

Miss Bruere kept looking over our way in the stands, but Monty wouldn't see her. Naturally she was offended, and when Lou Gross came horning in on her she quit turning toward us at all. After the race Lou had to go back and arrange for getting his Federal to the garage, because he was team manager as well as driving, and that gave Monty another chance. But he wouldn't take it. Miss Bruere kept looking, but Monty went down to the pits and we got enough life back into the poor old Eclipse so that she could get to the garage on her own power, although she had ought to have been carried on a litter. All the way I kept puzzling why Monty wouldn't play the game with that little girl. I was a long time finding out, and meantime a lot of things happened.

We were dated to enter in a road race the next month after the Corona, and it was going to be all we could do to work the Eclipse over for the event. Monty never would put his car in a shop and let a lot of high-priced bunglers tear her down and put her up again. He always did it himself, with me—and with a couple of good boys to help. We started on her the next Monday morning, and it kept me busy. Of course we had to change the gears and the carburetor, to refit her for a road race, but she was so generally done up after the Corona that it was a ten days' job to get her so that she'd turn over without wheezing or rattling her wheels off. When we had her all set

up, Monty took a sudden notion to put in a new transmission, and so we had to do it over again.

All that time Monty was thinking about that little girl at Corona. We went to the Orpheum one night, and there was Miss Bruere and Lou Gross in a box, and Lou had on an evening dress. The big stiff! Monty didn't have but about a suit and a half of clothes, and he was sending money home to his folks, and he didn't wear these white-front regalias himself, so Lou Gross had a lot of crust! Afterward we strolled along out of the theater, and Lou Gross was helping Miss Bruere into his big roadster, and I heard him say: "All right, the Maison it shall be!" So I told Monty: "Let's go up to that French dump to eat," and he said he didn't care where we went. But he was glad, I guess, because where we got a table he could look at Miss Bruere without her knowing it because her cheek was toward us. Monty had a good time—humped up there, with his meal getting cold, and looking miserable, and cussing Lou Gross and wishing he hadn't come. That's the way fellows that get in love have a good time.

So I thought about it a lot, and the next day, when we were working over the timing gears, I said to Monty: "Why don't you drop in and say hello to Miss Bruere once in a while for a change?"

Monty tried to look as if he didn't know what I was talking about. "Miss who?" he said.

"Oh, you heard me the first time, Monty," I said. "Lou Gross isn't the only race driver in Los Angeles, and you're good enough looking when you get a shave."

Monty told me if I'd mind my own business I wouldn't drop a screw into a gear box so often, and that's all he'd say. Of course I never dropped any

screws into any gear boxes, and Monty knew it. But that was what he said.

Two weeks before the race, we went out in Monty's little touring car to have a look at the course. It was Los Angeles to Sacramento, about five hundred miles, and the worst all-round route I have ever traveled—with one exception. There were some good roads, but there were also some so bad that it would be a shame to try to get my opinion of them past the editor. About forty miles north of the start, you hit the San Francisquito Cañon, which is as crooked as a Mexican election and as steep as a café meal. When you're dizzy from turning corners and soaked through from crossing the stream, you come out on the summit on the desert side. If you have any luck at all, you don't do any worse than melt and run down into the oil pan crossing that Antelope Valley Desert. Then you start up again over another range of mountains, down a long road through pines and oaks and alders, and out onto the adobe flats where you're in dust up to your hub caps if it's dry weather, and in mud up to your goggles if it isn't. Then you get away up the San Joaquin Valley, hit more mountains, and end in Sacramento, which is a good town to end in, all right, but not much for anything else. That's the Los Angeles-Sacramento road-race course, and if I had my choice I'd pay myself a dollar and a half to keep off it after this.

We breezed over it in three days, and shipped the car back. Monty didn't have to argue me into that plan—it suited me clear to the ground, and coming down on the train he got to telling me about Miss Bruere.

It seems like he had met her on the street and taken her to lunch a few days before we saw her and Lou Gross at the theater, and she hadn't treated him right, he thought. I told him she was only leading him out, but Monty said no, that she wasn't that kind of a girl.

Honest, that expression makes me sick! Every fellow that has gotten himself mixed up in a love affair always says it. It looks to me like a grown man ought to know that they're all that kind of a girl. They're all the same. They may bawl a fellow in French or Italian or Comanche Indian, or south of Market Street, or the Boston dialect that's spoken up north of the Erie Canal, but they all mean the same thing and they all put it over in the same old way. It's a wonder to me Adam didn't say it when they were panning him about that apple business. "Oh, Eve isn't that kind of a girl!" And I'll bet he would have, at that, if he hadn't been so busy thinking about how to pass the buck.

Well, Monty said Miss Virginia had started by giving him the third degree because he wouldn't stick around more at the Corona. Then, when he said he thought she seemed to have plenty of good company that day, she said: "Oh, you mean Mr. Gross? Isn't he nice, though?"

And right there she went to it, like any girl will that's got a fellow going, and she combed Lou Gross' hair and manicured his nails and fixed his necktie straight and gave him perfect table manners and a university education and made a hero out of him, and Monty sat there and let her! And she fooled him, too. "She's more than interested in Lou Gross, that's all there is to it," Monty said to me. "And he isn't fit to give her his coat to walk on."

"Oh, all of that!" I said. "The trouble with you, Monty, is that you can't put on speed when the other fellow is passing you and throwing dust. And this girl isn't going to grab you by the hand and lead you up to herself and say: 'Miss Bruere, will you take Monty Merrick to be your wedded husband?'"

"You've got it wrong, Billy," Monty said.

"Oh, sure I have," I said. "I'm on the outside looking in, and I can see

Lou Gross tying you to a post while he romps away into the first money. That's what makes me sore."

"But what can I do?" he said, as mournful as a lamb that's fallen into a tank of sheep dip. "Lou Gross has got an income besides his winnings and his salary with the Federal factory. He probably splits all the purses seventy-five-twenty-five with his mechanician, and the rest is velvet. He owns property in Detroit. I've heard he's worth fifty thousand."

"Well, rave away," I said to Monty.

"I'm not raving," he said. "I don't wish Lou Gross any bad luck. I'm not kicking. But I know when a girl is the love in a cottage at twelve dollars per week sort, and when a girl is too good for the man that invented money. This one is the sort that a man would be ashamed to speak to unless he had enough to give her the proper setting and frame, as it were. That's what I mean about Lou Gross. He's worth money, and I'm worth—"

"Don't say it, Monty," I cut in there. "Let me say it for you. You're worth any amount as a race driver and four times that as a man, but when it comes to making love to a woman you really do love, you're as useless as the air that's outside a flat tire. I don't know Miss Bruere, but she looks like class to me. If you want her, go get her."

Monty said: "It seems easy to you. Why, Billy, if a woman spoke to you you'd fall down on the sidewalk and cut your head. What do you know about women?"

"Oh, I knew one once," I said. "She was eight years old and I was six, and she used to let me kiss her hand. I learned about 'em when I was going with her."

Monty laughed right out good, and I was glad to hear it. "What happened to her?" he asked.

"She grew up and married an undertaker," I said. "Then he got a di-

voice because he said she was too lively." That was a pretty good one for me, wasn't it? I've heard worse on the stage.

Well, anyhow, I got Monty to laughing, and he felt better. But he wouldn't buy a bouquet and take it around to her. He said he'd wait, and if we won the Sacramento road race he might go back and make the play. "All right," I said, "but don't crab to me if you're too late. Lou Gross isn't one of those kind that hangs around at the starting wire until the field has gained two laps on him and then tries to go into the money. He starts in front. I'm telling you."

When we got off the train the next morning in Los Angeles, it was raining hard, and Monty ducked out for the depot while I went up front to get my kit of Belgian tools out of the express car. I always carried them with me on any kind of a run, because I could do more with that kit of tools in an emergency than a whole shopful of mechanics with the ordinary American or German tools—made of cast iron and lead. When we had loaded the machine at Sacramento, I put the tools on the seat. I arranged to have the bus unloaded that afternoon and left in the freight shed until it quit raining some, and then I got my kit bag and started for the depot.

A messenger boy met me and asked if I was Monty Merrick. I said no, but I'd take the message for him. It was a telegram that the kid had in his cap. It was pretty wet already, and the envelope was half off, so I stuck it in my pocket and signed the boy's book. But when I went on to the depot Monty had got tired waiting and gone uptown. So I caught a car, and when I was on it I thought of the telegram and wondered if it might be from Miss Bruere, so I took it out of my coat.

Well, sloshing around in the rain without an overcoat, I had gotten the telegram envelope soaked through, and

the telegram came out in my hand, open. So I couldn't help seeing what it said. It went about like this:

MONTY: Mother very low. Doctor says another operation necessary. Life or death. Can you wire five hundred? MARGARET.

I remembered then that Monty had told me he had a sister by that name, and that she and a little brother lived with their mother back in Jersey City. But that was all he'd ever said. I knew he sent them money, but I never had any idea how much or why. Now I began to guess. And a funny thing—it made me think of Miss Bruere right away.

I said to myself that there was the reason Monty didn't get into the game stronger with the lady. He was sending away all he could raise, and his mother was sick and he was taking care of the family, and doctor bills and evidently some operations, and hospitals and— Well, I knew what hospital bills were. I'm the fellow that turned over a cliff demonstrating a car at San Pedro two years ago, and when I got out of the clutches of those bonesetters that time I didn't have enough left to buy myself a match to light the cigarette that I couldn't afford to buy. No wonder Monty was going light on this love game, especially when he had the sort of idea he did about Miss Bruere needing a man with money to do her justice!

I hustled off and found Monty and explained how the telegram had come to be the way it was. I didn't tell him I'd read it, but I guess it wouldn't have made any difference if I had, because he was pretty near knocked out. He just said he'd be at the garage tomorrow, and then blew. But if I'd been Miss Bruere and happened along there about that time, there was one sad-hearted little racing driver that would have had an arm around his shoulders and a pretty cheek against his sunburned one and a cheerful word in the ear—that's how far I go!

I didn't sleep very well that night. I never can sleep when I'm trying to think. I had a scheme, but it wasn't much good because I didn't have any money, and there's nothing that's as good for a scheme as a large, fat roll behind it. Right at that time I was buying a lot out in the suburbs, five dollars down and five dollars a month, just for speculation, and I had to dig sometimes to keep from losing my property to some jealous millionaire that wanted it for a country home or something. I wasn't getting rich off of Monty, because I had signed on a salary basis, and as it was enough for me I never hollered for more. Now I remembered that Monty had said two or three times that if "something back East" turned out all right pretty soon he was going to give me a new contract that would cut me in on a percentage of our winnings. I knew now that this operation was the "something." Well, I wasn't kicking. I would have worked for Monty Merrick for my meals and a garage bench to sleep on, and I didn't care whether I ever got as rich as Lou Gross or not.

Right here, though, was where I wished I had some ready cash. Early the next morning I went over to the real-estate fellow that wished that lot on me and asked him to sell it for me, and he looked wise and wrote something on a piece of paper. I guess the exertion must have killed him, because I never heard anything more about it. So it was up to me to do some high financing. It was one morning in the shop that I thought of what to do, and I went out right away and caught myself ten dollars that were running up a steep hill yelling for help. I bought roses with them and sent them out to the apartment where Miss Bruere was with her mother or some dame that was always with her. I had Monty's name on a card. Those roses would have cost a hundred dollars in Chicago and a million in New York, and the rose man

wrote the card out for me in a beautiful hand of writing that looked like one of these loop the loops at Coney or down here at Ocean Park.

Monty was plucky about that telegram, all right. He didn't say a word, but I could see he was watching the door all the time for another one the next few days. Also he was thinking about Miss Bruere some, because one day a Jane passed the shop that looked sort of like her, and he ran out like the place was on fire. He talked to me a little about her, but he never gave me a chance to hand him any more of my grandfather stuff. He always talked right through the intermissions. So the time came to take the old Eclipse for her first work-out over the course.

Work-outs for a road race are a little easier than the race itself, some ways, but they're harder in others. You've not only got to put your car through at a hard enough pace to wrack all the weak places loose, which means harder work for the mechanic than it does for the driver the first work-out, but you've got to watch her like a hawk for deficiencies and feeble parts, and you've got to learn your road same as you'd learn a book. Of course that was what we made the first trip in the touring car for; but going over the long route in a touring car at a twenty-five-mile average and pushing the stripped car along at a forty are two different things. I have a pretty good memory for a road, Monty says, but it's because I work. By the time we'd blown into Sacramento, I had that course down pretty well; and on the return trip, which we made in the fastest time, by the way, it had ever been driven up to that date, I called the turns and the grades and the railroad crossings and the bad twists through the towns and all the other million little places where a slip on the mechanic's part may cost the driver the race, and called them without one mistake. When we crawled out of the

big boat at the home garage, Monty just dropped his hand on my shoulder a minute and said: "Good boy, Billy!" But I'd rather had that than one of those medals from a king that you can't hock because they're engraved and that you can't wear because there's no place on you to hang 'em.

There was a telephone call waiting for Monty, and he showed it to me. "Call V. B. at the Castleton," it said, and Monty's eyes popped.

"Well," I said, "what are you standing there looking at me for? You know how to get central, don't you?"

So Monty called her up. I was taking off my driving suit—all covered with oil and mud and dust—and I couldn't help hearing what he said:

"Is this Miss Bruere? Well, this is Merrick. Yes, Monty. I have your call here. I beg pardon? Why—there's some mistake, I'm afraid, Miss Bruere. I only wish I——"

Just then I gave him a kick from behind. "Don't tell her that," I said, in his ear. "Tell her you'll come up and straighten out the mistake there, you darn idiot!"

Monty glared at me and turned to the telephone again. "Oh, don't say that, please," he said. "We'll talk it over when I can see you. What? No, I'm in bad luck about that, Miss Bruere, but I can't make it. No—nor then, either, I'm afraid. You see, we're just working up to the Sacramento road race—See here, lady—just a minute! I'm awfully sorry. Hello! Hello! Oh, damn the thing!" He hung it up then and swung around on me.

"Well," he said, like he was going to take it out of my hide, "what's the matter? Does it look funny to you?"

"No," I said, as humble as I could. "Only you do certainly manage to drive into a fence every time you start in this handicap with Lou Gross," I said, and I went out and left him that to think over.

That evening I found ten dollars lying on top of a piano in an art gallery, and I took it and bought some more flowers and a box of candy big enough to make a girl's college sick, and sent them out "To V. B. from M. M." Maybe my work was a little crude, but it certainly was good enough to prevent Miss Bruere from forgetting Monty—that was a safe bet.

The race was five days away, and that old Eclipse had to be taken to pieces like a watch. The morning we started on the job Monty got a telegram, and he came in from reading it in the office with a kind of smile on his face, so I judged the old lady was doing better. I thought it was funny he wouldn't say anything to me, and, sure enough, when I was in the pit loosening the nuts to take the body from the chassis he leaned down.

"That telegram was from Jersey City, Billy," he began. "Hand me up that gold-inlaid Belgian wrench you're so proud of, will you?"

I rattled in my kit, but the wrench wasn't there, so I gave him one of the shop wrenches. "Mine's mislaid somewhere, Monty. Go easy on this one or you'll strip the threads," I said. They never make tools in this country like mine were. "So you got a wire from home, eh?"

"Yes—Jersey City. That's where my folks live. I've been pretty worried about my mother for a long time, but she's had three operations now, and the last one is successful."

"Fine!" I said, and he thought I was talking about his mother. I wasn't. I was thinking of Miss Bruere.

"It certainly is," he said. "Of course it'll be a long time, probably, before she can leave the hospital."

"That's too bad," I said, and he thought I was still thinking about Mrs. Merrick. I wasn't.

"So I don't feel as much out of sorts as I did," he said.

"Well, then," I said, still thinking about somebody else, "maybe you'll have time to do a little business for yourself."

"Oh, it won't make any difference that way," Monte said. "I wasn't planning to go home—I couldn't afford to."

Of course he had got me wrong, so I didn't say anything. But that night, when I'd cleaned up around and gathered my Belgian kit up, I went out and took ten dollars away from a Jewish church and bought an automobile bonnet kind of thing for a lady. It was a peach, I guess. I had seen Miss Bruere looking at one like it at the Corona. Funny how a fellow will remember things like that. I'll bet if I should ever get in love I'd make a girl sit up and notice me!

Two nights before the race, the Eclipse was tuned up to thirty-two hundred revolutions, and she looked like a new pianola piano. If I had been a betting man, I would have bet any amount on her against the field at, say, one to four, if I had had the money. Monty was tired, and so was I, although a mechanic being tired doesn't amount to anything. If he isn't tired two days before a race he isn't much of a mechanic—that's how far I go! Anyway, Monty said to me: "Let's go down to the beach and have a swim and take a day off." That sounded fair enough, so we went.

Well, of course we had to run right into Miss Bruere the same night in a dancing pavilion. She was with a big, high-class party, but she sailed over when she saw us, and shook hands, and her eyes sparkled, and I said to myself: "If I was Monty——" But she was saying to him: "I wish that you'd give me some chance to thank you, Mr. Merrick, but you're such a retiring celebrity."

Monty stared at her. "Thank me?" he said.

"I don't know how to do it," she said,

"but I'd like to have you give me a chance to try."

It looked to me as though Monty was going to get something that he didn't expect in a minute, but he never got it, for just then here comes Lou Gross in a brand-new suit and overcoat and a glass stopper in his shirt front, and he took Miss Bruere's arm.

"Hello, Monty!" Lou said, as fresh as though they were teammates. "Seeing the big city?" And there's little bright-eyed Billy, the child mechanic! Well, well—be careful, my sons! This town is full of live ones." And then he said to Miss Bruere: "This is my dance, you know."

I was watching her, and if Lou Gross had any chance with her right at that minute I'll sign the pledge and vote "California dry!" Monty was swallowing hard, and I thought to myself it's lucky Lou Gross was with a party of ladies or he wouldn't be starting in the Sacramento the next night unless he started in an ambulance, with a doctor for mechanic. But looks never killed anybody yet. Monty had been passed on the turn again by Lou Gross. So we went down and bowled for an hour. Monty pretty near killed a pin setter twice, and I'll bet they had to repair the back of that alley end the next morning!

I went up to the city early in the afternoon before the race and out to the garage to take a look at things, and from there blew around to a place where they make silver dollars, and I had them make me twenty of them. I said to myself: "I'm going to do it right for once. Lou Gross, I'll bet, buys fifty cents' worth at a time!" I looked around a good deal, but finally a jewelry-store fellow sold me a silver kind of purse, like a young trunk, with a book and powder dingus and a small place for nickels and dimes in it, and everything but a folding bed and a toothbrush, I guess, and it was twenty-

four dollars. So I dug up, and the fellow put the initials V. B. and M. M. on it and said he'd send it. He said those little mouse traps were all the rage with the ladies, and I guess it was, all right. But these women sure get some funny rages, don't they? If I had have been a woman, I would rather have had a box of chewing gum or a season ticket to a theater myself.

I thought I might have a good hot steak that evening, because I had forgot to have lunch, and the race started at midnight, so it would be some time before we'd eat again. But on the way to the garage I remembered that I had spent my last four dollars for that rig-amajig for Miss Bruere, and, anyway, I wasn't very hungry. So I was waiting at the shop when Monty showed, about eight o'clock, and we began putting on the last touches. It didn't take long, but we kept fiddling around, because, of course, a fellow has got to keep busy the last few hours before a race or he'd go crazy. At half past eleven we turned her over and nosed through town to the control by the newspaper office where the race was to start.

It was a big field—fifty-one entries—and they were to get away two minutes apart, beginning at midnight, because of the bad San Francisquito and Tejon Cañons, where they didn't want a lot of cars to pile up. The theory was that the drivers wouldn't see much of each other that way until along about daylight, over on the desert side. I had started in a good many races by this time with Monty, but never in a big road race, and it was interesting to me. Each car had a searchlight on a stand-ard by the mechanic in addition to its regular equipment of lamps, and these big white lights were flashing around as the cars were jockeyed into place. We were all expecting rain, so all of us carried storm aprons and slickers. There was a heavy fog that night, and some of the crews had their slickers

on. Of course there was the infernal racket of fifty racing cars, and a big siren on the newspaper office giving us the "good luck," and policemen's whistles blowing, when you could hear them, and the gongs of the street cars trying to get through the crowds. And, believe me, there was some crowd, too. I didn't know so many people in Los Angeles could keep their eyes open and find their way around after nine o'clock at night!

Our car number was 42, but we had drawn fifteenth start. I noticed a lot of headline drivers and their entries, but the man I wanted to see most was Lou Gross. He had a big new Federal that had been rebuilt from a stock car especially for this road race, and we hadn't had a glimpse of it yet, although there had been pictures of it in the papers. He had drawn the nineteenth start, and his car number was 7. Pretty soon I spotted it, over near the curb, and Lou was leaning out of it, pulling on his helmet and talking to Virginia Bruere. She was with that old lady that was always sticking around somewhere, and so I had an idea.

I said to Monty: "I think that's George Hill over there by the curb. He's waving to you to come over."

George Hill was a friend of Monty's—about the biggest mechanic in the game—and Monty hadn't seen him for a long time. My driver had his helmet and goggles on, and he couldn't make out that I was telling him a yarn. So he climbed out and started over, jerking at the elastic on his goggles, but he didn't get them off until he was right on top of Lou Gross. Then Miss Bruere saw him, and I could see that she was introducing him to her mother, or whoever it was, and some more classy people. Then she reached right across Lou Gross' wheel and took Monty's hand. If she said what she looked, it was: "Monty, all you've got to do is to ask me and I'm yours," but I

suppose it was more likely something about wishing him all the luck in the world. Monty fussed around for a minute, and then he looked for George Hill but he couldn't see him. That was funny, too, because Hill was in New York City then. So Monty came back and said I must have been mistaken, and I said, well, it looked like George, anyway.

The first car went off up the hill from the starting line at midnight sharp. The heavy fog kept the smoke low, and by the time we got the word we were plowing through a regular bank of it and had to run slow. I'd like to find the man who first invented using castor oil in race-car cylinders, too, by the way. I don't know what that start must have been for the last cars that got away. We only made forty miles up that hill, but when we got through on the other side of the tunnel that's there it was a little clearer, so we lit out.

I have to explain that each mechanic had two fusees when he started, with orders to light one in the road three hundred feet behind his car if he had to stop anywhere for repairs. The rule was that the mechanics must turn those fusees in at the Bakersfield control whether they had been used or not. This was to make sure that each man had put his signal out if he stopped and then had run back, after the repairs were finished, to get the burned stick before he started again, so there would be no danger of cars piling up. We passed two of these things burning in the San Francisquito Cañon, which made us in thirteenth place, as no one had passed us. The rate Monty was driving, they weren't going to, either, and I knew he was thinking of Lou Gross—eight minutes behind us in the start and ready to drive his wheels off to beat us.

Well, just before daylight we came out on the flat north of that second range of mountains, and there was a

fusee burning in the road. We came down on it, with our searchlight thrown on the car ahead, just as the mechanic ran back and picked up the butt of the burned stick. I caught one good look at him and pretty near fell out of the car. It was that little Frenchman, Lamar, driving with Lou Gross!

He grabbed up the fusee and put the flame out in the dust, and then he started on a run for the Federal. He wasn't far ahead of us, but he sure could run. Lou Gross started before the mechanic caught up, and the Frenchman put on one last burst of speed, caught hold of the extra casings rack on the rear, and climbed in some way, and Lou Gross looked over his shoulder, with our searchlight shining on his face, and grinned and went off ahead of us. We found out later that Lou had paid a country fellow money to show him a short cut that had saved him fourteen minutes. Maybe if it was Monty that had known about the short cut I wouldn't say anything, but I don't believe, at that, that Monty ever would have played that sort of a game. The rules don't say anything against it exactly, but it's understood when a road race starts that the cars are going to follow the same route to the finish. If they don't, it isn't a race—it's a geography contest! Well, let that go. All that counts is that we were driving into daylight about a hundred miles from Los Angeles, and Lou Gross was leading us.

After that, the race was just a pursuit event for us. We didn't think of anything but catching Lou Gross, and when cars passed us or we passed other cars—which was happening all the time because of accidents and principally tire trouble—we didn't even bother to keep track of them. We were out after Lou Gross.

I never had seen Monty the way he was that day. He drove like a wild man. Evidently we had more bad luck

than Gross did, because he kept gaining a little on us and I know he didn't have as good a car as we did and I know he wasn't as good a driver as Monty—not that day, anyway. We just piled through. I would hate to take the chances again that we took that morning. Sometimes nights now I wake up thinking of one of them—a sharp turn at a little summit and straight down into a cañon after you make it. We were doing, I guess, forty miles when we went into that curve, and had just swung it when we ran square into a freight team. It was either wreck the car in a mangling mass of mules or run up the left-hand bank. Monty threw her to the left, and I thought for a minute the nose of the car was going to come over on top of us. The teamster had stopped by then, and we rolled back onto that grade and went by him on the outside with about half an inch between his mules and outfit and our inside hub caps. I'll bet that driver got off the course after that until the last cars were through!

I was having a busy little time all to myself, and I wasn't feeling very good, some way. At the Bakersfield control I had got a sandwich, but just as we pulled out Monty hit a railroad track and I had to grab to stay in the car. Mr. Sandwich went up higher than bread and ham usually get even in these war times, and then I remembered that I hadn't had anything to eat since the morning before. Well, I says, I won't have time to worry about that—and I didn't. I only had to watch the tires and the shock absorbers, and be ready to get out any second to put on a new tire or clean out the air valve or something, and read the road for Monty and pump oil and keep the air pressure up in the gas tank, and occasionally drop back and hang on with my necktie to tighten a strap on the extra-tire rack, or batter the threads on a loose nut or something. Between times I kept Mon-

ty's goggles as clean as I could, and rubbed his arms, and once in a while I'd take the wheel for a few miles in a straightaway to give him a chance to get the blood back in his fingers. Of course it had to rain, too, for about an hour—a nice, straight, tend-to-business rain that soaked us through and laid out a mud-bath course ahead of us. Oh, automobile road racing is a gentleman's sport, all right—so long as the gentlemen watch it from their front porches or a car window or from under an umbrella!

And then, about sixty miles out of Sacramento, with Lou Gross still ahead of us, and our Eclipse running smooth as a watch, in about third or fourth place, as near as we could guess, Monty misjudged a high center, while we were doing better than sixty miles, and it stopped us so quick that I went out on my shoulder into the next county and Monty was doubled over the wheel like closing a jackknife. I wasn't hurt, as far as I could make out, but when I got back to the car and shut off the gas I saw that Monty was. It was more than just his wind. I got him out on the ground, and his face scared me. Some country people came running and brought water. Monty came out of it for just a minute, spitting blood, and awful green around the lips, and he whispered to me: "Take her on, Billy," and then went off in a faint again.

The car wasn't hurt. I was all right. I couldn't do anything for Monty. And the one rule of the racing game is: "Keep going!" I turned to a big strong farmer boy standing near there and I said: "Will you drive as mechanician for me?"

His face got red, but he jumped forward. "You bet you're whistlin'!" he said. "Want me to?"

"Turn her over," I said, "and we'll see if we can back off this high center."

That boy was a regular country edi-

tion of Sandow. He turned the engine over and then jerked down a fence rail and had one side of the car pried up so that I could make my rear wheels bite, in less than no time. We made one or two false starts, and then she caught and went backward out of those ruts, roaring. I threw in my clutch and set the lever forward again. "Jump!" I yelled, and he jumped, and we were off.

I showed him how to pump oil and air, and then I left him alone. The old Eclipse just sang me a tune, and I had a chance to show how much I had learned from Monty Merrick. I kept saying: "It's for Monty and the little girl." And when the big car hit a turn too fast and skidded, or when I'd slam her a little too hard on a down grade and scare myself out of a year's growth, I'd think about my poor little driver, maybe with his vitals all smashed up, and I'd keep my head and straighten her nose around into it again and get away. We passed a car about twenty miles along, then somebody came up from behind and tried to pass us, but we managed to keep them in the dust, and then we struck the straightaway leading down toward Sacramento and the river, and I opened her up for fair. "It's now or never for Monty and the little lady," I said to myself, and I yelled to the farmer boy to hang on. He was scared—I knew that—but he kept pumping oil and stayed with me, and about twelve miles from the finish I saw a car ahead, sort of flagging itself along like a deer that's been shot, and when I got nearer I knew it was Lou Gross. There was something wrong, but he didn't want to take a chance of stopping to fix it. I went by him at seventy miles an hour, and cut in front of him so sharp that I could almost hear the tires scrape. I thought that he looked up quick as the nose of that good old Eclipse came up to his elbow, and I hoped he knew who was driving her, because I didn't like Lou Gross' style,

and I wouldn't have been bashful about showing it.

We didn't stop for anything much from there in. We went around a street corner along toward the end with a crowd of people yelling and flocking back out of the way of our skidding rear wheels, and I got the black-and-white checker flag, and the Eclipse 42, with Billy Haley, mechanic, driving, and Wallace Ottman, a farmer boy, pumping oil, went into fifth place across the line. The checkers did some lightning calculating in the next five minutes, and the chart showed us in second money. And Lou Gross nowhere! Nowhere! He didn't finish—went out of it with his poor old heart-broken boat about three miles from home!

I was about all in, but I couldn't stop long, because a fellow looked up the southbound trains for me and there was one leaving that I could just make. That euchred me out of a meal again, but I wanted to get back to Monty, and I had a ham sandwich and a cup of coffee that was so bad I wouldn't have poured it in my worst enemy's radiator. So I borrowed twenty dollars from that fellow and bought a ticket to the little town Monty had been taken to. As soon as I got on, the porter brought me a telegraph blank, and I sent a wire to Los Angeles. Then I went to sleep in my seat, and the conductor woke me up and they had to carry me off the train. Somebody grabbed my shoulder, and it hurt like blazes, but I didn't remember very well about little things that evening.

I got braced up some with a cup of real coffee at a sort of hospital place where Monty was, and then they took me in to see him. The doctors said he was pretty bad. But he was conscious, and I told him the news. He was too weak to do anything but squeeze my hand, but that felt good. I thought I'd cheer him up a little and tell him some-

thing about my end of the drive, but right then the floor hit me across the back of my neck and the room turned upside down and all the lights went out, and the next thing I knew it was morning.

A nurse came in—I didn't know they had any nurses as pretty as that one was—and she brought me a big breakfast and said Monty was resting better. But I wasn't to see him until afternoon and must get some more sleep myself, she said. There was a bad ache in my shoulder, and I told the nurse about that and she smiled, and said yes, she wouldn't be surprised if there was, and that I had a broken shoulder blade from being pitched out of the car the day before. I thought she was joking, but if she was the joke was on me, because I found out afterward that that was right. What do you know about that? I hadn't even felt it.

I went to sleep again then, after I'd had a lot more food, and when I woke up it was getting kind of dark outside and I had slept all day. Then they said I could go in and see Monty.

He was a lot better, but had to lie awful still, and they said he'd have to have an operation before he could get around again. "Well," I said to Monty, "that's bad luck." But he said it wasn't as bad as though we'd stalled the old Eclipse and let Lou Gross beat us.

That pretty nurse looked at me kind of funny and said: "Or both of you been killed!"

Well, that was true, too.

And just then a doctor came in, smiling, and he said there was a lady to see us with her aunt. I said: "All right; bring them in." And Monty looked at me, but he was too weak to ask any questions, and I was glad he couldn't, right then.

So the door opened, and that little Bruere girl came running in and threw herself beside the bed, but very quietly

and softly, and she slid an arm under Monty's head and brushed the hair back from his eyes, and she said: "Oh, Monty, boy—you're all right, aren't you? They said—the papers all had the news——"

Monty was pinching himself to see if he was alive or had got into heaven with a crowd by mistake; but I didn't notice him trying to get away from that little girl. His eyes were as big as spark plugs, and he kept swallowing hard and blinking.

I said: "What did the papers have about it?"

Miss Bruere looked at me and blushed, and then she gave a kind of cry and turned toward the bed again. "They said you were killed, Monty!" she gasped.

Then the doctor came over with that swell old dame I had always seen with Miss Bruere. He said: "The boy was given up for dead before they got him in here. But he'll be all right now if we keep him quiet. Perhaps you all better go out now to rest him."

Monty rolled his head over then, and reached for that little girl's hand, kind of timidlike, but he got the hand. "Let them stay—a minute," he said. "If I—don't get this—straightened out—I will—die!"

This sort of embarrassed Miss Bruere somehow, and she drew back a little. "It's all straight, Monty," she said, and then she flushed up again and sat on a chair by the bed. But I saw that she didn't take her hand away from Monty. "They telegraphed that you needed me," she said.

"Who did?" Monty said.

I began to think it was time for me to be getting out of there.

Miss Bruere said: "I don't know. The telegram was signed William Haley."

Monty looked at me, and I looked back and wouldn't let him see that I

was rattled and scared stiff. Pretty soon he said: "Oh!" And that was all.

The little girl said: "I thought for a long time you never even knew there was such a person as Virginia Bruere, Monty. But you always sent the flowers and things when I was feeling miserable because I couldn't make you look at me. I can't understand it all yet, but there's plenty of time for that."

"Flowers?" Monty said. "Flowers—and things?"

I saw he was most likely going to steer into another fence if I didn't flag him, so I said to the doctor: "Hadn't we better go now, so you can look at his tongue or something?" But Monty interrupted:

"No, I'm all right. Wait a minute! Tell me—Virginia—about—the—flowers."

So she told him. Monty began to stare at me. I turned away and looked out of the window, and I could see a train coming a long ways off, and lights beginning to shine from little farm-houses, and it looked sort of cozy and homelike and settled down and married and all. I faced Monty, and he was holding that little girl pretty tight, I thought.

"So it was you, Billy?" he said, awful quiet. "How did you do it?"

I knew what he meant by that. "Oh, it wasn't much," I said. "I had a few dollars soaked away and——"

"I know you didn't, Billy," he said, and he sounded kind of choky. "And you know you didn't. How did you get the money——"

Then I had a hunch the whole game was up because there was a queer light coming into his eyes. Pretty soon he said: "Come over here, Billy." And I went over to the bed, and he took hold of my hand with one of his that happened to be lying around loose. "The night before we started," Monty said,

awful slow, and not letting me look away, "I asked you for your Belgian wrench—the big one. Three or four days before you told me it was mislaid. I didn't think about it then—either of those times——"

"Well?" I said, trying to bluff it through.

"Well, Billy," he said, "how many of those Belgian tools have you left?"

So I knew it wasn't any use after that. "Oh, I've got the oil can," I said, and they all laughed, and Monty wouldn't let go of my hand, but he was holding that little Bruere girl pretty tight, I thought.



SOFT TIES

THE late Rafael Joseffy, famous piano virtuoso and teacher, was the object of much adoration among his young-lady pupils. One of them, noting that he always wore a black windsor tie, thought it would be a romantic souvenir to possess one that the master had worn.

"Oh, Mr. Joseffy," she entreated on one occasion, "do let me have one of your old ties! I'd love to——"

"Why an old one, my dear Miss H.?" he asked innocently. "My wife makes them for me, and I will get her to make you a new one."



CONSIDERABLE LODGE!

CHARLEY HARVEY, who for a long time has had the lunch-room concession at the Polo Grounds, New York, at one time employed a negro chef, known only as "Slim Jim." Harvey was very proud of Jim and regarded him as his most valuable asset, for Jim could slice meats thinner than any boarding-house mistress in captivity. But Harvey was also a crank on punctuality—it is his one hobby, and he demands that all his employees report daily at the ball park, promptly on time. So when Jim slunk in the entrance of the Polo Grounds one afternoon, two hours late, Harvey approached him with fire in his eye and demanded an immediate explanation.

"I done joined a new lodge last night, boss, and they 'nitiated me!" was Jim's excuse, as he stood before his irate boss with bowed head.

"What's that got to do with you coming here two hours late?" shouted Harvey angrily. "It didn't take them all night to initiate you, did it?"

"Well, I won't go so far as to say it took 'em *all* night, boss," returned Jim, "but it sure did take a long time—you see they done made me an officer!"

"They made you an officer the first night!" exclaimed Harvey. "I don't believe it; you'll have to get a better one than that. What kind of an officer could they make you the very night you joined?"

"They done made me supreme king, boss!" answered Jim proudly.

"Supreme king!" cried the exasperated Harvey. "No lodge in the country would elect you to such high office the night you joined it. Why——"

"Well, you see, boss," interrupted Jim, "that am the *lowest* office this here lodge is got!"

Troubled Waters

By Bertrand W. Sinclair

Author of "Cargo Reef," "Fuzzy Wuzzy," Etc.

Life is a ghastly joke sometimes. It lifts a man to the pinnacle of his dreams—and then blows up the pinnacle. Instance this city man, turned logger

THE first time I met Joe Galloway after he married, I envied him. A friendly, good-natured envy, you understand. He had attained what looked to me like genuine success; he had got somewhere, both in a material and spiritual way. He had a connection that gave him income sufficient for his needs, sufficient to maintain a decent standard of living, and a substantial interest in the business besides, which was slowly but surely building up a competence for him. He had his little circle of friends, and his home. And he was mated to a woman any man might be proud of. I could not see anything a man really craves that was beyond his reach.

I've not had what you'd call a multifarious experience in the way of married folk, but I haven't gone through the world blind. I have seen a lot that lived the proverbial cat-and-dog existence. I've seen a lot more that lived in a state of more or less tolerant indifference. And I have seen a few that appeared to have a corner on confidence and affection and genuine understanding, to be really mated, in the widest meaning of the term. Galloway and his wife seemed to me to be one of the finest examples of the latter that I'd ever come across. Joe was a real man, sterling. If one may know a woman by her ordinary manner, then Norma rang as true as he did. And she was a beautiful woman, too; one of those tall,

perfectly formed, radiant creatures that a man is proud to be seen walking down the street with.

I'd gone to school with Joe Galloway, but I had seen nothing of him for many a long moon, until I ran across him quite by accident on a trip East. We had been chummy kids, and we had drifted apart because Joe was one of those quiet beggars that knows what he wants and stays everlastingly on the trail of his purposes—and I'm a rolling stone, a full-fledged brother in the order of the wandering foot. But time and distance made scant difference. He had a warm recollection of me, and he insisted that I make his home my headquarters. I did, and spent nearly three weeks with them. They made me feel one with themselves—and, as I said, I envied them in their happiness. If they were not happy and contented, there is no such satisfying state of mind.

I came back to the coast in due time, and while I didn't write, because I'm not much on correspondence, I did retain some very vivid impressions of Joe and Norma Galloway. I liked to think of them like a pair of birds in their nest, while I was knocking about in logging camps, with bolt cutters and all the roving, restless lot my way of life took me among. A man playing a lone hand finds his life full of bleak spots. He can't dodge them. And I suppose I thought of those two often because their lives seemed full of de-

sirable things which had eluded me. As I saw it, they had attained as near to the ideal as we can ever reasonably expect to come.

So you can judge of my surprise and know that I was filled with deep wonder and kindred emotions when I came out on the wharf at Coderre Landing just as a tubby coaster backed away and plumped into Joe Galloway sitting on a war bag, dressed in mackinaws and calked boots like any logger. I'd never seen him in such garb. I hadn't seen him at all in four years, and he had a week's growth of beard—but I knew him. And I knew by the way his eyes widened and then narrowed that he knew me. I spoke to him. For a second I thought he meant to refuse recognition. Then he stuck out his hand.

"Hello, Steve!" he said. "It's a long time since we met."

"It is, and I sure never expected to meet you here," I blurted out.

His face darkened a trifle.

"No," he answered slowly, "I don't suppose you did. Still—I'm in a logging country, dressed like a logger. In fact, I am a logger. Do I look the part?"

I had to admit that he did, although I had no idea what he was driving at.

"You're a friend of mine, aren't you, Steve?" said he.

"I certainly am," I replied.

"Well, then," he continued, in a weary sort of tone, "just take me for granted. I'm here, going to work in a shingle-bolt camp. I'm a woodsman, and my name is Joe Hall. Just remember that, and don't ask me how it comes to be that way. Will you? I'm here, but I don't know how long I'll be here, nor where I'll be headed when I leave. And I don't want to be reminded that I was ever anything else, or that things were ever any different."

Of course, I told him I would meet him halfway on that proposition, and

we went up to the Coderre Hotel and had a drink, Joe packing his war bag over his shoulder, as if he had done it all the days of his life. We talked more or less perfunctorily, haltingly, dodging consciously old days and old themes. I found out that he was bound for the bolt camp under whose owner I myself held a five-hundred-cord contract. He seemed a little glad of that, and asked me a lot about my camp and prospects. Then, after a little, he asked the way to Ryder's. I showed him, and he started out. I wanted him to wait an hour or so till I got my business transacted, but he seemed anxious to get on, and I didn't urge my company upon him.

And I watched him hike off down an old skid road that led to Ryder's camp at Skeleton Point, wondering. Naturally I wondered. When a man sloughs everything that makes life worth while and turns up at the hardest job on the Pacific coast with a different name, and something hard and bitter in his eyes, there's something radically wrong. I didn't ask him what it was. I had no intention of asking, of prying into his affairs merely to satisfy my own very human curiosity. In the language of the undertaker, it was his funeral. But I wondered. I surely did. I didn't think he'd committed any crime. He didn't act like a fugitive. He seemed to me more like a man who had come some terrible cropper and lost all heart for everything. And it must have been something sinister and very sweeping, for he wasn't the sort of man who lets go easily.

What I saw of him afterward only confirmed those first impressions. He stuck at the Ryder job, and he used to come down to my camp every few days and play crib with me in the evening. There wasn't much of the old life in him. Not that he was wearied with the work, because he was a powerful man. Whatever ailed him in his soul, his body

hadn't suffered. I've lived in the open most of my life, doing things that take endurance and muscle, and he was physically a better man than I. But where he used to sparkle, to be full of the devil, now he would sit around quietly, always immersed in his own thoughts, an absent look stealing over his face if he were left long to himself. And he never spoke of anything east of the Rockies, although the coast States seemed like a well-read book to him. So far as speech and actions went, the first thirty years of his life that I knew directly and indirectly seemed to have been blotted out. He never talked about it, and I dare say he didn't even want to think about it.

Things ran along like this for a month or so. Joe mentioned at last that Ryder was giving the men rotten grub. I put in my oar at that. I had a contract under Ryder, but we hadn't much use for each other—and I was short-handed, too.

"You come down here and cut bolts for me," I proposed. "I can't pay more per cord than Ryder does, but I'll guarantee you better food."

He considered this a minute.

"All right," he said indifferently. "It'll be a change, anyway."

He landed in my camp at ten the next morning and went to work. I can't say that we got any closer for all that we worked in sight of each other by day and slept under the same roof in the same room at night. Joe remained a silent, preoccupied man. But he had decent food to eat, and I had an efficient shingle-bolt cutter, and, in addition, an able crib player to pass the lonely evenings.

I don't know why, but I felt sorry for him. There was nothing concrete in his speech or action to arouse that feeling. It was just an atmosphere, one that I should likely never have sensed if I hadn't known him under different circumstances. I couldn't get it out of

my head that the man had suffered, was still suffering, still being seared by some inner fire. It isn't natural for a man of that type to cut loose from everything and everybody. He never got a letter, never seemed to expect one, never wrote one. He didn't seem to have any care for the future, any ambition. He lived from one day to another, just putting in the day. It seemed to satisfy him. But it didn't satisfy me. It didn't seem natural.

When he had been with me about six weeks we began to get some bad summer winds on the gulf. Skeleton Point lies just at the entrance to one of the worst tidal passages on the whole North Pacific. The thirty-odd miles of the gulf's width is pinched to a pair of half-mile narrows—one against Vancouver Island, one on the mainland side, where my camp stood. Through this pent channel the tides come and go with devilish ferocity. Woe to the small craft caught therein at the full run either way. Even the powerful coasters lie up for the slack of the tide, for few have power to buck that tide race, and if they run with it, the danger is little less. Reef and point thrust out from the closing shores to fling the headlong current this way and that in great whirls that will suck down a sixty-foot timber as if it were a match. The rivers of the Western watershed have their "hell gates"—but that gateway of the sea which I speak of, leading through narrow reaches to the open water of Queen Charlotte Sound, is the true gate to hell for those who take it otherwise than at slack water.

This snarling trap for mariners rose to the zenith of its fury a few hundred yards past the lagoon in which I boomed my shingle bolts for Ryder. Snarling rips lifted their torn crests offshore from my cabin, when the ebb run met the gulf swell. And just within Skeleton Point where the pent channel widened suddenly, beginning there and extend-

ing its circumference past my lagoon, there swirled and circled ceaselessly—save for a brief hour at slack water—a huge back eddy, in which sailed around and around all the driftwood and flotsam spewed through Hell Gate or brought to its door by ebb and flood. Round in its circle the gray-green water swept, swifter and more swift, until at full run in or out it raced, and a hollow whirlpool spun in the center like a top.

About three weeks after Joe came to work for me, we sat at dinner one day. Low tide came at one-thirty—the end of a big flood. It had become my habit to watch those tides. The tremendous inrushings and outpourings fascinated me. And I, like other men, had seen strange and fearful things happen there. Once, indeed, the foolhardy skipper of a coastwise boat, with ninety lives under his hand, tried to buck through Hell Gate. He had a sixteen-knot-boat contempt for fast water, and a schedule of gulf ports to make. He fought tide and whirl and rip and eddy till he laid Skeleton Point abeam. There his headway was no more than the race of the stream, and while he quivered and lurched a great swirl caught and swung him hard on the point, crushing the steel skin of his ship like so much cardboard—and of the ninety, only a dozen clawed desperately ashore. I saw that. I saw, too, a thirty-foot fishing boat go down by the nose in a whirlpool, go down and down till the water closed over her, to be shot afloat, keel up, ten minutes later, her crew of three drowned like rats in the pilot house. In no spirit of irony was that grim spot called Hell Gate.

As I said, we sat at our food, three of us. I gazed at the water foaming by the point, and saw nothing but the racing tide. A second later, with my eyes on my plate, Joe startled me with the vehemence of his exclamation:

“For God’s sake, look at that!”

I picked the boat up at a glance, and

knew that in the moment of my inattention the tide had vomited her out of Hell Gate and past the black teeth of Skeleton Point. But she was in hard case, helpless in that terrible sweep, lurching heavily down to her sheer strake. Thus she would lie canted on her side half a minute on end. Then she would straighten loggily. Again she would spin in the grip of a whirl, a masterless craft, at the whimsical mercy of the sea. I knew that by the way she yawed and spun, and the silence of her—no chatter of engine, nor dull popping of exhaust. Her power plant was dead. She was about a forty-footer, of the work-boat type. As for her crew—one man stood by the stumpy signal mast, and that was all I saw. He waved a hand to us airily, as if it were all in the day’s work, that sickening lurch, that uncontrollable spinning in the swirls.

We were all outside on the bank by then, my third man, Joe, and myself. I squinted seaward and saw very near at hand the tide rips tumbling in a rising gulf swell.

“There’s only one chance for him on God’s green earth,” said I. “If he goes into those rips without steerageway—good night. If the back eddy catches him, we might heave him a line as she swings past. Come on!”

Past the mouth of the lagoon, a low cliff gave straight down on the eddy’s sweep, and I had often noticed that driftwood making its interminable round passed under the cliff. At the end of my cabin hung a coil of half-inch rope. This I took hurriedly, and a link from a boom chain weighing perhaps half a pound for a weight whereby to cast the line. Skirting the lagoon, we three came to the cliff and stood by to watch, I knotting fast the weight. And by the turn of chance or the hand of Destiny, the back eddy caught him in the nick of time.

As he swung out of the seaward

stream into the eddy and turning from those ominous rips began his swift circle inshore and toward us, I knew that his chance was small if we failed to reach him on the first or second turn. I knew his trouble by the boat's loggy swing. Without power to give her steerageway, she had swept through Hell Gate, taking water by the barrel, escaping destruction against cliff and reef only by some miracle of the sea. But she rode deep, and listed heavily now to starboard, now to port, as if all weary of the struggle. Her buoyancy was gone. If she circled in the eddy till she drew to its center that spinning whirl would suck her down.

"Give me the line!" Joe said, as she shot down toward us.

It was the first word he had spoken, and with it there shone in his eyes such a gleam of resolve as I had never surprised there—as if before a fellow being's peril his own embittered soul had cast off its lassitude, had fired with the human instinct to do, to help, to save.

He swung the link on the rope's end as a sling-shot thrower whirls his missile, and as the boat—now showing the name *Grosbeak* in bold white against her black bow—came abreast, he shot the line with a tremendous heave of his body. I could not have cast it as far by forty feet, I know. But the throw failed. It was scarce in a man's arm to bridge the distance. The speed of the current helped to fool him besides. The line fell short, and to the rear.

"Haul in!" Joe panted. "Haul fast!"

I hauled, and as I hauled he threw off his clothes, his heavy boots, and catching the loose end of the line, knotted it about his breast under the armpits.

"Ahoy, you!" he yelled. We were running now along the bank to keep abreast. "Swim for it. I'll meet you with the line."

It was a desperate chance for both of them. But the man leaning against the pilot house threw off shoes and cap, and, running aft, poised lightly on the stern. Then he waved a hand and plunged headfirst, rose, and faced cliffward, borne swiftly along on the eddy, but swimming with slow, vigorous strokes. Galloway—or Hall, as he wished to be known—sprinted along the cliff and gained some headway on the swimmer.

"Pay out!" he gritted. "And keep along with the current if you can."

Then he plunged, thirty feet to the gray-green sweep of the eddy.

It was a great fight, with us two helpless watchers and every chance against that hardy soul from the *Grosbeak*. With a line on Joe, we could haul him in. The other had to reach him or drown. And it seemed to me and my bolt cutter that he lost ground, that the eddy carried him out for all the power of his stroke. But we told each other that if he could hold his own Joe would get him.

And he did. With a scant fathom of line left in my hands, and the *Grosbeak* man fast weakening, they met. I saw Joe grip him, and saw him relax in that grip. Then we hauled them in and lifted them out on a flat rock, both near gone—for the pull of the rope against the drag of the tide held them under half the time.

The man was conscious, but utterly exhausted, too spent to speak. He lay on his side, breast heaving, hair in clammy strands across his brow. A good-looking, clean-built chap of thirty, maybe. All he had on him was a thin undershirt and a pair of cotton overalls. Their damp cling threw into clean contours the depth of his chest and the rosy muscle of his arms. His face was almost boyish. He lay there panting, blinking up at me. Slowly a wry grin, an odd expression for one who had been near to death, stole across his face.

He sat up and looked at the *Grosbeak*, now on her second swing, drawing fatefully near to the vortex.

"I wonder if she'll make it?" he murmured indifferently.

"It's about a hundred to one that she won't," I answered.

He looked at Joe appraisingly.

"You're all right," said he, "to take a long chance like that for a rank stranger. I figured it was thumbs down for me. I knew I couldn't swim ashore in that current, and I knew she'd founder as soon as she struck those rips."

"She isn't going to strike the rips," my bolt cutter put in. "Look at the old packet."

The *Grosbeak* lay over on her side and skidded—that is the only way I can describe her action—skidded right into the whirlpool, and spun there a dozen turns. Then, curiously, her broad fantail stern sucked down, down till the bluff bow pointed skyward, and so spinning, she disappeared.

"Either way," said the man, with a shrug of his shoulders, "it made no difference."

"Well, you didn't," Joe observed quietly.

"Thanks to you, I didn't," he said. "Still—I wasn't particular."

I looked at him attentively. He nursed his chin in one hand, staring at the place where the *Grosbeak* had been, a queer, pursed-up twist to his lips. For a man who had cheated death by scant ten feet of manila, he was singularly calm, even indifferent.

"How did it happen?" I asked. "The *Grosbeak's* a stranger through these waters."

"Nanaimo boat," said he. "Belongs to the G. G. Fish Company. We started through Hell Gate in plenty of time to get through on the first of the run. But she dropped her propeller. You can guess the rest. Except that the skipper—there were just the two of us—got panicky when she began to take

water in some of the boiling places. He was so afraid for his life that he threw it away."

"How?" I inquired.

"Took the dinghy to row ashore," the man grinned. "A whirl caught him."

He turned his thumb down expressively.

"So here I am," he continued, "safe and sound, which I didn't look for. Sitting on a rock in a shirt and overalls. Oh, well, it'll be all the same a hundred years from now."

"Less time than that," I smiled. "In the meantime, come on to the cabin and get some dry clothes on—both of you."

That is how Ed Broderick happened into my camp at Skeleton Point and gave me a pair of human enigmas to observe. He seemed quite indifferent as to where he went or what he did. A certain cynically cheerful humor came over him when he was dried and fed. He had no strings on him, he declared. The G. G. Company owed him no wages, and his duty to them ended with reporting the matter. And the upshot of that near-tragedy was that Broderick took on a job with me, cutting cedar into bolts for the hungry shingle saws.

From the very beginning he seemed to exercise a tonic effect on Joe. I don't attempt to explain it. I know that it worked out that way. The two became fast friends. Broderick could always banish those silent spells of brooding under which Joe fell. He could make him grin, rouse him out of that deadly absorption in himself. They had in common the fact that both were afflicted with the itching foot, both had a past of which they never talked. Both were men of education, both were of the East. It showed in their inflections, their mannerisms. But the territory beyond the Rockies lay always ignored in the speech.

Otherwise it seemed that from the

Gulf of Georgia to San Diego harbor their trails had crossed and recrossed unknowingly in the last four years. Many the incident they recalled where each had been among those present—a riot in a California hop field, a Frontier Day in Oregon, the stranding of a battleship on the bleak Washington coast. Brothers in unrest, they were, and I, listening to their talk of these things, wondered more and more what turn of fortune's wheel had set Joe Galloway's feet in these troubled ways.

Time passed, however, and Joe seemed to brighten up. So far as Broderick went, he was a mighty man with ax and saw, and my bolt piles rose in corded ricks. Some devil rode him, too, at times, but it rode him to drink more than was good for him, and to fight like a tiger when the liquor was on him. He seldom sat and pondered. He was all action. In the following two months, he broke out at divers times in this fashion. And one evening when the three of us were sitting with our pipes—I having let my other man go—Joe took him mildly to task. They had got so chummy that they had planned a prospecting and trapping trip when my contract was finished.

"What satisfaction is there in going on one of these rampages?" Joe asked. "You only hurt yourself and make enemies of the men you bruise up in those wild rows."

"I don't know that it's a matter of satisfaction," Broderick replied thoughtfully. "Only life seems to me now and then to be nothing but a ghastly joke. And I get a crazy impulse to tear everything to pieces."

"What hit *you* below the belt?" Joe asked softly.

"Myself, I guess," Broderick grunted. "Circumstances. Most of us have our skeletons. When mine rattles I hate the noise so bad I try to drown it out any old way."

"While I sit still and listen to the

clatter of the bones—or I used to——" Joe threw out his hands impatiently. "Damn it, you're right, Ed. Life is a ghastly joke sometimes. It lifts a man to the pinnacle of his dreams—and then blows up the pinnacle. Look at me. Five years ago I could say honestly and fervently that the world was mine—or that part thereof that I desired. I had everything a man wants—money, friends, a home, a woman's love. And I had to give it all up. It burned me. It hurts yet. I guess I let it hurt me, because it's always been simmering in my mind, and I've never been able to talk about it to any one—never wanted to. I hugged it to myself, and went about crying to myself against fate. And still—I've often wondered if I'm any different from other men; if the same thing comes to other men, and if they take it the same way?"

He looked up. Broderick was staring absently out over the tide race past Skeleton Point, and Joe met only my mildly questioning gaze. He smiled gently.

"I didn't murder anybody, nor loot a bank, nor commit any felony whatever to send me on the tramp under an assumed name, Steve," he said to me. "I suppose when I put it in plain words it all sounds like a confession of sheer weakness. It was very simple. You remember how everything was with me when you were back there? You remember Norma?"

I nodded.

"Four years ago," he continued, "like lightning out of a clear sky, she told me one day that our life had been an utter failure—that she had ceased to love me, that she had grown to love another man, and there was no use trying to go on.

"Man," he broke out passionately, "it drove me nearly mad, with the combined madness of grief and jealous rage. I knew I loved her, but until I saw myself losing her I never realized

how much she meant to me, how my life was bound up in her. I humiliated myself, pleaded and raved and threatened. It seemed to me a madness that had stricken her. I couldn't see why such a thing had to be. There we were, happy, I thought, in our companionship. We had our home, our little circle of friends, all the beautiful plans for the future that we'd made together. Nothing seemed to count—nothing but the fact that she loved some other man and no longer cared for me—that she was living a lie, and that she was not going to live a lie any longer.

"I didn't know the other man. I never saw him, never learned his name even. I never could visualize him, somehow. But he was there somewhere in the background, with her hopes and dreams focused on him. I couldn't seem to grasp that phase of it, why she should turn away from me, when she had loved me once, as I know she did. We'd had our differences. Every man and woman living in the intimacy of marriage has them. They were trifling things to me, I don't even know if it was a mere succession of petty irritations that brought it about. But there it was. And while she was sorry, while she regretted it, there was only the one way out as she saw it. She had to get away from me, to live her own life in her own way. In every bitter discussion that I forced on her when I was lashing out against the impending break I dreaded so, I could see that she was getting farther and farther away from me, that I had no power to stir in her any emotion except resentment, and a little pity.

"So I threw up my hands. I wanted to play fair, as she had played fair. She wanted to be free, and she was financially dependent on me alone. I cherished a glimmer of hope that she'd come to her senses—as I put it—at the last minute. But she didn't. And so I sacrificed everything, turned it all into

cash. I didn't care. Hell, there was a while I didn't know what I was doing. I had to get quick action or go mad. She was leaving me, but I didn't want economic need to drive her into another man's arms before she was ready. She wanted to avoid that herself. Oh, we talked it over time and again, talked soberly and sensibly when I felt like shutting off the breath in her white throat rather than let her go. That was only white-hot jealousy. I couldn't help it, but I did control it. When I'd cleaned up everything I had about eighteen thousand dollars in cash, and I'd wrecked the foundation of a fortune. But that seemed nothing beside this other dread thing that was happening. That gnawed at me day and night. And I had to move with caution, to avoid open scandal. I wanted to save her that. Oh, it was maddening! But the time came at last. I kept five thousand and gave her the rest. And I hit the trail. I had to. I've been hitting it ever since.

"I never heard from her. I don't know how she's faring. I do know that I can't get away from the hurt of it. I've lost something more than my mate. The heart to buck up and make life give me those things I used to value is clean gone. I strewed that five thousand clear across the continent trying to make myself forget. But I didn't. You can't knife a man that way without leaving a sore wound." I peg along from day to day. But when I think of doing otherwise, when I think of trying to start all over again, I find myself asking "What's the use?" If I could shut out all those old memories. But I can't. My mind keeps eternally on them, like this back eddy, circling around what was and might have been and can't be. I'm a Samson shorn, without the mercy of perishing when the pillars of my house fell about me."

Joe stopped and drew the palm of his hand over his forehead. His eyes

were glistening. He stared for a minute out over the uneasy gulf, unseeing, over Broderick's head. And Broderick's gaze was fixed on him with a queer, half-pitying expression.

"Didn't you ever go back or write to find out if, after all, your wife might have been the victim of an illusion and only realized it when you stepped out of her life?" Broderick asked carelessly.

Joe shook his head.

"No," said he. "I didn't give her up without a struggle, and when I had to I let go completely. I couldn't persuade myself to make another effort. She knew her own mind, and she held to her determination when it was making me suffer like the damned. She was sorry. But I didn't want her pity. I wanted her love."

"You don't get my point," Broderick pursued. "If you ask me, I'd say you acted like a fool—any man's a fool to take a woman's actions for granted until she's committed herself irrevocably. You've been eating your heart out for four years, and yet you don't even know but what she's suffering as much as you do—aching for you to come back. For all you know, the very moment that you were gone and she was free to marry the other man, it may have dawned on her that she didn't want to, that you filled a place in her life no one else could possibly fill. I don't think you've got a very comprehensive knowledge of women, Joe, or of human nature in general. You two loved each other. All right. That being so, you passed together through that peculiar ecstasy of feeling that burns like a flame at mating, and, like a flame, sometimes burns out—but always leaves smoldering embers. A man and a woman can only have that emotional experience at its full intensity, once. When you have had it, it's something that no one and nothing can take away. Its impressions can't be ironed out as you can iron the wrinkles out of a piece of cloth. It's a

bond between a man and a woman as long as their hearts beat. Do you suppose that the hundred and one associations of your life together meant nothing to your wife?"

"They didn't seem to," Joe answered sullenly. "She was sick of it all. She thought she saw happiness in another direction."

"The reason for that you probably know better than I do," Broderick said. "But if I loved a woman I'd take *nothing* for granted. Not even if she swore to her feelings on a stack of Bibles. She'd have to prove her words by her deeds before I gave up hope. If she'd been mine once, I'd almost have to know she was finding comfort in another man's arms before I'd be convinced that her feeling for me was dead. There'd be pain in that, but it would take about that to convince me. And by your own admission you don't know. You haven't given her or yourself a fair fighting chance. It's one thing to act in a whirl of feeling. Things often look altogether different when you've dropped back to everyday living. You took your hurt and ran away and nursed it. You didn't wait to see what happened after you'd done your part. You don't know but she's somewhere nursing a grief that overtook her the minute you took yourself beyond sight and hearing of her."

"No chance," Joe muttered.

"No chance?" Broderick echoed, with a tinge of scorn in his voice. "The law of probabilities is all on your side. I wish I felt my chances as good. I wish that my chance of happiness had been half as good as yours. Would I throw up my hands and go wandering up and down the earth with pain and uncertainty and self-pity like thorns in my flesh? I should say not!"

"You don't understand," Joe answered somberly. "There's some things a man can't put into words. He can only feel them."

"But I do understand," Broderick insisted. "I've been through the mill. A man gets on the grid, and he can only squirm. I know what it is to ache with a pain that isn't physical. But with me it came of actual unescapable knowledge—the pain of sheer unchangeable hopelessness. *You* took a lot of things for granted. Seems to me you ran away under fire."

Joe threw out his hands impotently.

"What the devil else could I do?" he demanded harshly. "She had to be free—free to marry the man she wanted. I could have stood on my rights as a husband. What was the use? She'd only have hated me. It wasn't any light love affair with her. She wasn't that kind. She wanted happiness—she could only see it in a certain direction—but she wanted it to come decently and honorably. There was no ground for divorce. I had to devise a ground. So I deserted her. As I saw it, there wasn't anything else for me to do."

Broderick's eyes gleamed.

"You're a man," he said quietly, "a real man. But a fool for all that, I think. Didn't it ever occur to you that she might really miss you after those years of intimate living? That your clean sweep of everything might have made a gap in her life that nothing but you yourself could fill in again? A woman's human—gifted or cursed, as you like to put it—with all the human vagaries of impulse. Sometimes it takes a grand upheaval to make us see things as they really are—to know ourselves."

Joe got to his feet and threw his arms wide to the sunset, and let them fall by his side.

"Why should I try to fool myself?" he said. "All I want is to forget. That's all."

He went into the cabin. We heard the creak of his bunk as he threw himself down. Broderick clasped both hands over his knees and stared at the

ground. His brows knitted, as over some problem he strove to solve. After a minute, he looked at me.

"Joe unburdened his soul very completely," he said. "Does his right name happen to be Galloway?"

"Why, yes, that's his name," said I—surprised into admission. "How did you know?"

"I didn't know," Broderick muttered. "But I had a hunch."

He sat for a little while, picking up pebbles and casting them over the bank with a flip of his hand. Then he, too, rose and went into the cabin.

The door stood open beside me, and the small window above my head. Every word they uttered within came distinctly to me. I heard Broderick repeat almost word for word, impatiently, challengingly, the last questioning sentences he had put to Joe.

"Why bother me with your theories," Galloway answered roughly. "What is it to you? What do you know about these things I've been fool enough to talk about?"

"I know all there is to know about it," Broderick answered slowly. "A great deal more than you yourself know. I'm the other man."

I drew beyond hearing at that. It lay between the two of them, a matter intimate and grievous, not for casual ears. So I moved to the corner, where only came the indistinguishable drone of their voices, wondering to myself if the devil that rises in men where a woman is concerned would presently set them at each other's throats. They were strong, passionate men. I was a little afraid for them, for I liked them both.

An hour passed. Dusk merged into darkness. Still they talked, their voices never rising above that repressed murmur. Then the lamp flashed its yellow square through the doorway, and both came out. Joe turned away and walked along the cliff slowly, a dim outline in

the night. Broderick stood looking about. Presently he called:

"Oh, Steve!"

"Here!" I answered.

He came and sat down on the ground beside me. The match he laid to his pipe bowl showed his face hard-drawn. His eyes smoldered.

"Did you hear?" he asked.

"I heard you declare yourself," said I frankly. "Then I moved out of ear-shot."

He sat silent for a time.

"Joe doesn't actively blame me," he said at last. "But he resents everything. He's lived within himself so long, bottling up his grief, that he's morbid. I can't do anything with him, can't make him see sense. The thing he ought to do for their own two sakes—write to Norma or go to her and make up—he won't do. You knew her, it seems. You heard his side of it—absolutely true, so far as it goes. But there's two sides to everything."

"Fire away," said I—for I knew by his tone that he was smoldering inside, that he wanted the relief of talk that would neither be misunderstood nor resented.

"Joe made the same mistake that other men have made and regretted," Broderick went on, "as near as I can gather. He let his ambition and his business overshadow his wife and his home. I suppose he felt that everything was fixed and secure and final. And that's a bad thing with any woman young and proud and passionate as Norma Galloway. It was very simple. Joe was getting wholly immersed in his business. He was traveling a lot for his firm. And I happened to wander into her life at a time when she was in a peculiarly receptive state of mind. That sounds commonplace—but I'm not good at analysis. I loved her in my own headlong way. Nothing else mattered to me but her. I knew where I stood. She thought she did. There

wasn't anything sordid or underhand about it. We talked it over from every angle, God knows. She wasn't happy with him. All her feeling for him seemed dead. She knew I loved her, and she believed she loved me, and that for us two life together meant happiness if we could take it up honorably together. So she told him, and you know how he played his part."

"I've known Joe since we were kids," I said. "He's a white man."

"He is," Broderick agreed. "Every inch of him. But, as I said, something of a fool where a woman's heart is concerned. He took too much for granted—let go too easily. He didn't have anything but her word for it—and a woman's word is nothing in matters of this sort. One can talk and talk and never get anywhere. It's deeds that count. He didn't give her a chance. He never saw me, never even knew my name. I wasn't looming a big figure before him to drive him insane with impotent jealousy. But when the big upheaval came, he effaced himself as absolutely as if he had been buried. He made no effort to learn how things went.

"And then"—Broderick bowed his head for a second—"then, after he was gone, and there was nothing to do but wait patiently a little while, get a divorce quietly, and marry me, she woke up. It wasn't me she wanted. It was Joe. She'd loved him in the beginning. When he'd made the complete renunciation, stepped out of her life for good and all, she found something lacking, a place that nobody else could fill, that she wanted him back, that her heart ached to have him back. Oh, you can't ever tell anything about a woman. And yet, I suppose it was only natural. He'd become a part of her life. I was only an incident. I suppose so many things used to rise up and make her long for him. She'd lived with him. The nearest she'd ever been to me was to kiss me shyly once or twice.

"Anyway, once he was gone, it was all different. The money he gave her she banked and left alone. She would no more have lived on it than she would have let me support her. She used to say that she was being punished for breaking a good man's heart for a passing whim."

Broderick lifted his head and laughed harshly.

"Meaning Joe, of course," he said. "It didn't seem to occur to her that I was very deeply involved. The most she would let me do for her was to help her get a position. I happened to have a cousin in the millinery business in Utica, and Norma got work there—enough to live decently on. And when I'd tried every means to move her, and failed, I had to get out and get action or go crazy. So I went on the tramp, like Joe, a good deal. I can live anywhere, under any conditions. And there you are.

"But," he broke out, after a little, "I didn't let go like he did. I wrote to her. Time and again, at first. Every few months since. That's how I know where she is, and how she still feels. She's there yet, pegging away, waiting. She's his wife, legally, in spirit, every way. She's been true as steel. And her one solace is that some time he'll come back, or she'll find out where he is and win him back and make up somehow for these ghastly years.

"And can you see the tragedy in it?" Broderick went on. "He refuses to act. He won't do anything. He says he has suffered till he's numb. And I can't make him see that she has suffered, too, is suffering yet, as he is. It's pride. If I were in his place, I'd have no pride. I'd crawl on my hands and knees in the dust back to her if I could create for myself the longing she has for him. It isn't worth while to be proud and aloof and miserable when all you have to do is reach out your hands for happiness. Two of us can get our feet out

of this deadly coil. Why should all three be lonely and miserable? I know he doesn't want to have it that way. It's just a stubborn streak. He's morbid. What has been can't be helped. But the future, that's a different matter."

"You might write and tell her where he is and how he feels about it," I suggested. "That would be a fine thing to do."

Broderick laughed hard and mirthlessly.

"I suppose I could," he said. "But it would be better if he made the first move. However, I know *she* wouldn't hesitate. Yes, I dare say it would be eminently proper for me to be the god in the machine—to bring them together with a Heaven-bless-you-my-children—and then fade away. Well, I don't know. I'll have to think about that."

He got up abruptly and walked into the cabin. When I followed, he was in his bunk, the blankets drawn over his head. A few minutes later, Joe came in. What sort of truce they had declared I never knew. Between them as men there was genuine liking. If that matter of a woman had stirred up feeling of any intensity between them, they were men enough to repress it.

So, for a matter of two weeks, the days marched past, filled with the monotonous labor of cutting and piling cedar bolts. The fall days were on us, with their long, gray evenings. My bolt contract was about done, and we took it easy, working short hours. The first man in kindled the kitchen fire, and also built another on the ground before the cabin door. When we had eaten we would sit outside under the projecting eave smoking our pipes before the cheerful crackling logs. It was pretty much as it had been before that night of soul unburdenings—except that we talked a bit less freely, there was more of constraint upon us.

Then one evening, in the first gray of dusk, when we had knocked off early and were sitting outside by the fire, watching the same tubby coaster that had brought Galloway to Coderre go lurching past Skeleton Point into the maw of Hell Gate, I heard the clatter of a buggy on the little-used road that ran between the landing and my camp. In a minute it gained the clearing. I saw the figure of a woman beside the driver. A few seconds later she was clambering out and walking toward us with a firm step. Norma Galloway, just as I recalled her, fair strands of hair wind-blown across her face, deep blue eyes shining, lips a trifle parted, her gaze fixed on Joe.

I turned to look for Broderick. He was all but behind the cabin, and he beckoned me imperatively. I followed. It didn't matter, anyway. There was only one man looming before her, and he stood rooted to the ground as if he doubted the evidence of his visual sense.

Broderick strode along the cliff. When I caught up with him he was seated on a log, holding his face in his hands.

"You did write. And she came," I said—for lack of something less obvious.

"Shut up!" he gritted. "I'm not in a talking mood."

I don't know how long we sat there. Broderick did not move, nor lift his head. It grew dark. I looked toward the cabin now and then, and once saw the fire break into a yellow gleam when some one stirred it.

"I guess all's quiet along the Potomac." Broderick lifted his face at last. "I've done my bit. Let's go back."

We walked slowly. Nearing the cabin and the soft glow before it, a stick broke in a shower of sparks and sent up a bright flame that threw into bold relief two figures—Joe on a block seat, his wife curled on the earth beside

him, her yellow head pillowed on his knee, one of his hands prisoned between both hers, the other laid protectingly, tenderly, across her shoulders.

Broderick looked—and whirled abruptly on his heel, drove back into the dark, striding fast, blindly it seemed to me. I caught up to him.

"Man," I breathed, "buck up!"

"I can't go back," he said hoarsely, never slacking a jot of his gait. "I can't. It's a madness I have to fight alone. She loves him, and that's as it should be—but if he'd loved her like I do this wouldn't have been. I'm through. What's the use? What's the use of anything? I've lost. And I'm a hard loser. I can't help it."

"Look here, Ed," I tried to reason with him. "Don't be——"

"Save your breath," he told me in a choked tone that made pity well up in me like a flood. So that I reached for his hand, and my fingers happened to close on his wrist—long enough to feel the mad, racing beat of his pulse before he shook my hand off roughly.

"You can tell them I've quit," he went on. "I *have* quit. I've got to. Look at them. She with her head on his knee, and his arm about her. How could I, feeling the way I do, go back and face them with a grin? No. Look at them! Look!"

I looked, at his insistence. There was nothing to see—a double silhouette, dim in the red glow. And when I turned again Broderick was gone. In that brief span of time he had vanished. Whether over the mossy level to the timber, or whence I do not know. I called him softly, but there was no answer. And presently, with a queer, dread feeling on me, I went back to the fire. They stood up to greet me.

"You remember Norma, Steve?" Joe said.

We shook hands, and Joe put his arm across his wife's shoulder, and she

smiled up at him, and then at me. There wasn't any further explanation needed.

"Ed has gone," I said—and added a white lie to smooth things. "He told me to wish you luck."

It seemed to me a shade of relief crossed both their faces. Love is selfish. But I couldn't blame them.

I gave them the cabin that night and made my bed beside the fire. But I

didn't sleep. No. Broderick loomed too big in my mind.

The back eddy had brought him unwitting to the spot, to straighten a grievous tangle in two lives, to bring peace to unquiet souls. And it might be that the eddy took him away. I don't know. I've often wondered. I know I never saw him, never heard of him again.



REWARD OF THE EARLY BIRDS

IT was eight o'clock in the morning, and two men on the way to business were aware of a large crowd of women gathered in a crush before the unopened doors of a well-known department store.

"Why, do you suppose," asked one man of the other, "do all those women want to reach that store so long before the regular hour of opening?"

"Because," answered his friend, "they are obeying the advertisement in last night's papers: 'Come early and avoid the rush!'"



THE RAILROAD STRATEGIST

A LIGHT-HAIRED, mild-eyed man may be seen almost any day walking through Wall Street. A rather grim twitch to his lips indicates the possessor of latent bulldog propensities, and his career shows high fighting abilities. Ten years ago he was the most-talked-of railroad president in the United States. Yet to-day few persons notice him. He did some great things and sank into oblivion.

Joseph Ramsey, junior, the man who made the Wabash, as a boy began to build railroads in the Alleghany Mountains in the early seventies, when his friend, Andrew Carnegie, was still superintendent of the Pittsburgh division of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The young railroad pioneer spent his spare time studying the strategic problem of taking a railway line eastward into Pittsburgh. Railroad men said it couldn't be done, but when Ramsey's time came, he accomplished his boyhood dream—he carried the Wabash Railroad into the steel city, spending thirty-five million dollars in the campaign. His road was the most costly one in the country.

Why has Wall Street forgotten Ramsey? Because in its eyes he committed the unpardonable crime. After having built up the Wabash, he tried to wrest control of it from George J. Gould. He fought his board of directors. Financial interests look with disfavor on such contests.

Ramsey met the fate of Stuyvesant Fish, who fought Harriman for control of the Illinois Central—the fate of all railroad presidents who oppose powerful directorates. He was overwhelmingly defeated.

Ramsey is now president of his own railroad, the Lorain, Ashland & Southern.

A Chat With You

SOME time ago we said that we didn't like to print stories in which criminals were successful and lived happily ever afterward. We gave as our reason, the opinion that such things don't happen in actual life. We received several well-written letters at the time—some of them would literally astound you if their writers permitted us to publish them—from men who had been convicted of crime, but had turned over a new leaf and succeeded in various professions. They gave their cases as a proof that what we had said about crime in actual life was not so.



THEIR cases prove nothing of the kind. We are not hiding behind the time-honored gag that the exception proves the rule. None of these cases were exceptions. The men from their own accounts were failures as long as they remained criminals. The reason they succeeded was that they ceased to be criminals, and began to devote their gifts to legitimate enterprise. A man who tries to win out as a criminal has thrown down the gauntlet to organized society, and organized society is too strong for any individual whatsoever. You can't beat the bank at Monte Carlo, you can't get rich buying stocks on margin, you can't dam out the incoming tide, and you can't match your little will against the collective wills of a hundred million. Everybody is a little crazy on some subject. Some men think that comfort and happiness are impossible unless they have a shot of whisky every few hours; others believe that life is a dull waste unless they inhale cigarette smoke every so often, and there are others to whom existence seems a

deadly morass unless brightened up by the presence of chorus girls and racing automobiles. Every one nurses some delusion, some mental scar left by a false association of ideas in infancy. The criminal has his, and if he is cured of it he is no longer a criminal.



CROOKS ought to be punished. They should not, however, be condemned to remain crooks always. If they escape legal punishment, this is what happens to them, and this, of course, is the worst punishment of all. For then they are doomed to perpetual failure. We have not been able yet to hit on the correct legal punishment. It should not be framed in a spirit of revenge. It should be a corrective. And that means that it must hurt. You cannot have an ulcerated tooth or a disgruntled appendix removed without pain, and it must hurt to have removed a lot of harmful ideas which have been bred into the very framework of the mind and disposition. After the punishment is over, the criminal should be cured. He should know that it doesn't pay to be a crook, that it never has paid, that it never can pay, that the only way to play the game is straight. Then, having served his sentence, he ought to have a good chance to start over again. The Buddhists in Burma seem to understand some of these things better than the Christians in America. There, if a man is convicted of a crime and goes to jail, he realizes that his punishment is a just one, and that it is really designed to be a benefit to him. He conceives the time spent behind the bars as a period of purification and regeneration. He atones for his sin, he

A CHAT WITH YOU—Continued.

washes it out, he leaves jail a holier and better man, ready to start life over again and with self-respect restored. Is that the way our prisons purify and restore the self-respect? Ask some one who knows them.



SO we can't publish stories of successful crooks for the simple reason that such things don't happen, and we insist upon being as true to life as we can. Perhaps a crook who had been engaged in criminal intrigue through the length of a story would reform and start over again. But don't you see that that would be another story entirely, having to do with the man's regeneration and not his crookedness? And it is well to remember that regeneration and atonement are terrible and grim experiences, and to tell about such does not always make for cheerful reading. All this arises from a chance remark dropped a good many months ago, when we were trying to describe the sort of fiction we wanted for *THE POPULAR*. We want to reply in some form to the ex-criminals who have favored us with letters. They are all men of some education who slipped in some fashion in early life, and all of them could tell you that they had to pay for their misdeeds in one shape or another. At the very beginning of the downward path, the barrier between the right and wrong is not a very high one, and who knows what circumstance has saved many a one from leaping over to the wrong side, or what it was that inspired many another to leap back while there was yet time? Our characters dictate our actions, but slowly and surely the actions mold the character. It was Doctor Johnson, if we remember rightly, who said, pointing to a miserable outcast: "There, but for the grace of God, goes Samuel Johnson." How many men, caught in the mesh of their own self-nurtured habits, altered and defaced

and ruined by their own deeds, may look upon some boyhood friend to whom the grace of God was kinder, and think that so *they* might have been but for one false step and one mistake? When we consider how far the limits lie between the heights to which honest ability may raise a man, and the depths to which a misguided genius and perverted imagination will sink him, it seems as if there were only one side to the argument.



PLEASE, please don't think that we are preaching a sermon, or that we are urging a larger Sunday-school attendance. We are merely saying what we think, and introducing to you the complete novel which opens the next issue of *THE POPULAR*. It is a story of criminals and honest men, of a gigantic conspiracy hatched by an ingenious brain, and carried out with unscrupulous efficiency. The honest man and the still honest and braver woman who are caught in the meshes of this horrible net are figures to call out all your interest and sympathy. "Fraser's Folly" is the name of the story. It was written by W. E. Scutt. For breathless interest, for ingenuity, for characterization it is equal to anything we have published in a long time. This fight for a South American mine is not a physical fight, but a contest of wits. It is waged on board a ship and in New York City; far more than a mine is at stake. It is a great novel, and opens a great number of the magazine. When we tell you that the other contributors are Ralph D. Paine, Clarence Cullen, Robert Welles Ritchie, H. C. Witwer, W. B. M. Ferguson, Foxhall Williams, H. H. Knibbs, Charles Kroth Moser, Robert V. Carr, and G. W. Johnston, you will realize that it is an issue really worth while. No matter how the election goes, we feel that we ought to be sure of your vote.

1916 Maxwell \$655

Including Electric Starter and Electric Lights



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The Acknowledged Automobile Sensation of 1916

The Lowest Cost Real Automobile

From the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Gulf to the Great Lakes, in every City, Town and Hamlet, automobilists are lauding the 1916 Maxwell's power—the 1916 Maxwell's beauty,—the 1916 Maxwell's luxury,—the 1916 Maxwell's complete and detailed equipment. Everywhere, men who know motor cars, are marveling that \$655 now buys a beautiful, powerful, stream-line, real complete, full five-passenger car, with electric starter,—electric lights,—high-tension magneto,—demountable rims,—"one-man" mohair top, and every other feature and modern refinement known to the automobile industry.

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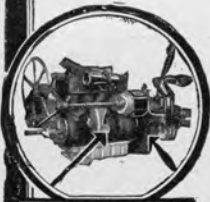
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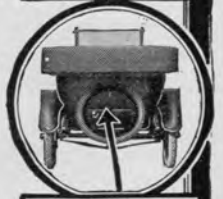
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Speedometer, fuse box, ignition, lights, battery regulator, all mounted flush up in instrument board.



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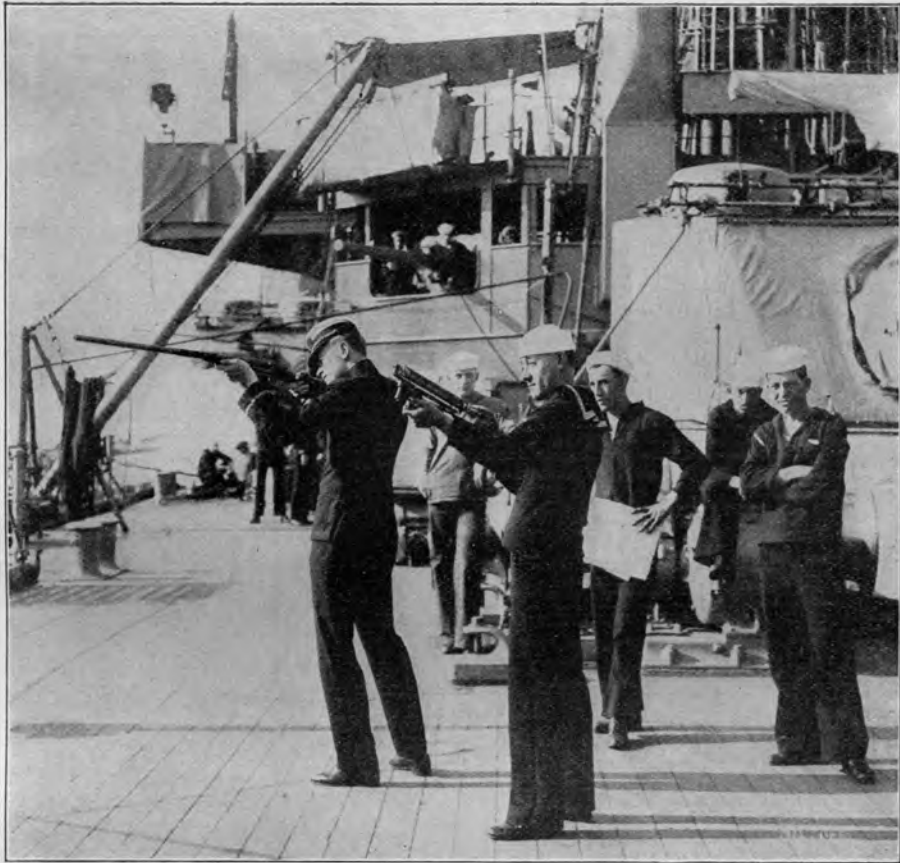
Each has its good points: Dupont—high velocity; Ballistite—waterproof; Schultze—easy on the shoulder; Du Pont Black Sporting—a favorite for 114 years. All give even patterns and are bound to get desired results if your aim is right. Du Pont loads, the choice of more than 80% of American shooters, are obtainable in all standard shells or in bulk at your dealer's.

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One sailor throwing the target while Ensign Willis is shooting at it on the U. S. S. "Connecticut."

FIELD, TRAP, AND TARGET

COMES THE HUNTING SEASON.

THE leaves are just taking on the tinge of autumn. The sun is growing mellow. There's an invigorating snap in the crisp autumn air that sets the nerves atingle and awakens the dormant spirit of Nimrod.

"Brer" Rabbit is frisking about in meadow and woodland—tantalizing the sportsman and tempting Fate, and the little gray pellets of lead. The loon breaks the stillness of the morning with its sharp, shrill call, and the flutter of quail and partridge sounds a welcome note in the brush.

The shooting season is here, and just beyond the fetid city loom up the sturdy mountains. Just a few steps from the barbed-wire limits of social and business strife stretch the golden meadows and the cooling woods.

Already the sons of Nimrod are beginning their annual pilgrimage. Gun cases and shooting traps are familiar sights about the many great railway terminals. The smiling, expectant visage of the inveterate sportsman mingles with the crowds on the thoroughfares, and the sporting goods dealers' tills tinkle with the jingle of money.

Stories of big game are in the air. The old-timers are brushing up their memories. Clubroom and office are filled with stories of prowess—what has been done and what is forthcoming. Good-fellowship is in full swing, and the country lad with his family heirloom will soon be matching his skill with his fancily equipped brother sportsman of the city.

Everything points to a season of successful shooting—a big season. There is a



What are you kicking about?

—You men who think you're underpaid

The men who get big pay are those who are **trained** to earn it. Your pay is small because you have no special training—and **you only are to blame.**

You can **learn** to **earn** more. No matter what your job, where you live or how old you are, if you can read and write, the International Correspondence Schools can train you for a **better position** and **bigger pay.**

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Advertising
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Automobile Running
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promise of game a-plenty, and every reason to believe that the signs are true.

The duck season especially looms up interesting. The Weeks-McLean Bill, designed and passed to prohibit the spring shooting of these swift-flying denizens of stream, lake, and shore, has had its desired effect. Unmolested, these birds have multiplied greatly in number, and the bays are literally black with them.

MILLIONAIRE YACHTSMEN BUY HAND TRAPS.

WE learn from a large sporting dealer in New York that George Jay Gould and William K. Vanderbilt have equipped their respective yachts with two hand traps each, so that they and their guests may indulge in the fascinating sport of trapshooting over the water. A number of Uncle Sam's war craft carry trapshooting equipment, and contests between officers of different vessels have become a recognized naval sport.

ARE YOU A PROXY SPORT?

BEYOND a shadow of doubt, trapshooting is to-day the greatest of American organized sports. Practically it stands alone in the list, since baseball is less sport than spectacle, wherein eighteen men work themselves into premature senility for a salary, and a cowpenful of spectators look on and holler, as at the old-time gladiatorial contests—staged when the Roman empire was ripe, and waiting to be gathered by the breechless and hungry barbarians. A nation is getting in a bad way when it takes its sport by proxy. There may this much be said in favor of trapshooting: It keeps its devotees off the bleachers, and it teaches an accomplishment which will certainly prove to be worth while when the Huns and Vandals invade the league grounds and appropriate gate receipts, pink lemonade, and popcorn.

"Some of my dearest, truest friends are baseball fans—rabid monomaniacs, who would rather see Matty pitch and Baker

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You'll find yourself pouring out more. And more. And then some. You'll want to **EAT Blue Label Ketchup!** That's how good it is.

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One chance shot—a droll remark—a hair's breadth hit—any of these may decide tonight's victory! This thrilling game puts new blood into hard-worked men—and keeps boys home at last!

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bat than lead the singing in Sabbath school; and if I cling to them in spite of all, certainly I can lavish lots of my young affections upon the other crowd, though its units find no earthly enjoyment more sweet than the pulverizing of blue-rock targets. It is considerably better to do something all by your lonesome—like throwing a handful of fine shot at a composition target—than to waste a whole lot of enthusiasm in applauding some other fellow's exuberant antics with bat or ball."—S. D. Barnes, in *Sports Afield*.

WOMEN TRAPSHOOTERS TO THE FRONT.

THIS year has marked an immense wave of popularity in the ranks of The Sport Alluring, and to prove the attractiveness of the pastime—to lend color and éclat to the sport—lo and behold! the eternal feminine is entering with a vim.

Women trapshooting clubs are springing up all over. Ladies' events have become a general thing on the program of many gun clubs, and women's shoots are being conducted both at home and abroad.

One of the latest wrinkles is a feminine shoot "via wire" recently held between the Diana Squad of Chicago and the Nemours Club, a trapshooting club composed of Wilmington "shootists." The Wilmington women were severely handicapped by being obliged to shoot in a hard, driving rain, but while the downpour helped result in a victory for the Chicago Dianas, still it forms conclusive proof of the tight hold trapshooting has taken on the fairer sex when they will unhesitatingly brave the elements and run the risk of spoiling their summer finery in order to indulge in the sport.

Just a few short years ago trapshooting was exclusively a man's game. To-day there are hundreds of women competing with man in his own bailiwick, and successfully, too. Incidentally, so important has this feminine phase of trapshooting become that there are persistent rumors that a trap for women shooters will be a feature of the next Grand American Handicap.

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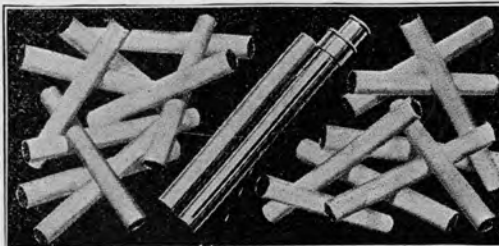
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My pay comes when your weight is reduced, if you so desire. My treatment has often taken off fat at the rate of one pound a day. No dieting or exercising. A safe and sane method that has many endorsements. **Dr. R. NEWMAN**, Licensed Physician, State New York, 36 East Third Street, New York. Desk 258.



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A Practical Novelty for Cigarette Smokers

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Our Customers' letters continually prove this.

A FIRM of over 60 years of unquestioned integrity is offering special diamond bargains right now. Exquisite gems which you can secure at prices you should not overlook. Read below the indisputable reasons that make these attractive prices possible. Then write for latest bulletin. Just issued.

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Diamonds of the finest grade—beautiful, scintillating blue white gems—fully 50% below the normal figure. And fully guaranteed. Don't miss these great bargains. Write—write today for the latest bulletin.

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Our business as diamond bankers enables us not only to quote you amazing low prices, but it also enables us to get hold of the very choicest gems—diamonds which were selected originally by purchasers only after long study and investigation. We have often offered stones which cost originally more than \$100 for \$49 or less. You should write at once for the new bulletin with complete descriptions and prices—now ready to mail.

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provides for Everything as offered; Exact weight to smallest fraction; Quality, color, etc. Exchange at full price; Exact cash loans.

We will send prepaid the gem or the watch of your choice on approval. See it and examine it for yourself. Compare it with any other you ever have seen—satisfy yourself that the price we are making you represents a most remarkable achievement even for a 60 year old house as large as ours—over \$750,000 behind us. If not satisfied with article after examining it, return at our expense.



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Address.....

Slam into this with both barrels—
You can't make too sure
Of bagging this thought:
Good old LUCKY STRIKE
On your hunting trip
Will keep you in good humor,
Good health, good spirits,
And—good luck!

LUCKY STRIKE

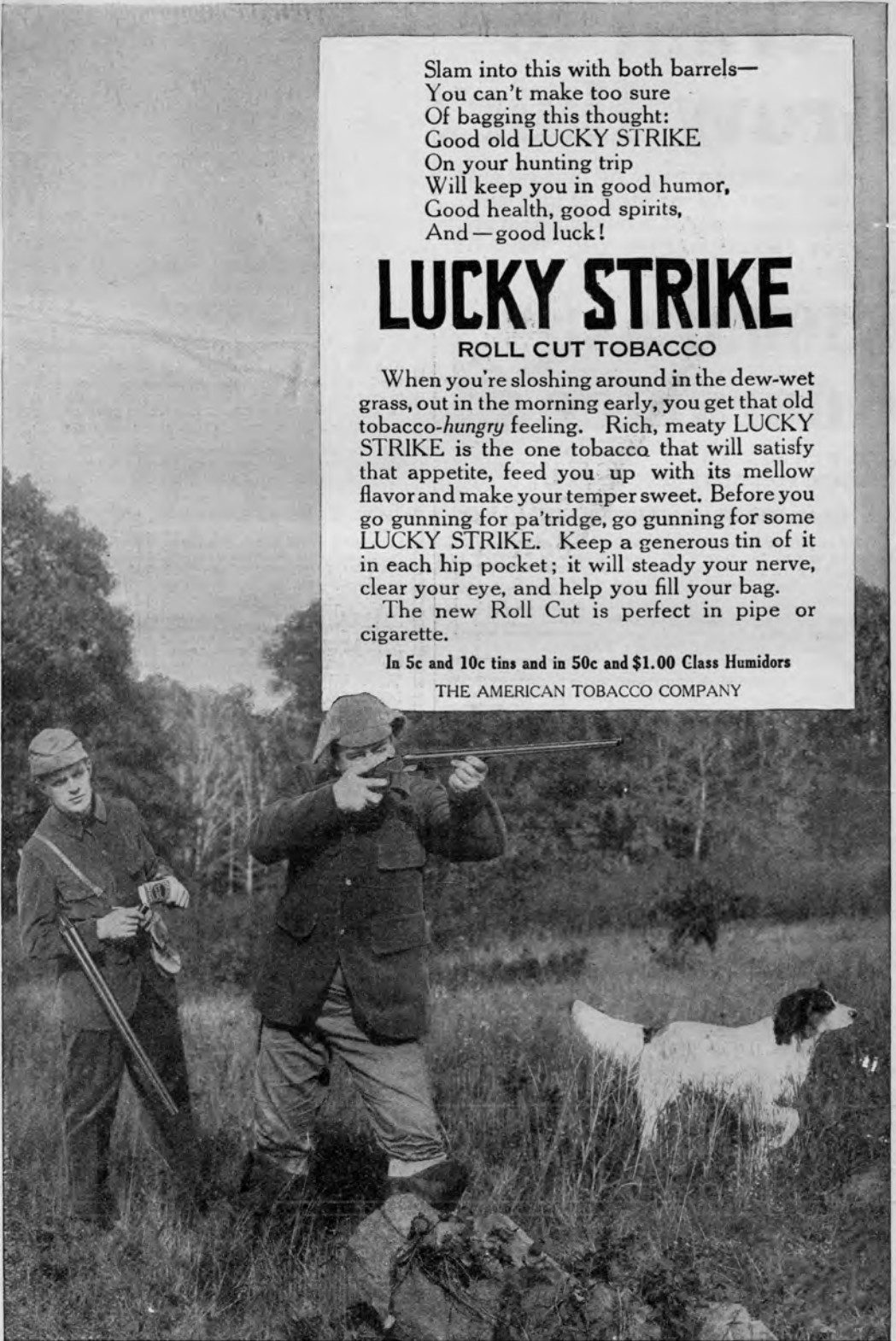
ROLL CUT TOBACCO

When you're sloshing around in the dew-wet grass, out in the morning early, you get that old tobacco-hungry feeling. Rich, meaty LUCKY STRIKE is the one tobacco that will satisfy that appetite, feed you up with its mellow flavor and make your temper sweet. Before you go gunning for pa'tridge, go gunning for some LUCKY STRIKE. Keep a generous tin of it in each hip pocket; it will steady your nerve, clear your eye, and help you fill your bag.

The new Roll Cut is perfect in pipe or cigarette.

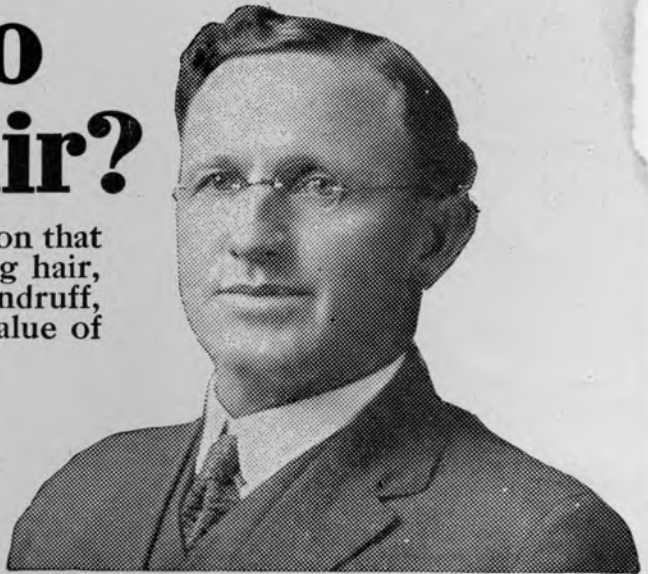
In 5c and 10c tins and in 50c and \$1.00 Class Humidors

THE AMERICAN TOBACCO COMPANY



Want to Grow Hair?

If you desire to grow hair on that bald spot, or to stop falling hair, or completely banish dandruff, you should test the true value of Koskott. We offer



W. H. COPELAND, (photo above) reports: "My hair is improving right along, the bald spot looks darker; I am thankful I heard of Koskott."

\$500. Cash Guarantee

that we can produce over 1000 genuine voluntary testimonials

READ THESE EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS; WE HAVE LEGIONS MORE.

"For eight or nine years I have been a bald-headed man; the top of my head was as bare as my hand. Now hair is growing again, it is the most wonderful thing I ever saw."—**Lee Fish**, Clayton Co., Iowa.

"I can no longer find the place where the bald spot was; the hair is as long there as on any other place of the head."—**Matt Bagley**, Itasca Co., Minn.

"My hair has quit falling out, my scalp itches no more and new hair is growing thickly."—**Mrs. J. Lundeen**, Multnomah Co., Oregon.

"After being bald 20 years, my head is mostly covered with new hair; am well pleased."—**Geo. Van Wyck**, Union Co., N. J.

"The baldness on my head has entirely disappeared, being covered with hair, by use of Koskott Hair Grower."—**Prof. C. E. Bowman**, Maryland.

"For growing hair and making it beautiful there is nothing like Koskott, for my hair is now a surprise to all my friends. I am telling everybody of your wonderful hair grower."—**Mrs. W. Rabiger**, Alleghany Co., Pa.

"Koskott has started a new growth of hair on my head."—**R. C. Cunningham**, Abbeville Co., S. C.

"The hair is now about an inch long on my head where there was not a hair in 30 years; Koskott did it."—**J. J. Ellis**, Minnesota.

"Four months ago my scalp was bare; now it is covered with a nice growth of hair and it is growing nicely."—**W. C. Colman**, Red River Co., La.

"One sample box and one full box of Koskott have grown hair on my head where I was perfectly bald."—**A. W. Bowser**, Butler Co., Pa.

"I was bald and never could find anything to bring the hair back until I used Koskott."—**Esther Arnett**, Wallace Co., Ky.



MRS. JENNIE DAVIS, who reports full growth over completely bald head in a few weeks. She used Koskott exclusively.

BOX FREE TO YOU

We offer to send you a testing box of Koskott FREE, postpaid. It is probably different from anything you ever used on your scalp before. It is inexpensive because concentrated. We know that Koskott has surprised and delighted many who were losing or had lost their hair and feared they must remain bald throughout life.

What Koskott has done for others' hair, why not for yours?

If you have entire or partial baldness, alopecia areata (bald spots), barbers' itch, dandruff, dry scalp, brittle hair, falling hair, if you get a lot of hair on your comb whenever you use it, itching scalp, or other hair or scalp trouble, try Koskott.

GROW HAIR!

You need only ask for a free box of Koskott—a postcard will do. It will come to you promptly, with full directions, and you can soon decide what it will do for you.

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There's more crisp, brisk, youthful vigor in an ounce of "Bull" Durham than in a pound of any other tobacco ever rolled up into a cigarette. It's the co-partner of the go-ahead spirit—the delight of the fresh, unjaded taste that goes with enthusiasm and energy. This grand old tobacco—the favorite of three generations—is today the liveliest smoke in the whole world.

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Within the last two years the "roll-your-own" idea has spread amazingly. Thousands of men have learned that their own hand-rolled "Bull" Durham cigarettes have a freshness and fragrance impossible to obtain in any other way. Made exclusively from mild, ripe Virginia-North Carolina "bright" tobacco leaf, "Bull" Durham is unique in its mellow-sweet flavor. Try it once and you'll smoke it always.

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"papers" with
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